

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

- **US Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker to step down; Ten killed in a suicide blast in Khost province**

According to reports, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker will be stepping down. The US State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said on May 22, 2012 that the 62-year-old veteran envoy would leave his post in Kabul this summer because of health reasons however, she declined to provide details. Crocker departure comes a year earlier than planned after he came out of retirement in 2011 to take the helm of the embassy in Kabul at President Obama's personal request.¹

In another development, according to reports, a suicide bomber has killed ten people including children at a security check post in Khost province of Afghanistan.²

Pakistan

- **Pakistan President Zardari attends NATO Summit in Chicago, presses to help find a "permanent solution" to US drone strikes; PM Gilani welcomes Turkish investments; A US Senate panel expresses its outrage over Pakistan's conviction of a doctor who helped the US in tracking down Osama bin Laden**

According to reports, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, during a NATO meeting in Chicago May 20, 2012, pressed the United States to help find a "permanent solution" to US drone strikes that have fueled tensions between the two uneasy allies. Zardari also called for the United States to do more to make amends for the deaths of 24 Pakistani soldiers killed in November by US aircraft along the border with Afghanistan.³

In another development, according to reports, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said on May 21, 2012 that Pakistan was seeking more Turkish investments in multifarious sectors and was ready to offer special incentive package and exclusive investment zone for Turkish entrepreneurs and companies. Speaking at a dinner hosted in honour of Prime Minister of Turkey

¹ "US Ambassador to step down from Kabul post", *Al Jazeera*, May 23, 2012 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/05/2012522114317578741.html>

² "Suicide blast kills 10 at Afghan checkpoint in Khost", *BBC*, May 19, 2012 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18130207>

³ "Zardari urges for a permanent solution on US drone strikes", *Dawn*, May 21, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/21/zardari-urges-for-a-permanent-solution-on-us-drone-strikes/>

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Gilani said, "Pakistan would warmly welcome more Turkish investments in infrastructure including energy, construction and communication as well as in urban development and agriculture sectors".⁴

In other developments, reports noted that a US Senate panel on May 24, 2012, expressed its outrage over Pakistan's conviction of a doctor who helped the United States track down Osama bin Laden, cutting aid to Islamabad by \$33 million, \$1 million for every year of the physician's 33-year sentence for high treason. The punitive move came on top of deep reductions the Appropriations Committee had already made to President Barack Obama's budget request for Pakistan, a reflection of the growing congressional anger over its cooperation in combating terrorism. Meanwhile, according to reports, the overall foreign aid budget for next year had slashed more than half of the proposed assistance and threatened further reductions if Islamabad fails to open overland supply routes to US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.⁵

Bangladesh

- **The Central Bank of Bangladesh not interested in swap funds offered by India; Dipu Moni urges Kuwait to lift ban on manpower recruitment; Indian Law Minister Salman Khursheed visits Bangladesh; Bangladesh to purchase four Lockheed MC-130Es from the US; Bangladesh and Belarus signed two deals; An amendment to the Indian Constitution is being drafted to enable the exchange of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi enclaves in the Indian territory; US contributes in the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund**

According to reports, Bangladesh's balance of payments (BOP) is in stress, but the central bank of Bangladesh is not interested at the moment in "swap funds" offered by India due to relatively high interest rates.⁶

Reports noted that Foreign Minister Dipu Moni has urged Kuwait to lift its ban on manpower recruitment and recruit skilled manpower from Bangladesh. She made the request when a three-member Kuwaiti delegation, led by Director General for Asian countries of Kuwait Foreign Ministry Mohammad Ahmad Al-Mejren Al-Rumi, called on her on May 17, 2012 during their three-day visit to Bangladesh. In response, the Kuwaiti director general assured full cooperation and said Kuwait would encourage skilled manpower, especially in the technical fields including professionals like doctors, engineers and nurses. Dipu Moni also requested Kuwait to invest in infrastructure projects in Bangladesh and import products such as readymade garments, pharmaceuticals, jute items, leather, and others from the country.⁷

⁴ "Pakistan welcomes Turkish investments in the country: Gilani", *Dawn*, May 22, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/22/pakistan-welcomes-turkish-investments-in-the-country-gilani/>

⁵ "US Senate panel cuts Pakistan aid over Afridi's conviction", *Dawn*, May 24, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/24/us-senate-panel-cuts-pakistan-aid-over-afridis-conviction/>

⁶ "BB not interested in India's swap funds: Officials say funds charge high interest rates", *The Daily Star*, May 21, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235008>.

⁷ "Lift ban, recruit manpower from Bangladesh: Dipu Moni urges Kuwait", *The Daily Star*, May 21, 2012 at www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235060.

Meanwhile, Indian Law Minister Salman Khurshid went to Dhaka on May 24, 2012 on a four-day visit to join the joint celebrations by Bangladesh and India of the 113th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and to mark the 90th anniversary of the publication of "Bidrohi".⁸ Mr. Khurshid called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official Gono Bhaban residence on May 26, 2012.⁹

According to reports, in a bid to modernise the tactical transport aircraft fleet of the Air Force, Bangladesh will purchase four Lockheed MC-130Es from the United States at an estimated cost of \$180 million. According to the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) sources, the proposed sale would cover the "regeneration, overhaul, modification and logistics support" of the second-hand Hercules. The package would also include 20 Rolls-Royce T56 engines to be provided as excess defence articles, plus training and other equipment and services associated with the upgrade.¹⁰

In another development, Bangladesh and Belarus signed two deals on May 24, 2012, one on cooperation over agriculture and food and another on formation of a foreign ministry-level joint commission, to strengthen bilateral cooperation in education, culture, agriculture, investment and trade. Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, in the first-ever visit by a Bangladeshi leader to Belarus, signed the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) at the end of her three-day visit.¹¹

According to reports, an amendment to the Indian Constitution is being drafted to enable the exchange of 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in the Indian territory, said Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna. "The government is committed to the earliest implementation of the Protocol and Land Boundary Agreement (between the two countries) that would result in exchange of enclaves," he said in a letter to CPI leader Prabodh Panda.¹²

In other developments, according to reports, the US government, through USAID, announced an initial obligation of \$9 million to support the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund. The announcement was made at the environment and forests ministry on May 24, 2012, said a US embassy press release. A total of \$13 million US grant to the fund for four years was promised by US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during her recent visit to Bangladesh.¹³

⁸ "Indian law minister due tomorrow", *The Daily Star*, May 23, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235330>.

