

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

### A. SOUTH ASIA

#### Bangladesh

- **Foreign Minister Dipu Moni visits New Delhi; Indian company to build a complete set of dredging equipment for Mongla Port Authority**

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni made a three-day visit to New Delhi on July 25, 2013. During her visit, Ms. Dipu Moni met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley and discussed land boundary agreement. Manmohan Singh assured Dipu Moni that India would do nothing to harm Bangladesh's interests on the issue of waters, but gave no indication when the much-expected Teesta water-sharing deal would be signed. However, Arun Jaitley did not give any categorical assurance that his party would support this agreement. Reportedly, the visit, according to diplomatic circle in Dhaka, was a futile attempt by her as she had already known that India would not be able to make any commitment regarding the two vital deals.<sup>1</sup>

In another development, according to reports, Western Marine Shipyard will provide technical support to Goa-based Timblo Drydocks in building a complete set of dredging equipment for Mongla Port Authority. The \$8.5 million deal was signed at the headquarters of Mongla Port Authority in Mongla. One 18-inch cutter suction dredger, one 12-ton BP tugboat, one crane boat, one crew house boat, one officer's house boat with other accessories will have to be delivered to Mongla Port Authority in 18 months. The project is a part of the soft loan finance scheme of \$1 billion that the Indian government sanctioned to Bangladesh. The credit has been sanctioned at 0.59 percent rate of interest for trade enhancement of both the countries and also allowed Timblo Drydocks, an Indian origin shipyard, to get involved with the project to improve trade between Bangladesh and India.<sup>2</sup>

#### Sri Lanka

- **Japan's Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications visits Sri Lanka; Six-member British parliament delegation visits Sri Lanka; Proposal for Sri Lanka as the venue for**

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<sup>1</sup> Bhattacharya, Pallab, "Dipu Moni upbeat: Reaches New Delhi, hopes Indian political parties will see larger picture of land boundary deal", *The Daily Star*, July 26, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/dipu-moni-upbeat/>; "Manmohan repeats old pledges: Gives no specific timeframe for Teesta agreement; BJP support for land boundary deal unlikely", *The Daily Star*, July 27, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/manmohan-repeats-old-pledges/>; "Three-day Trip to India: Dipu Moni returns empty-handed", *The Daily Star*, July 28, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/dipu-moni-returns-empty-handed/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Western Marine partners with Timblo Drydocks for Mongla port", *The Daily Star*, July 26, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/western-marine-partners-with-timblo-drydocks-for-mongla-port/>.

### **international arbitrations; MR orders appointment of commission to look into the incidents of disappearance**

Japan's Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications, Mr. Yoshitaka Shindo visited Sri Lanka on July 28. The visit was a follow-up to the visit of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to Tokyo in March and the visit of Deputy Prime Minister of Japan and Parliamentary Senior Vice Minister of Finance, Mr. Taro Aso in May this year.<sup>3</sup>

In another development, the six-member British parliament delegation arrived in Sri Lanka on July 22, concluded their five-day visit on July 26, after meetings in Parliament with the government leaders. The delegation led by Conservative MP Eleanor Laing was in Sri Lanka to hold discussions on bilateral issues including the preparations for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) scheduled to be held in November in Colombo and to observe the progress of UK-funded projects. The delegation met with the Speaker Chamal Rajapaksa and Economic Development Minister Basil Rajapaksa in Parliament yesterday. However a meeting scheduled with the Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa was cancelled at the last minute.<sup>4</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, during his two day visit to the Netherlands, Sri Lanka's External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris met with Hugo Sieblesz, Secretary General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague and Judge Hishashi Owada, Judge of the International Court of Justice and formerly President of that Court. Minister Peiris suggested a greater role for Sri Lanka as the venue for international arbitrations when he met Hugo Sieblesz. Prof. Peiris has apprised Judge Owada of initiatives taken by Sri Lanka recently, especially, Sri Lanka's active role in the international arena in security of sea lanes in the Indian Ocean, climate change, promotion of alternative sources of energy, disarmament and nuclear proliferation, and the contribution by Sri Lanka to the South-South Dialogue for promoting trade and collaboration among developing countries.<sup>5</sup>