⁹ "PM urges India for speedy implementation of accords", *The Daily star*, May 27, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235893>.

¹⁰ "Military Transport: Air Force to buy 4 US aircraft", *The Daily Star*, May 24, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235482>.

¹¹ "Bangladesh, Belarus sign MoUs on agriculture, food", *The Daily Star*, May 25, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235653>.

¹² "India to change constitution to exchange enclaves", *The Daily Star*, May 26, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235733>.

¹³ "\$9m US grant for climate fund announced", *The Daily Star*, May 26, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=235746>.

Sri Lanka

- **Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka toured the Sri Lanka's Eastern Province covering all three districts to understand the ground situation in the Province; India is one of the countries in the troika appointed for the United Nations Human Rights Council's 14th session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process on Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan sign MoU; Sri Lanka will renovate the pilgrims rest at Lumbini in Nepal; Sri Lanka to enter into the global space race**

According to reports, Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Ashok K Kantha toured the Eastern Province covering all three districts, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara to understand the ground situation in the Province and explore opportunities for further development of economic, cultural and people-to-people links in the East. During his visit from May 24-27, 2012, the High Commissioner separately interacted with leaders and other representatives of major political parties including SLFP, UNP, SLMC, ACMC, NC, TNA and TMVP and religious leaders and members of civil society. Kantha also met with the Security Forces Commander (East) and Commander Eastern Naval Area to review the security arrangements in the former Tamil Tiger stronghold. The High Commissioner and the Chief Minister Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan inaugurated a Vocational Training Centre set up with Indian assistance of Rs. 76 million in the Batticaloa district. Kantha also handed over 15 trishaws to war-affected women in two separate events at Valachennai in Batticaloa district and Akkaraipattu in Ampara district. Apart from Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara, High Commissioner also visited Kalmunai, Kattankudy, Siharam, Onthachimadam, Valachennai and Akkaraipattu where he interacted with local communities and representatives of local bodies.¹⁴

In another development, reports noted that India is one of the countries in the troika appointed for the United Nations Human Rights Council's 14th session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process on Sri Lanka. Benin and Spain are the other two countries in the troika appointed for the review of Sri Lanka scheduled for 1st of November, 2012. Adoption of the report on Sri Lanka is scheduled for 5th of November. All three countries in the troika have voted in support of the UN resolution on Sri Lanka, sponsored by the United States and adapted by the UN Human Rights Council at the 19th sessions of UNHRC in Geneva on March 22.¹⁵

Reports noted that Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand the bilateral relations between the two countries and hold regular consultations between the respective foreign ministries. The MoU was signed during the visit of Sri Lanka's External Affairs Minister, Prof. G. L. Peiris to Kazakhstan on May 24th and 25th at the invitation of Kazakhstan Foreign Affairs Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov.¹⁶

According to reports, SupremeSAT (Pvt) Ltd. signed the investment agreement with the Board of

¹⁴ "India reviews progress in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province", *Colombo Page*, May 27, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May27_1338128945CH.php.

¹⁵ "India in UNHCR Troika appointed for Sri Lanka UPR review", *Colombo Page*, May 26, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May26_1338047950CH.php.

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan sign MoU to enhance bilateral cooperation", *Colombo Page*, May 26, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May26_1338013903CH.php.

Investment on May 23 with very ambitious plans to take Sri Lanka into the global space race. With an initial investment of USD 20 million which will be further increased up to USD 320 million, the company's long-term plan is to utilize the Planned Orbital Slot of Sri Lanka, which is located at 50 degrees East and launch SupremeSAT - the country's first ever telecommunications satellite.¹⁷

In other developments, Sri Lanka will renovate the pilgrims rest at Lumbini in Nepal at a cost of 65 million rupees, Sri Lankan government announced on May 24.¹⁸

Maldives

- **India has provided MVR 5 billion worth of aid to the Maldives during the past three years**

Indian High Commission in Maldives has stated that the Indian government had provided MVR5 billion worth of aid to the Maldives during the past three years. The statistics revealed to the media by the commission indicated that the projects undertaken by the government from 2009 had been granted USD 53.45 million dollars (MVR825 million). In addition, line of credit facilities, bond purchase, standby credit facility and items, equipment and financial assistance worth USD268 million (MVR4.5 billion) was provided to hold the SAARC summit in Addu according to the statistics, which is a total of USD321.5 million (MVR5 billion).¹⁹

B. East Asia

South East Asia

- **Indian Prime Minister to visit Myanmar; Street protests over power shortage in Myanmar; Anwar Ibrahim accused of defying protest ban; US to host the Philippine President; Rival royalist parties to re-merge in Cambodia**

In a significant development, reports noted that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will visit Myanmar starting May 27, 2012. During the visit, he will meet pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon. Singh will also meet President Thein Sein, who is credited with instigating a series of political reforms in the country. A number of agreements are likely to be signed during her visit.²⁰

¹⁷ "SL to launch first satellite", *The Daily Mirror*, May 24, 2012 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/18857-sl-launch-first-satellite.html>.

¹⁸ "Sri Lanka to allocate Rs.65 million to renovate pilgrims rest at Lumbini", *Colombo Page*, May 24, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May24_1337876165CH.php.

¹⁹ Hamdhoon, Ahmed, "MVR5 billion in aid from India to Maldives in 3 years", *Haveeru*, May 27, 2012 at <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/42298>.

²⁰ 'PM Manmohan Singh to meet Aung Suu Kyi in Myanmar next week', *The Economic Times*, May 25, 2012, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-05-25/news/31850991_1_myanmar-junta-nyan-win-democracy-icon

According to reports, persistent power shortage has led to street protests by the people in Myanmar in the past one week. Demonstrations in the past week in Myanmar's two largest cities and several towns could be seen as an indicator of the new openness under President Thein Sein, who has overseen the country's emergence from decades of authoritarian rule. But from another point of view, the protests – which have been limited to a few hundred people – are a reminder of the early stages of past unrest in Myanmar. The most recent uprising, led by monks in 2007, began as small protests over fuel price increases.²¹

Reports noted that the Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has been charged with defying protest bans. The prosecutors have charged the Malaysian opposition leader and two of his allies with breaking the law during a massive street rally to demand fair elections. The three men, who pleaded not guilty, face a maximum jail sentence of six months and fines totalling 12,000 ringgit if convicted. The court scheduled a preliminary hearing on 2 July to determine further trial dates. The charges could distract Anwar from preparing for national elections that many speculate will be held by September.²²

According to reports, the US President Barack Obama will meet with Philippine President Benigno Aquino III on June 8, 2012 at the White House. The White House says Obama looks forward to discussing the strategic, economic and “people to people” ties between the U.S. and the Philippines and their cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama has reportedly said the U.S. needs to deepen its engagement in the fast-growing Asia Pacific region, calling it critical to the nation's security and economic prosperity.²³

In other developments, reports noted that after six acrimonious years, Cambodia's two royalist parties, Funcinpec and the Norodom Ranariddh Party have decided to re-merge. Both parties hope the merger under the Funcinpec name will reinvigorate the royalist movement ahead of next year's general elections. But the merger is not expected to change the political landscape of Cambodia which is currently dominated by the Cambodian People's Party.²⁴

Japan

- **Japan insists China to improve transparency over its overseas aid; Japan and the US agree to take resolute action against North Korea if it conducts a nuclear test**

During the recent two-day long Sixth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, along with his counterparts from Pacific Island nations urged China to improve

²¹ 'Power shortages set off small protests in Myanmar', *New York Times*, May 26, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/27/world/asia/power-shortages-set-off-small-protests-in-myanmar.html?_r=1

²² "Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim charged over defying protest ban", *The Guardian*, May 22, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/22/malaysia-anwar-ibrahim-charged>

²³ 'Obama to host Philippine President at white House', *Global Nation*, May 26, 2012, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/37947/obama-to-host-philippine-president-at-white-house>

²⁴ 'Cambodia's once rival royalist parties to re-merge', *Radio Australia*, May 25, 2012, <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/asia-pacific/cambodias-once-rival-royalist-parties-to-remerge/950592>

its transparency of overseas aid. The request came at a time when Pacific Island countries are currently suffering from rising debts to China. During the Summit, all the emerging donor countries were requested to comply with international rules on aid. Noda reportedly expressed Japan's eagerness to promote exchanges of military personnel with Pacific island countries. He also pledged to offer \$500 million to these countries as aid over the next three years.²⁵

In another development, according to reports, during Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba's recent meeting with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at Chicago, both the leaders agreed to take resolute action against North Korea if the North conducts a nuclear test. Both the leaders also agreed to urge China to cooperate on this issue.²⁶

South Korea

- **South Korea plans to increase its number of missile to deal with North Korean threat; Seoul, along with Tokyo and Washington warn Pyongyang against further nuclear test; South Korea to get more legal jurisdiction over US troops**

Reports noted that to deal with the security threats posed by North Korea nuclear weapons, South Korea has recently decided to increase the quantity of its own ballistic and cruise missiles. The South Korean government and military reportedly aims to spend around 2.5 trillion won (\$2.14 billion) over the next five years to secure 500 to 600 missiles of such kind.²⁷ In the mean time, Seoul has warned Pyongyang of 'grave consequences' and fresh international sanctions if the latter tries to carry out another nuclear test.²⁸ In fact, during a recent tripartite meeting among nuclear envoys from South Korea, Japan and the US, the three countries called on North Korea not to 'miscalculate' warning of a united response against any further provocation from the North.²⁹

In another development, according to reports, the US military has recently agreed to give South Korean authorities more legal jurisdiction over serious crimes involving US soldiers stationed in the South. With this, South Korea will be able to keep custody of US military personnel involved in crimes like rape or murder, before they are indicted. The two countries have reportedly agreed to give up a contentious clause in the 1967 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) under which the South Korean prosecutors were granted only 24 hours to collect enough evidence to indict a US soldier taken into custody on suspicion of committing a violent crime.³⁰

²⁵ "Japan, others want clarity on China aid/Noda pledges 500 mil. Dollars to pacific islands", Yomiuri Daily, May 27, 2012, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120526002703.htm>

²⁶ "Gemba, Clinton warn N. Korea/Japan, US agree on resolute response if Pyongyang carries out N-test", Yomiuri Daily, May 23, 2012, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120522004733.htm>.

²⁷ "S. Korea to build more missile to counter threat from North: report", Mainichi Daily, May 22, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120522p2g00m0in109000c.html>

²⁸ "Seoul warns Pyongyang of 'grave consequences' from nuclear test", Korea Herald, May 24, 2012, at <http://view.koreaherald.com/kh/view.php?ud=20120524001139>

²⁹ "Seoul, Washington, Tokyo warn N.K. against further provocations", Korea Herald, May 21, 2012, at <http://view.koreaherald.com/kh/view.php?ud=20120521001242>

³⁰ "S. Korea gets more legal jurisdiction over US troops", Mainichi daily News, May 24, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120524p2g00m0in077000c.html>

North Korea

- **North Korea vows to conduct nuclear test if the US continues to insist on sanctions against it; The US and China reaffirm their commitment to prevent North Korea from taking further provocative action**

According to reports, North Korea has recently pledged to conduct another nuclear test if the US, along with its allies, continue to insist on imposing stricter sanctions against Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programmes. This is the first time the North has referred to the possibility of a nuclear test after its recent attempt to launch a rocket-driven satellite, which was widely suspected to be the North's covert test of missile technology.³¹

In another development, Glyn Davies, US Special representative for North Korea policy, during his recent visit to China, held talks with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying as well as with Wu Dawei, China's special representative for Korean Peninsula affairs. During those talks, both the parties reaffirmed their cooperation in preventing North Korea from taking further provocative action after the North's recent failed attempt to launch its so-called rocket-driven satellite.³²