According to reports, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa has directed Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunga to appoint a commission to look into the incidents of disappearance that have taken place during the 30 years of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

## **Maldives**

- **The Order of 'Nishan Ghaazee', the highest honour given by the Maldivian State, conferred**

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<sup>3</sup> "Japan's Internal Affairs and Communications Minister to visit Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, July 26, 2013 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_13B/Jul26\\_1374817912CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Jul26_1374817912CH.php).

<sup>4</sup> "Visiting British Parliamentary delegation positive about Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, Jul 27, 2013 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_13B/Jul27\\_1374942617CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Jul27_1374942617CH.php).

<sup>5</sup> "Sri Lanka as a venue for international arbitrations proposed", *The Colombo Page*, Jul 28, 2013 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_13B/Jul28\\_1374994363CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Jul28_1374994363CH.php).

<sup>6</sup> "Sri Lankan President orders appointment of commission to probe disappearances", *The Colombo Page*, July 26, 2013 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_13B/Jul26\\_1374821300CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Jul26_1374821300CH.php).

### **on Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; US reiterates its support to the Maldives on the issue of economic development and climate change**

The Order of 'Nishan Ghaazee', the highest honour given by the Maldivian State, was conferred on Maumoon Abdul Gayoom by President Dr Mohamed Waheed at a ceremony held at the Republic Square. The Order of 'Nishan Ghaazee' has previously been conferred on Ibrahim Nasir, the first president of the second Republic of the Maldives.<sup>7</sup>

In his congratulatory statement to the Maldives on behalf of President Barack Obama on the occasion of Maldives' 48th Independence Day, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that U.S will continue work on issues of mutual interest with the Maldives, particularly on fostering economic development and combating climate change.<sup>8</sup>

## **B. East Asia**

### **China**

- **Chinese President Xi met astronauts and scientists who participated in the Shenzhou X mission; Senior Communist Party of China (CPC) official Liu Yunshan expresses hope that bilateral ties between China and Vietnam can be advanced; China and Russia will hold the Peace Mission-2013 joint drills in Chelyabinsk; President Xi calls for deepening China's reform and opening-up efforts in order to maintain a healthy economy and achieve the goals set; China to carry out a survey of its territorial islands**

Reports noted that Chinese President Xi Jinping on July 26 met astronauts and scientists who participated in the Shenzhou X mission, extending congratulations to the success of the mission.<sup>9</sup>

According to reports, senior Communist Party of China (CPC) official Liu Yunshan said on July 26 that he hopes bilateral ties between China and Vietnam can be advanced. LIU said that developing friendly relations with Vietnam is a consistent policy of the CPC and the Chinese government. He added that China is willing to work with the CPV and the Vietnam government to fully implement the agreements made by the parties' leaders, enhance strategic mutual trust, strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation and properly handle differences.<sup>10</sup>

According to reports, the spokesman for China's Defense Ministry on July 25 said that China and Russia will send over 1,500 troops to attend joint counter-terrorism drills slated for later this

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<sup>7</sup> "Order of 'Nishan Ghaazee' conferred on former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom", *The Sun Online*, July 27, 2013 at <http://sun.mv/english/14610>.

<sup>8</sup> "U.S. reiterates support on economic development and combating climate change", *The Sun Online*, July 27, 2013 at <http://sun.mv/english/14622>.