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

- **Kazakhstan and Turkey plan to set up a massive industrial zone; Kazakhstan gas output to be tripled by 2030; Kyrgyzstan to allow NATO transit of military cargo; China to import up to 25 bcm of Central Asian gas in 2012; New 'narco-post' opened on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border with the help of US assistance; Tajikistan removes visa requirements for citizens of developed states; Entrepreneurs seek to end Turkmen political monopoly; Kyrgyzstan President supports the development of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway; Kazakhstan and US discuss strengthening the NDN network by making use of the Caspian port of Aktau; CASA 1000 partners sign a US\$ 1 billion electricity deal which aims to supply electricity to Pakistan and Afghanistan from Central Asia**

Reports noted that Turkey and Kazakhstan have agreed to set up a massive industrial zone as part of plans to triple trade between the countries to \$10 billion.³³

According to reports, Kazakhstan aims to triple output of natural gas to 110 billion cubic meters

³¹ "N. Korea hints at nuke test if Us steps up pressure for sanctions", Mainichi Daily, May 23, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120523p2g00m0in109000c.html>

³² "China, US reaffirm cooperation to prevent N. Korea's provocative actions", Mainichi Daily, May 23, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120523p2g00m0in110000c.html>

³³ "Turkey, Kazakhstan plan massive industrial zone", Central Asia Newswire, May 24, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12075>

(bcm) per year by 2030 and become a major supplier of world markets. It currently produces around 40 bcm/y of gas.³⁴

Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev has signed a deal on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Chicago to allow NATO to land transit (rail and road) of military cargo through the territory of Kyrgyzstan. In the past Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev had vowed to shut down the Manas Air Transit Center near the capital Bishkek, the main transit hub for military operations in Afghanistan, by the time the international forces leave Afghanistan.³⁵

China is set to import up to 25 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas from Central Asia in 2012. The amount is significantly higher than total gas from Central Asia imported in 2011, which was close to 15.9 bcm. A majority of the gas is imported from Turkmenistan although Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also provide gas to China.³⁶

Kyrgyzstan's drug control agency has set up a new narco-post on the southern border with Tajikistan. The post was built with financial and technical assistance from the U.S. Central Command and is aimed at tackling the drug smuggling along this route.³⁷

Tajikistan's parliament has approved a legislation that allows visa-free visits to citizens from the United States, the European Union, and a handful of nations in Southeast Asia.³⁸

Turkmenistan state-run media has said that business leaders are setting up a political party to challenge the one-party system that has controlled that Central Asian state since its independence two decades ago. The Association of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs has published an advertisement in several media outlets seeking members for the new Entrepreneurs' Party.³⁹

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev has said that his government strongly supports a project to build a trans-Asia railway to connect his country to both China and Uzbekistan. The more than \$2 billion rail line is planned to run from Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to Andijon in Uzbekistan, where it would link to the Uzbek rail network.⁴⁰

The United States and Kazakhstan are exploring the idea of expanding the amount of military

³⁴ "Kazakh gas output to triple by 2030", Central Asia Newswire, May 24, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12074>

³⁵ "Kyrgyzstan to allow NATO transit of military cargo", Central Asia Newswire, May 23, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12065>

³⁶ "China to import up to 25 bcm of Central Asian gas in 2012", Central Asia Newswire, May 23, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12070>

³⁷ "New 'narco-post' opens on Kyrgyz-Tajik border", Central Asia Newswire, May 25, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12083>

³⁸ "Tajikistan removes visa requirement for citizens of developed states", Central Asia Newswire, May 25, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=12088>

³⁹ "Entrepreneurs Seek To End Turkmen Political Monopoly", Radio Free Europe, May 25, 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-entrepreneurs-party-political-system/24593014.html>

⁴⁰ "Kyrgyz President Wants China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway", Radio Free Europe, May 27, 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyz-president-pushes-china-uzbek-rail-link/24590625.html>

cargo passing through Kazakhstan into and out of Afghanistan. The focal point of the discussions is the Caspian port city of Aktau.⁴¹

In other developments, according to reports, Central Asia South Asia Electricity Trade and Transmission Project (CASA 1000) partners Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan have signed a \$1B deal to formalize the building of a critical transmission cable to supply electricity. It is aimed at supplying 1,300 megawatts of surplus hydropower available during the summer months from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan will import 1000MW of surplus electricity while Afghanistan will import 300 MW.⁴²

Russia

- **NATO to carry on dialogue with Russia on ABM; Ukraine to look for alternative to Russian gas; The lower house of the Russian Parliament approves the 1st reading of bill to increase fines for rally law violations; Russian President Putin promises to increase government spending on science to over 2% of GDP; Prime Minister Medvedev to become a member and Chairman of the United Russia Party; Important appointments made in the Putin administration; The State Duma approves a bill adjusting the key parameters of 2012 federal budget; Moscow to host next round of talks on the Iran nuclear issue; British Foreign Secretary to visit Moscow towards the end of May; Russia to provide a loan of US\$ 800 million to Serbia**

According to reports, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has said that despite differences with Russia, NATO will carry on dialogue with it. NATO has just announced the completion of the first phase of the creation of an ABM system of the Alliance.⁴³

President Viktor Yanukovich has said that Ukraine will look for and find an alternative to Russian gas. Ukraine pays close to 620 US\$ for Russian gas while the Europeans pay in the range of US\$ 450.⁴⁴

The State Duma or the lower house of the Russian parliament has approved the 1st reading of the high-profile bill on large fines, up to 1.5 million roubles, for abusing the law on rallies. The house voted for the document 236-207, with one abstention. The new legislation was proposed by United Russia lawmakers following the May 6 events in Moscow, when the March of Millions escalated to mass disturbances and clashes with police.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "Kazakhstan: Astana Touts Caspian Port as NDN Hub", The Times of Central Asia, May 23, 2012, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/politics-analyses-and-opinions/7003-kazakhstan-astana-touts-caspian-port-as-ndn-hub>

⁴² "CASA-1000 partners sign \$1B deal", The Times of Central Asia, May 21, 2012, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/economy-finance-and-investment-news/6995-casa-1000-partners-sign-1b-deal>

⁴³ "NATO to carry on dialogue with Russia on ABM", ITAR-TASS, May 21, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/425449.html>

⁴⁴ "Ukraine to look for alternative to Russian gas", ITAR-TASS, May 20, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/425106.html>

⁴⁵ "Parliament approves 1st reading of bill to increase fines for rally law violations", ITAR-TASS, May 22, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/427415.html>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has set a task of increasing spending on science to 2.5 percent of the GDP by 2015.⁴⁶

Prime Minister Medvedev will become a member and Chairman of the United Russia Party. He follows in the footsteps of President Putin who had to step down as Party chairman after taking office since the President's job rules out any party membership.⁴⁷

According to reports, in a sign of a major reshuffle in the President and Prime Ministerial team, some significant appointments have been made. Sergei Ivanov has been appointed as head of the Kremlin administration, Nikolai Patrushev as secretary of the Russian Security Council and Igor Sechin as chairman of the Rosneft Board of Directors.⁴⁸

Reports noted that the State Duma has approved a bill adjusting the key parameters of federal budget of 2012. According to an adjusted socio-economic development prognosis, Russia's GDP will increase from 58.683 trillion roubles to 60.59 trillion roubles /a 3.4 percent increase, down from the previously projected 3.7 percent/. The price of Urals oil is expected to be at 115 dollars per barrel versus the previous estimate of 100 dollars per barrel. Wages fund is expected to reach 14.75 trillion roubles versus 14.472 trillion roubles planned before. The consumer price index /inflation/ is unchanged at 5 to 6 percent. Federal budget revenue in 2012 increases by 897.1 billion roubles, including 808.4 billion roubles of oil and gas revenue and 88.7 billion roubles of non-oil/gas revenue to 12.677 trillion roubles. Budget deficit has been decreased from 1.5 to 0.1 percent of the GDP. Some 500 billion roubles of additional oil and gas revenue are to be used for cutting the volume of internal borrowings, while the rest will be added to the Reserve Fund.⁴⁹

Reports noted that the next round of talks to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue will be held in Moscow on June 18-19, 2012.⁵⁰

In other developments, according to reports, British Foreign Secretary William Hague will visit Moscow on May 28, 2012 and is scheduled to have talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The main topics of discussion will be the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, Afghanistan and Iran and Russia-EU-NATO interaction.⁵¹

Meanwhile, reportedly, Russia will provide the second tranche of a loan of the amount of US\$

⁴⁶ "Putin pledges to increase spending on science to over 2% of GDP", ITAR-TASS, May 22, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/427239.html>

⁴⁷ Dmitry Medvedev to join United Russia Party on Tuesday", ITAR-TASS, May 22, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/426825.html>

⁴⁸ "Medvedev appoints Sechin as Rosneft board chairman", ITAR-TASS, May 22, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/427312.html>

⁴⁹ "Parliament adjusts parameters of federal budget 2012", ITAR-TASS, May 24, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/428687.html>

⁵⁰ "Moscow to host next round of talks on Iran's nuclear problem", ITAR-TASS, May 24, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/429739.html>

⁵¹ "British foreign secretary to visit Moscow on May 28", ITAR-TASS, May 24, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/429009.html>

800 million to Serbia for meeting its infrastructural needs. In 2010 Russia had provided a loan of US\$ 200 million.⁵²

D. West Asia

Iran

- **Iran to launch biological, cyber defence base; China increases Iranian oil imports; South Korea likely to halt Iranian oil imports by end of May; India to host meeting with Iran despite US pressure to downgrade ties**

Reports noted that Iran has announced that it will launch a biological and cyber defence base later this year to counter biological and cyber threats.⁵³

Meanwhile, according to reports, China's crude oil imports from Iran increased in April, 2012 after dropping sharply earlier this year, indicating that Beijing remains a steady customer of Iranian oil despite US attempts to tighten sanctions on Tehran. The increase likely reflects the resolution of a commercial dispute between Chinese and Iranian oil companies over the terms of the supply agreement. Chinese officials have said that Western sanctions are unlikely to affect its imports from Iran.⁵⁴

On the other hand, reports noted that South Korea may halt Iranian oil imports by end of May. The EU has declined a request by South Korea to exempt it from a ban on insurance of oil tankers transporting Iranian oil that begins in July, 2012. European countries have a monopoly on oil tanker insurance and have been using this measure to pressure Iran over its nuclear program. Refiners usually do not risk operating uninsured tankers that generally carry close to 2 million barrels of crude oil.⁵⁵ Japan has also reduced Iranian oil imports to win sanction waivers from the US government.

In other developments, according to reports, India will host a three-day expert level meeting on the north-south corridor – a project that began as an Iran-India-Russia initiative but now involves more than 15 countries. The meeting is a follow up to an earlier interaction on the project held in January and will address pending issues with the Iranian side, identify missing links-roads, rails and required funding, and address issues such as customs and immigration procedures.⁵⁶

Syria

- **UN observers continue their visits in Syrian cities**

Reports noted that Groups of UN observers visited neighbourhoods in Homs, Dayr al-Zawr and

⁵² "RF to provide 2nd tranche of loan to Serbia – Putin", ITAR-TASS, May 26, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/431105.html>

⁵³ "Iran to launch biological, cyber defence base this year – agency", ISNA website, May 19, 2012

⁵⁴ "China "increases" oil import from Iran", Islamic Republic News Agency website, May 21, 2012

⁵⁵ "South Korea may halt Iranian oil imports by May end due to EU pressure", Choson Ilbo website, May 21, 2012

⁵⁶ "India to host meeting with Iran as key player despite US "counsel" to cut ties", The Hindu website, May 23, 2012

Aleppo on May 20, 2012. The observers also visited hospitals in the Damascus and Homs countryside and met with local residents.⁵⁷

Jordan

- **Jordan keen to boost ties with China**

According to reports, Jordan's King Abdullah II has stressed Jordan's desire to strengthen ties with China at all levels, particularly through increasing Chinese participation in vital projects such as transport, railway and energy. He noted this during a meeting with a Chinese delegation led by Wang Gang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.⁵⁸