<sup>9</sup> "President Xi meets Shenzhou X astronauts" *China Daily*, July 26, 2013 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/26/content\\_16839240.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/26/content_16839240.htm)

<sup>10</sup> "CPC official calls for closer China-Vietnam ties" *China Daily*, July 26, 2013 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-07/26/content\\_16839021.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-07/26/content_16839021.htm)

week. Yansheng said at a monthly briefing that the armed forces of China and Russia will hold the Peace Mission-2013 joint drills in Chelyabinsk in Russia's Ural Mountainous region from July 27 to August 15.<sup>11</sup>

In other developments, reports noted that President Xi Jinping has called for deepening China's reform and opening-up efforts in order to maintain a healthy economy and achieve the goals set during the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks during a tour of central China's Hubei Province from July 21 to 23. Xi called for maintaining "a spirit of reform and innovation" in every aspect of state governance and economic development.<sup>12</sup>

According to reports, China will carry out a survey of its territorial islands, the State Oceanic Administration announced on July 23. It will be the country's second island resources integrated survey. A logo was released by the administration to mark the survey, featuring an island, waves, sea birds and fish. according to the administration, the survey aims to cover China's territorial islands, which number around 10,000, in five years.<sup>13</sup>

## Japan

- **Japanese Prime Minister hopes to hold talks with China and South Korea; Foreign Minister Kishida visits Jordan, extends support towards Syrian refugees; Japan to provide the Philippines with ten patrol ships**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, on July 26, expressed hope to hold bilateral talks with China and South Korea. As Tokyo's relationship with the two neighbouring states has recently turned sour over territorial disputes, Abe argues that talks could revive Japan's ties with them. In the meantime, while emphasizing on the 40-year long Japan-ASEAN relationship, he expressed satisfaction that both sides have moved beyond their economic relations to forge a relationship that takes on responsibility for regional security, including freedom of navigation.<sup>14</sup>

According to reports, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida recently visited the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan and extended Tokyo's support to Jordan as well as the other countries supporting those refugees. He also assured Japan's assistance in areas like water supply and sanitation management. It is worth noting that during the G-8 Summit held in June this year, Japan pledged to offer \$120 million to Jordan in the form of low-interest yen loans.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "1,500 troops to attend China-Russia joint drills" *China Daily*, July 25, 2013 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/25/content\\_16832447.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/25/content_16832447.htm)

<sup>12</sup> "Xi urges deepening reform, opening up" *China Daily*, July 23, 2013 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/23/content\\_16819722.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/23/content_16819722.htm)

<sup>13</sup> "China to survey territorial islands" *China Daily*, July 23, 2013 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/23/content\\_16819164.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/23/content_16819164.htm)

<sup>14</sup> "Abe seeks talks with China, S. Korean leaders", *The Yomiuri Daily*, July 28, 2013, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000412940>

<sup>15</sup> "Kishida visits Syrian refugee camp in Jordan", *The Yomiuri Daily*, July 28, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000413609>

In other developments, Japanese Prime Minister Abe, during his talks with the Philippines counterpart President Benigno Aquino on July 27 in Manila, offered to provide the Southeast Asian state with ten patrol ships. These ships are to boost the coast guard capabilities of the Philippines. While extending Japan's economic as well as maritime support to the Philippines, Abe also expressed support towards the latter's decision to apply for mediation by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea over a territorial dispute with China.<sup>16</sup>

## South Korea

- **South Korea and US hold second round of talks to renew agreement on the burden sharing**

On July 24, delegates from the US and South Korea opened the two-day long bilateral dialogue to renew the Special Measures Agreement on burden sharing between the two alliance partners. This is the second round of high level talks on the agreement. While citing factors like the growing threat from North Korea, South Korea's economic prosperity and US budget cuts, Washington has, in recent years, has called on the South to increase its financial support in maintaining 28,500 US troops on the South Korean soil. Under the agreement, last revised in 2008, South Korea currently shares 869.5 billion won (\$778.1 million) or about 42% of the total cost. However, Washington insists that Seoul should increase the amount to at least 1 trillion or 50% of the total cost next year.<sup>17</sup>

## C. West Asia

### Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Arabia calls on international community to exert more pressure on Israel**