Yemen

- **High casualty in clashes between terrorists and security forces**

According to reports, around 120 Yemeni security forces were killed and over 350 others were injured in a suicide bomb attack on Yemen's parade rehearsal in capital Saana on May 21, 2012. The suicide bomber, a suspected al Qaeda militant, reportedly infiltrated into the parade and blew himself up at one of the battalions participating in the parade.⁵⁹ No organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it is widely believed that it may be the work of al Qaeda as the country's new political leadership has stepped up its fight against the militants holding large parts in the southern of the country.⁶⁰

In another incident, according to reports, 13 people including three children were killed when a suicide attacker drove an explosives-packed car into a post held by Shiite Houthi rebels in Al-Jawf province in north Yemen on May 24, 2012.⁶¹

In other developments, according to reports, around 22 al Qaeda militants were killed in overnight clashes and an air strike in southern Yemen by the security forces on May 27, 2012. Around 15 terrorists were killed in the northern part of Jaar, a town in Abyan province that has been controlled by the al Qaeda since last year. The bodies of seven other militants were found in a factory located west of Jaar after it was attacked by a Yemeni warplane on May 26.⁶²

⁵⁷ "UN observers visit areas in Homs, Dayr al-Zawr, Aleppo", SANA news agency website, May 20, 2012

⁵⁸ "Jordan king hopes to boost ties with China", Source: Xinhua news agency, May 22, 2012

⁵⁹ "Death Toll Rises to over 120 after Yemen Parade Bombing", Yemen Post, May 21, 2012, at <http://www.yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=5413&MainCat=3>

⁶⁰ Suicide bombing kills at least 96 soldiers in Yemen, Gulf News, May 21, 2012, at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/yemen/suicide-bombing-kills-at-least-96-soldiers-in-yemen-1.1025918>

⁶¹ "Bomber strikes again in Yemen; many killed", Arab News, May 25, 2012, at <http://arabnews.com/bomber-strikes-again-yemen-many-killed-0>

⁶² "At least 22 militants killed in Yemeni fighting", Arab News, May 27, 2012, at <http://arabnews.com/least-22-militants-killed-yemeni-fighting>

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **DRDO Chief Saraswat refutes General VK Singh's allegations; DRDO chief lauds Agni-V**

The Director-General of the DRDO, Vijay Kumar Saraswat on May 24, 2012 said that there was no truth in the Army Chief General VK Singh's charge that corruption takes place in arms deals. "There is a system under which the deals are finalized and there is no scope for corruption in them," he said. Addressing a press conference, Saraswat, who is also secretary to the defence ministry and science adviser to the government, said efforts for making the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) had been going on for the last 20 years and all problems relating to its making have been resolved and it will be available from next year onwards. This should not be considered a long time as even the US had taken a total of 22 years to develop its stealth aircraft, the DRDO Director-General said. He also said that the problems in the making of the LCA arose as carbon fibre that is used in it is not available in the country.⁶³

Meanwhile, DRDO Director General V. K. Saraswat on May 25, 2012 said that Agni-V missile which took 30 years to be developed, was the best such thing in the 21st century. Saraswat pointed out that the making of the missile had become possible because of the support and cooperation of people like former Prime Minister late Indira Gandhi and former scientific advisor A P J Abdul Kalam. "Such people had great vision and this helped in the successful making of the missile," he stated. The DRDO Director General said the making of the missile had given him happiness and satisfaction and induced hope that challenges of future would be met successfully.⁶⁴

International

- **French President defends Afghan withdrawal strategy calling it a "sovereign decision" U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says no need for U.S. forces on the ground in Yemen**

According to reports, the new French President Francois Hollande on May 25, 2012 defended France's imminent exit from Afghanistan, saying 2,000 combat troops will leave in a coordinated withdrawal this year but vowing not to abandon the country. Hollande met French soldiers deployed in the volatile Kapisa province of Afghanistan and held talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on his first visit to the country where French troops have been fighting the Taliban since late 2001. He explained his decision to recall French combat troops by the end of 2012, a year earlier than Paris initially planned and two years before NATO allies. "It's a sovereign decision. Only France can decide what France does," he told soldiers at Nijrab Base in eastern Kapisa province, where most of France's 3,550 troops in the country are based. "It will be

⁶³ "No truth in VK Singh's charges of corruption: Saraswat," May 24, 2012, at http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_no-truth-in-vk-singh-s-charges-of-corruption-saraswat_1693207

⁶⁴ "Agni-V to be best missile of 21st century: DRDO chief," May 25, 2012, at http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_agni-v-to-be-best-missile-of-21st-century-drdo-chief_1693462

conducted in good understanding with our allies, especially President Obama, who understands the reasons, and in close consultation with Afghan authorities.”⁶⁵

Meanwhile, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said on May 27 that the United States can deal with al-Qaida’s spreading presence in Yemen without U.S. forces on the ground, relying instead on targeted operations. “Our whole effort there is aimed at going after those terrorists who threaten to attack our country,” he said. “We’ve been successful. We’ve gone after a number of key targets there. We’ll continue to do that.” He added.⁶⁶

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram visiting Srinagar on May 22, 2012; Militant killed near LoC; Interlocutors’ report released; Pulwama youth arrested by police; Hizbul Mujahideen militant killed in an encounter**

Reports noted that Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram will arrive in Srinagar and is scheduled to discuss the security and development related issues at a meeting to be co-chaired by him with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. According to official sources, Chief Minister will strongly advocate for partial revocation of AFSPA at least from the areas where army has no operational role. Chidambaram will fly to Kargil directly from New Delhi to inaugurate a school function being organized by North Zone Cultural Council.⁶⁷

According to reports, security forces claimed to have killed a suspected militant, who tried to infiltrate to the side of Line of Control in Rajouri district. Col. R.K. Palta, Defence Public Relations Officer, said in a statement that the soldiers deployed in the Gambhir area on the Line of Control (LoC) observed through the surveillance devices that three to four persons with weapons were moving towards the LoC fence. Exchange of fire occurred between the soldiers and the persons who were moving across. During the search operation, the body of a suspected militant was found in the bushes.⁶⁸

Reports noted that the Centre on May 24, 2012 put the report of the group of Interlocutors appointed by it on the website of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and said it would welcome an informed