According to reports, Saudi Arabia's UN delegation appealed for increased international pressure on Israel to seek genuine peace with the Palestinians and to put an end to human rights violations against the Palestinian people. Saudi Arabia stresses the importance of not relying on hopes without the continuation of exerting more pressure from the international community on Israel and the issue should not be limited to the reviews in the Security Council's deliberations. Abdulmohsen F. Alyas, the kingdom's Chargé D'affaires stated that, "Israel is on a quest to change the situation on the ground that include, but not limited to, confiscation and destruction of Palestinian homes, expansion of settlements; arrests, detentions and use of excessive violence against demonstrators, continuation of the blockade on Gaza Strip." Saudi Arabia appreciates a decision by the European Union (EU) to ban NGOs active in Israeli settlements from using EU money and called for other countries in the world to follow the EU's step.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Abe meets Aquino, offers patrol ships", *The Yomiuri Daily*, July 28, 2013, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000414771>

<sup>17</sup> "Seoul, Washington start talks on sharing cost of USFK upkeep", *The Korea Herald*, July 24, 2013, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130724000837>

<sup>18</sup> "Saudi Arabia calls for more pressure on Israel to stop violations", *Al Arabiya*, July 23, 2013, at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/07/23/Saudi-Arabia-calls-for-increased-pressures-on-Israel-to-stop-violations.html>

## Kuwait

- **Kuwait Parliamentary elections: Shias lose; liberals and Islamists gain**

Kuwait went to the parliamentary polls on July 26 and, according to the government sources, the voter turnout was 52.5 percent. According to official results, released by judicial authorities on July 29, 2013 Shia candidates won eight seats in the 50-member parliament. In the December 2012 polls they had a record of winning in 17 seats, who constitute about 30 percent of the native population. According to the results, the Liberals, who had no seat in the previous parliament, won at least three this time while Sunni Islamists increased their presence from five to seven seats. Only two women were elected compared to three in the previous parliament. The new parliament includes as many as 26 new faces.<sup>19</sup>

## Israel/Palestine

- **Negotiators aim for peace deal in nine months**

According to reports, stalled negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians have gained new life following efforts led by US Secretary of State John Kerry, with both sides setting a goal of nine months to reach a peace deal. Following initial meetings in Washington between Israeli chief negotiator Tzipi Livni and her Palestinian counterpart Saeb Erakat, the two sides have agreed to meet within the next two weeks. Kerry has said that all contentious issues would be on the negotiating table. These include right of return for Palestinian refugees; the borders of a Palestinian state; and the fate of Jerusalem claimed by both sides as a future capital. US diplomat Martin Indyk has been appointed as the country's special envoy to the talks. The previous US-led talks held in 2010 collapsed as a result of continued Israeli settlement building in occupied territories. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, is opposed to the resumed talks, but has observed an informal truce with Israel since late last year.<sup>20</sup>

## Syria

- **Syrian opposition to form provisional government in August**

According to reports, the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) has announced that a government in exile is set to be formed in late August following months of failed efforts. The coalition's previous attempt to form a provisional government failed after Prime Minister Ghassan Hitto resigned in four months. SNC head Ahmad Jarba has said that the group needed clarifications before proceeding to the Geneva 2 peace talks, particularly the position of Russia which continues to support the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad. The SNC has also said that peace talks must be held within a timeframe and "cannot last three years, for instance, while the

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<sup>19</sup> "Shias lose over half of seats in Kuwait polls", *AlJazeera*, July 28, 2013, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/07/201372835712365520.html>

<sup>20</sup> "Palestinians, Israelis seek deal in 9 months", *The Daily Star*, July 31, 2013 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Jul-31/225713-palestinians-israelis-seek-deal-in-9-months.ashx#axzz2agvYRtSp>

regime continues to kill our people". The rebels have also sought arms to fight government forces, even while a political solution is sought in Geneva.<sup>21</sup>

## Iran

- **Eleventh Iranian government consists of principlists and reformists: Ali Dehqan; Russian president expected to visit Iran**

According to reports, Gholam Ali Dehqan, the spokesman of the Moderation and Development Party has said that Iranian President-elect Hassan Rohani is committed to form a moderate and extra-factional cabinet that would consist of both principlists and reformists. Dehqan also mentioned that Rohani will use the potential of various political parties, and this constitutes meritocracy in the cabinet of the 11th administration.<sup>22</sup>

In another development, reports noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin is to visit Iran in August to try and restart talks on Tehran's nuclear programme. Putin's visit is planned for mid-August, shortly after Iran's new President Hassan Rohani formally takes office on August 3. It will be Putin's first trip to Iran since 2007. Moscow hopes the visit will provide impetus to restart the currently stalled talks on Iran's nuclear programme. Western powers have expressed cautious hopes for a change in tone in talks after the June election of Rohani, a centrist cleric who has vowed to engage constructively with the international community and to ease tensions raised by Tehran's nuclear programme. Meanwhile, both the sides have not officially confirmed the visit.<sup>23</sup>

## Iraq

- **Fourteen people killed by gunmen in Iraq**

According to reports, Iraqi officials said that dozens of militants set up a roadblock north of Baghdad early on July 25, stopped trucks, checked the IDs of drivers and killed 14 Shias. Two local officials said some 150 militants carried out a coordinated operation during the night that included the highway killings, in the area of Sulaiman Bek, a town north of Baghdad. The attack was reminiscent of the darkest days of the Sunni-Shia sectarian bloodshed in Iraq in 2006-07, when thousands of people were killed because of their religious affiliation or were forced to abandon their homes under threat of death. Lingering tensions between Sunnis and Shias have been inflamed by persistent violence in Iraq and the civil war in neighbouring Syria, and there are growing fears that the country is slipping back towards all-out sectarian conflict. Another seven people were killed elsewhere on Thursday, including three policemen.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Opposition to form provisional government in late August", *The Daily Star*, July 31, 2013 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Jul-31/225703-opposition-to-form-provisional-government-in-late-august.ashx#axzz2agvYRtSp>

<sup>22</sup> "Rohani determined to form a moderate, extra-factional cabinet," *Mehr News Agency*, July 27, 2013, at <http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1825521>

<sup>23</sup> "Putin to visit Iran for nuclear talks", *Mehr News Agency*, July 25, 2013, at <http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1825437>

<sup>24</sup> "Gunmen kill 14 truck drivers in Iraq," *Khaleej Times*, July 25, 2013, at [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2013/July/middleeast\\_July231.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2013/July/middleeast_July231.xml&section=middleeast)

## D. Russia

- **Russia welcomes the agreement to reset Israel-Palestine talks; Russia's agreements with Syria on S-300 supplies remain in effect; Russia and China to hold anti-terrorism exercises in August 2013; Russia disposes off over 74 per cent of its chemical weapons; Russia and Macedonia sign an agreement on South Stream offshoot construction; Russia to continue to explore new navigation areas in Arctic; Russia invites NATO countries to monitor the Russia-Belarusian war games; Russian and Ukrainian defence ministers discuss bilateral cooperation; Prime Minister Medvedev expresses concerns over the weak competitiveness of the Russian economy**

According to reports , the Russian foreign ministry has lauded the agreement to reset the Palestinian-Israeli talks on the issue of the final status of the Palestinian territories.<sup>25</sup>

The Syrian Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil after his negotiations with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that all agreements signed between the two countries concerning deliveries of Russian air defence missile systems S-300 to the Syrian government remain in effect.<sup>26</sup>

Reports noted that Russia and China will hold an anti-terrorism exercise 'Peace Mission 2013' beginning August 15, 2013. It will include over 1,500 Russian and Chinese servicemen and will take place at the Chebarkul firing range near Chelyabinsk in Russia.<sup>27</sup>

Russia has disposed off 30 tonnes of "category one" chemical weapons, which make up over 75 per cent of its declared stockpiles. The rest of the chemical weapons are expected to be destroyed by the end of 2015.<sup>28</sup>