⁶⁵ “French President Hollande Defends Afghan Withdrawal Strategy,” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, May 25, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120525/DEFREG03/305250001/French-President-Hollande-Defends-Afghan-Withdrawal-Strategy?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

⁶⁶ “Panetta Says No Need for U.S. Boots In Yemen,” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, May 27, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120527/DEFREG02/305270004/Panetta-Says-No-Need-U-S-Boots-Yemen?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

⁶⁷ “Chidambaram arriving today”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 22, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/23/chidambaram-arriving-today-52.asp>

⁶⁸ “Militant killed near LoC”, *Greater Kashmir*, May 22, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/23/militant-killed-near-loc-70.asp>

debate on the recommendations. In what is being perceived to be a mixed-bag of ruling National Conference and opposition Peoples Democratic Party's demand for autonomy and self-rule, the Centre's interlocutors on Jammu and Kashmir have supported upholding the special status that the state enjoys under Article 370.⁶⁹

In other developments, according to reports, Police said the explosive recovered from an abandoned vehicle at Chanapora Bridge on May 18 was about to be used to target Jammu and Kashmir High Court. They said they have arrested an alleged Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) Over Ground Worker (OGW) and were hunting for three more persons in this connection. Family members of the arrested youth claimed that their ward was innocent. According to a police officer, who is part of the investigating team, LeT, OGW, Ayaz Ahmad Malik of Hakdipora village in south Kashmir's Pulwama district was arrested during a nocturnal raid from his house.⁷⁰

Reports noted that a Hizbul Mujahideen militant, who was allegedly involved in the killing of an army soldier, was shot dead in a gunbattle with security forces in Kishtwar district. Acting on a tip off about presence of militants, police launched a cordon and search operation in Patimah area of the district which resulted to an encounter in the area after the militant fired at the operation party. In the ensuing gunbattle Hizb militant Akhtar Hussain was shot dead. Police recovered AK rifle and two magazines from the spot.⁷¹

North East India

- **ULFA faction calls for shutdown opposing Sonia Gandhi's visit to Assam; Maoists' links with North-East ultras come under scanner; Assam-Meghalaya border meeting to be held; Maoist Assam State in-charge nabbed in Kolkata; Imphal-Mandalay bus link to be established; Three Manipur based militants arrested in Meghalaya; Hynnwtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) cadre arrested in Meghalaya; Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) camp busted in Garo Hills; Naga reconciliation meet held at Chiang Mai**

Reports noted that the anti-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) called for a 12-hour dawn-to-dusk Assam shutdown on May 26, 2012 to oppose the scheduled visit to Assam by Congress President Sonia Gandhi, who also heads the ruling United Progressive Alliance. All essential services were, however, exempted from the purview of the bandh, the statement said. Baruah, ULFA's commander-in-chief, has opposed any peace talks with the central and Assam governments.⁷²

According to reports, the Maoist rebels have not only established bases in Assam, but they are also established contacts with militant groups of the North-East. The most disturbing fact is that

⁶⁹ "Centre releases Interlocutors' report", *Greater Kashmir*, May 24, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/25/centre-releases-interlocutors-report-88.asp>

⁷⁰ Police arrest Pulwama youth", *Greater Kashmir*, May 24, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/25/police-arrest-pulwama-youth-86.asp>

⁷¹ "Hizb militant killed in encounter", *Greater Kashmir*, May 21, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/22/hizb-militant-killed-in-encounter-97.asp>

⁷² "ULFA faction opposes Sonia's Assam visit, calls for shutdown", *The Assam Tribune*, May 22, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2212/at01541>

a number of transactions of weapons between the Maoist groups and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) took place in different parts of Assam including in Guwahati city. This fact came to light during an investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on the links between the Maoists and the PLA. Growing links between the Maoist rebels and insurgent outfits of North East region came to the fore yet again with the NIA filing a charge sheet against three members of Manipur based militant outfit People's Liberation Army (PLA) for supplying weapons to the Maoists.⁷³

Meanwhile, in view of the uneasy calm prevailing at Langpih in the Assam-Meghalaya inter-State border, top officials of both the State Governments will be meeting on May 24, 2012 to sort out the differences that erupted recently and as part of a dialogue to end the decade-old boundary crisis. Langpih is one of the disputed areas along the inter-State border which falls under West Khasi Hills district and Kamrup district in neighbouring Assam. Meghalaya and Assam have 12 areas of difference along the inter-State border. The matter got worse when in May 2010 four youths from Meghalaya were shot dead by Assam police during a clash at Langpih. Meghalaya had adopted a resolution to urged the Centre for the constitution of a Border Commission which was rejected by the Assam Government.⁷⁴

In another development, according to reports, the attempt of the Maoist rebels to established strong roots in Assam and other parts of the North East region received a major setback with the arrest of Indranil Chanda, the rebel in-charge of Assam and North East by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Indranil alias Ajoy alias Raj, aged around 40 years, was arrested in Kolkata with the help of the Special task Force of the Kolkata police. He was brought to Guwahati and was produced in the court of the Special Judge. The Maoist leader has been remanded to the custody of the NIA for seven days. According to sources, Indranil was instrumental in establishing links between the Maoists and the Manipur based militant group PLA and coordinated the arms and communication set transshipments. He was also instrumental in signing of an agreement between the Maoists and the PLA.⁷⁵

In a significant development, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh goes to Myanmar on a three-day visit during which the two countries are expected to seal a pact on a landmark bus link between Imphal and Mandalay and unveil new initiatives in expanding trade and energy cooperation. Ahead of the visit, the Cabinet cleared the bus service linking Imphal in Manipur to Mandalay in Myanmar, setting the stage for the signing of the pact after talks between Manmohan Singh and Myanmar President Thein Sein in the Myanmar capital Nay Pyi Taw. The bus link will be a signature initiative that is expected to enhance people-to-people interaction and trade between Myanmar and India's northeastern states. Improving regional connectivity and expanding bilateral trade will be key highlights of Manmohan Singh's visit.⁷⁶

⁷³ "Maoists' link with NE ultras come to light", *The Assam Tribune*, May 22, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2312/at08>