Russia and Macedonia have signed a bilateral agreement, according to which the two nations will construct a South Stream gas line offshoot in order to deliver gas to the Balkan country. The document locks Macedonia's guarantee of not introducing any limits to capital investments made by Russia in Macedonia. Macedonia is also required to facilitate a favourable customs and tax environment for its partner.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "Russia lauds agreement to reset Palestinian-Israeli talks", Itar-Tass, July 22, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/815637.html>

<sup>26</sup> "Agreements between Russia and Syria on S-300 supplies remain in effect", Itar-Tass, July 22, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/815624.html>

<sup>27</sup> "Russia and China end planning Peace Mission 2013 anti-terrorism exercise", Itar-Tass, July 22, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/815480.html>

<sup>28</sup> "Russia disposes of over 75 prc of chemical weapons", Itar-Tass, July 22, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/816335.html>

<sup>29</sup> "Russia and Macedonia sign agreement on South Stream offshoot construction", Itar-Tass, July 23, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/817226.html>

Minister of Economic Development Alexei Ulyukayev has said that he was confident that inflation in Russia will be below 6 per cent in 2013.<sup>30</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, Russia's Northern Fleet will continue to explore new navigation areas in the Arctic. The fleet's surface naval forces have been in the Arctic since the middle of 2012.<sup>31</sup>

Russia has invited NATO countries to observe the Russia-Belarusian strategic war games 'Zapad 2013' which will be held towards the end of October in Belarus.<sup>32</sup>

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Ukrainian counterpart Pavel Lebedev have discussed the state of and prospects for the development of their bilateral cooperation. These include military-technical cooperation and the Black Sea fleet.<sup>33</sup>

Prime Minister Medvedev has expressed concern over the weak competitiveness of the Russian economy despite simplification of licensing procedures, ensuring equal access to energy resources and infrastructure and reduction of excessive state facilities. However, he did stress that the government is making an effort to bring about greater competitiveness.<sup>34</sup>

## E. United States of America (USA)

- **US Vice-president Joe Biden pitches for enhanced relations in terms of bilateral trade as well as strategic and economic partnerships; Vice President Biden: India are cooperating closely in Afghanistan; President Obama: Fixing economy would be the "highest priority" of his second term; India-US partnership on cyber security issues needs to be built; US Vice President visits Singapore**

US Vice-President Joe Biden, on July 24, described India as a "rising power" and said that the US was a stakeholder in its "vibrant" economy. He also pitched enhanced relations in terms of bilateral trade and strategic and economic partnerships. He was speaking on the sidelines of the "US-India Partnerships" at the Bombay Stock Exchange in Mumbai. Speaking about the India's rise since 1991, Biden said that India took a "bold step" to open up its economy to the world. "In 1991, there were five million telephone lines in India against the 900 million today. The bilateral trade

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<sup>30</sup> "Minister expects inflation in Russia to be below 6 prc in 2013", Itar-Tass, July 26, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/820339.html>

<sup>31</sup> "Russia's Northern Fleet explores new navigation areas in Arctic", Itar-Tass, July 26, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/820544.html>

<sup>32</sup> "NATO countries invited to monitor Russian-Belarusian war game", Itar-Tass, July 23, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/816983.html>

<sup>33</sup> "Russian, Ukrainian defence ministers discuss cooperation", Itar-Tass, July 27, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/821969.html>