⁷⁴ "Assam-Meghalaya border meeting tomorrow", *The Assam Tribune*, May 22, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2312/oth07>

⁷⁵ "Maoist State-in-charge nabbed in Kolkata", *The Assam Tribune*, May 23, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2412/at07>

⁷⁶ "PM's Myanmar agenda: Imphal-Mandalay bus link, trade", *The Assam Tribune*, May 25, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2512/at04>

Reports noted that three female cadres of Manipur-based militant outfits were arrested and two minors detained in Meghalaya when they were trying to cross into India from Bangladesh. During preliminary interrogation they have confessed that they were coming from their camps in Khonagaon area in Moulvi Bazar district of Bangladesh and that they were heading for Manipur. The BSF handed over the five to Meghalaya police.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, according to reports, BSF troops deployed along the India-Bangladesh border have arrested a hard core cadre of the Meghalaya-based militant outfit Hynnwtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC). The cadre was arrested on May 27, 2012 while trying to sneak over to the Indian side from Bangladesh near Dawki.⁷⁸

In other developments, according to reports, the East Garo Hills police in a major offensive against the banned terror outfit Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) on 26 May, 2012 busted their general headquarters after a heavy gun battle. Police SWAT forces together with CRPF's CoBRA unit attacked the general camp of the outfit near Sobokgre village, 16 kms from Williamnagar. The ultras numbering around 60 returned fire using RPG rockets, hand grenades and AK rifles prompting the police to use two inch mortars and heavy weaponry. After heavy firing for more than 15 minutes, the militants escaped with all their weapons and police dismantled the camp which could house as many as 100 ultras. The chief of the outfit, Sohan D Shira, was also in the camp at the time of the attack along with a fresh batch of recruits.⁷⁹

Report noted that against the backdrop of the absence of the NSCN -IM at the ongoing Naga reconciliation meet at Chiang Mai in Thailand, the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) held a meeting with the highest leaders of the NSCN (Khole-Kitovi) led by Chairman Gen (Retd) Khole Konyak and General Secretary Kitovi Zhimomi and the NNC/FGN led by President Brig (Retd) Singnya and Vice President Zhopra Vero on May 26, 2012. According to a statement issued by FNR, the leaders of the two groups present expressed, in no uncertain terms, their regrets over the inability of NSCN-IM Chairman Isak Chishi Swu and General Secretary Th Muivah to participate in the much awaited moment. The leaders of the two political groups were also jointly of the view that another meeting of the highest level leaders must be convened.⁸⁰

IV. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **UN Security Council condemns massacre in Syria; Terrorist attack in Yemen condemned; India pushes for global internet governance; India under the scanner at UNHRC; UN**

⁷⁷ "Three militants arrested in Meghalaya", *The Assam Tribune*, May 25, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2512/at044>

⁷⁸ "HNLC cadre arrested in Meghalaya", *The Assam Tribune*, May 27, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2712/at043>

⁷⁹ "GNLA camp busted in Garo Hills", *The Assam Tribune*, May 26, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2712/oth06>

⁸⁰ "Naga reconciliation meet held at Chiang Mai", *The Assam Tribune*, May 27, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2812/oth05>

criticized for failing in Syria; Three Indian security personnel to be honoured on UN peacekeeping day

According to reports, in an emergency meeting, the UN Security Council voiced its condemnation of the recent massacre of civilians in the Syrian village of Houla. The Council condemned the killing of civilians at close range and by severe physical abuse. The 15-member body also demanded that the Syrian Government immediately cease the use of heavy weapons in population centres as well as immediately pull back its troops.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the UNSC and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon strongly condemned a terrorist attack in the Yemeni city of Sana'a which killed 96 soldiers and wounded more than 300 people. The UN also expressed its sympathy and condolences to the victims, their families and the Government of Yemen.⁸²

In another development, at the UN, India is pushing for an open democratic system of global internet governance which will balance private, commercial and public policy interests. India also called for a committee to look into the various issues of internet governance. As far internet governance is concerned, India wants an open, flexible and transparent architecture to keep the internet free and on cyber security, it wants to build offensive capabilities that will enable it to take initiative in a cyber war.⁸³

Reports noted that during the periodic review of India's human rights record at the UNHRC, the Attorney General G Vahanavati gave a 'reassuring' picture and said that the country has the ability to 'self-correct and has redressal mechanisms available'. On being questioned about the AFSPA, Vahanavati pointed out that the constitutionality of the Act was upheld by the Supreme Court.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, the UN reportedly, came under the scanner for failing to address the Syrian crisis. Amnesty International, in its report criticized the UN Security Council and said that it was suffering from a failure of leadership and seems 'tired, out of step and increasingly unfit for purpose'. It also chastised the 'determination' of some permanent members to shield the Syrian regime 'at all cost'. According to the report, this redundancy made a compelling case for the Syrian situation to be referred to the International Criminal Court for investigations of crimes against humanity.⁸⁵

⁸¹ "Security Council strongly condemns massacre of civilians in Syria", *UN News Centre*, May 27, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42095&Cr=syria&Cr1=>

⁸² "Security Council and UN chief condemn deadly terrorist attack in Yemen", *UN News Centre*, May 21, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42054&Cr=yemen&Cr1=>

⁸³ "At UN, India pushes for 'democratic' net governance", *The Times of India*, May 22, 2012 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/news/internet/At-UN-India-pushes-for-democratic-net-governance/articleshow/13370231.cms>

⁸⁴ "India calms UN over human rights record", *The Times of India*, May 25, 2012 at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-05-25/india/31851950_1_afspa-national-report-prevention-of-torture-bill

⁸⁵ "UN Security Council 'tired and out of step', says Amnesty International, *The Guardian*, May 24, 2012 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/24/amnesty-un-syria>

In other developments, reports noted that at the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on May 29, 2012, three Indian security personnel, Rifleman Lundup Gailpo, Major Jaidev Singh Guleria and police constable Pritam Singh who lost their lives during UN peacekeeping operations will be honoured.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ “Three Indians died during UN peacekeeping ops to be honoured”, *Zee News*, May 25, 2012 at http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/three-indians-died-during-un-peacekeeping-ops-to-be-honoured_777619.html