<sup>34</sup> "Medvedev: Russia's economy competitiveness almost not progressing", Itar-Tass, July 25, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/819592.html>

between the two countries also reached \$100 billion in the last 13 years. Liberalisation has also helped India boost its exports from \$20 billion to \$300 billion. Imagine what the two countries can achieve together," he said. Recognising the contribution of Indian immigrants, he said the US has benefited greatly from Indian human capital. Suggesting increased cooperation in civil nuclear energy, he said a 6,000 MW power plant could be set up in Gujarat using American nuclear reactors. "There is dialogue ranging from strategic and military partnerships to higher education. Military relations are also being worked upon, but without compromising the sovereignty and independence of either of the nations. India currently bought C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft, which are being used to save the lives of flood victims in Uttarakhand," he added. Regarding global terrorism, he said that both the nations have shared intelligence and other information to prevent terror attacks. "We have had our 9/11, while India has had its 26/11," Biden said. About Pakistan, Biden said that Indo-US relations would not be defined by the status and nature of India's relations with Pakistan. Mr Biden also added that a strong and powerful India is central to ensure a stable South Asia.<sup>35</sup>

Biden also noted, "America and India are cooperating closely in Afghanistan. It's been the subject of many of my discussions thus far with your leadership...I know there are questions about the U.S. position on reconciliation with the Taliban. I want to be clear: We have always been committed to an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process that meets three outcomes. The Taliban must, one, break with Al Qaeda permanently; stop the violence; accept the Afghan constitution and guarantee free and equal treatment for women." Biden said India has exercised responsible leadership in Afghanistan through assistance, investment and strategic agreements with the Afghan government. "The United States is committed to supporting Afghanistan through our Strategic Partnership after the transition is complete at the end of 2014... we are not leaving the region -- even as Afghans step up and take responsibility," he stated.<sup>36</sup>

According to reports, US President Barack Obama on July 25 said the US has fought its way back after suffering one of the worst economic recessions in years and asserted that fixing economy would be the "highest priority" of his second term. "Five years after the start of that Great Recession, America has fought its way back. We fought our way back," he said in a speech at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he had delivered his first major economic speech on the national stage in 2005. Observing that there is a growing inequality, Obama said reversing trend like this has to be Washington's highest priority. "It has to be Washington's highest priority. It's certainly my highest priority," he said. Listing out the steps taken by his administration to save the auto industry; fix the broken health care system and investing in new American technologies to reverse dependence on foreign oil, Obama said that in the last 40 months, businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs. "This year, we're off to our strongest private sector job growth since 1999," he said.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Rising India' gets US boost", The Asian Age, July 25, 2013 at <http://www.asianage.com/mumbai/rising-india-gets-us-boost-957>

<sup>36</sup> "Biden backs India on Afghanistan policy", Indiablooms.com, July 24, 2013 at <http://www.indiablooms.com/NewsDetailsPage/2013/newsDetails240713u.php>

<sup>37</sup> "America has fought back from recession: Obama", Zee News, July 25, 2013 at [http://zeenews.india.com/business/news/international/obama-warns-of-growing-inequality-in-us\\_80560.html](http://zeenews.india.com/business/news/international/obama-warns-of-growing-inequality-in-us_80560.html)

In other developments, according to reports, the United States needs to build up partnership with India on cyber security issues, eminent American experts have said, noting that New Delhi faces threat in the cyber sphere from Pakistan, China and non-state actors. "The Indians' primary concern in cyber security is with Pakistan and Pakistani non-state actors or state-sponsored actors launching some kind of attack against India. Their second concern is Chinese espionage," James Lewis, Director and Senior Fellow, Centre for Strategic International Studies' Technology and Public Policy Programme, told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing. "One of the things that works in our favour is they aren't particularly friends with the Chinese all the time, and they worry a lot about it. So we have an opportunity to work with India. The thing we have to avoid in doing that is giving the impression that we're trying to contain China," he stated.<sup>38</sup>

Reports noted that US Vice President of the United States of America Joseph R Biden will visit Singapore from July 25-27, 2013. He will meet with President Tony Tan Keng Yam, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "US needs to build partnership with India on cyber security", IBN Live, July 24, 2013 at <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/us-needs-to-build-partnership-with-india-on-cyber-security/409059-11.html>

<sup>39</sup> "US Vice President Biden to visit Singapore from July 25-27", Chennel News Asia, July 25, 2013 at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/us-vice-president-biden/756426.html>