

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh began building container ships for the first time; Another Jamaat leader indicted by the International Crimes Tribunal**

Reports noted that Bangladesh for the first time started building two container ships and another two vessels, called Landing Craft Utility (LCU), at the Khulna Shipyard Limited premises on September 1, 2013. Navy Chief Vice Admiral M Farid Habib, as chief guest, initiated the construction through a keel-laying ceremony.¹

In another development, according to reports, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 indicted Jamaat-e-Islami leader Mir Quasem Ali on fourteen charges, including murder, torture, abduction and confinement of people and complicity in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War on September 5, 2013. The tribunal has fixed September 30 for the opening statement of the prosecution and the commencement of the trial.²

Sri Lanka

- **India is planning to supply two naval warships to Sri Lanka; Ten Sri Lankan fishermen arrested by Indian coastguard; Sri Lanka suspends purchasing medicine and pharmaceutical items from the Indian company Alvita Pharma; Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms meets President Rajapaksa; Iraq's Labor and Social Affairs Minister called on President Mahinda Rajapaksa; Iraq's Labor and Social Affairs Minister meets President; Sri Lanka expresses concern over alleged use of chemical weapons near Damascus in Syria; Sri Lanka ranks 65th in the Global Competitiveness Report; BASL to study the gazette notification assigning powers to the President to deploy army personnel to any district; Energy World International to invest up to US\$1.35 billion to establish a LNG terminal and a power plant in Sri Lanka**

Reportedly, India is planning to supply two naval warships to Sri Lanka to strengthen its capabilities to guard its maritime boundaries. The two Offshore Patrol Vessels would be built by the Goa-based defence PSU Goa Shipyard Limited and they are expected to be delivered to the Island nation by 2017-18 timeframe.³

¹ "Bangladesh starts building first container, LCU vessels", *The Daily Star*, September 2, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/bangladesh-starts-building-first-container-lcu-vessels/>.

² "Quasem indicted: He faces 14 war crimes charges; trial starts Sept 30", *The Daily Star*, September 6, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/quasem-indicted/>.

³ "India to supply two naval warships to SL", *The Daily Mirror*, September 5, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/34964-india-to-supply-two-naval-warships-to-sl.html>. "Don't supply ships to SL: DMK and PMK", *The Daily Mirror*, September 7, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/35036-dont-supply-ships-to-sl-dmk-and-pmk.html>.

According to reports, ten Sri Lankan fishermen, who were arrested by the Indian Coast Guard in two different incidents for allegedly entering Indians waters illegally and fishing last month, have been handed over to police authorities.⁴

Reports noted that Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Mr. Ahsan Iqbal made a courtesy call on President Mahinda Rajapaksa on September 3, 2013.⁵ Meanwhile, Iraq's Labor and Social Affairs Minister Mr. Nassar al-Rubaie called on President Mahinda Rajapaksa on September 5, at the President's Office. President Rajapaksa. Minister al-Rubaie agreed and thanked the President for re-establishing diplomatic ties with Iraq. Minister al-Rubaie also requested for Sri Lanka's assistance in the construction sector.⁶

According to reports, the Sri Lankan government expressed its deep concern about media reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons near Damascus in Syria. Issuing a statement the External Affairs Ministry said it was imperative to ensure an impartial and professional investigation in establishing the veracity of the use of chemical weapons.⁷

Reports noted that the World Economic Forum has upgraded Sri Lanka's global competitiveness ranking from 68th to 65th place among 148 nations in the year 2013-2014.⁸

In other developments, reports noted that the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) has appointed a one-man committee to study the gazette notification assigning powers to the President as the Commander-In-Chief to deploy army personnel to any district. The BASL is exploring the possibility of challenging the gazette notification in courts.⁹

According to reports, Hong Kong-based liquefied natural gas (LNG) power generator, Energy World International, will invest up to US\$1.35 billion to establish a LNG terminal and a power plant in Sri Lanka, according to industry reports. The firm has reportedly been granted cabinet approval last month to set up a LNG Hub Terminal in the Colombo Port.¹⁰

⁴ "Ten Lankans held for illegal fishing in Indians waters", *The Daily Mirror*, September 4, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/34856-ten-lankans-held-for-illegal-fishing-in-indians-waters.html>.

⁵ "Pakistan Minister meets MR", *The Daily Mirror*, September 3, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/34840-pakistan-minister-meets-mr.html>.

⁶ "Iraq seeks to strengthen relations with Sri Lanka", *Official Website of Government of Sri Lanka*, September 6, 2013 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201309/20130906iraq_seeks_strengthen_relations_sl.htm.

⁷ "SL concerned over alleged chemical attack in Syria", *The Daily Mirror*, September 4, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/34888-sl-concerned-over-alleged-chemical-attack-in-syria-.html>.

⁸ "Sri Lanka moves up in Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014", *Official Website of The Government of Sri Lanka*, September 05, 2013 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201309/20130905sl_moves_up_global_competitiveness_report.htm.

⁹ "Bar Association appoints committee to study Sri Lanka President's powers to deploy army", *The Colombo Page*, Sep 8, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Sep08_1378654162JV.php.

¹⁰ "Hong Kong firm to invest US\$1.35 billion for LNG power project in Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, Sep 6, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Sep06_1378477643CH.php.

Maldives

- **Mohamed Nasheed faces runoff election; A high-level Indian delegation went to the Maldives to observe the Presidential election**

According to reports, Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives, faces a runoff after falling short of a clear majority in the first round of Indian Ocean archipelago's presidential election. He received 45 percent of the vote in Presidential election contested by four candidates. Nasheed needed to receive more than 50 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. Businessman Qasim Ibrahim was a close third with 24 percent, while incumbent President Mohamed Waheed Hassan ended with 5 percent. About 240,000 of the Maldives' 350,000 citizens were eligible to vote, out of which 211,000 voted.¹¹

In another development, reports noted that a high-level Indian delegation went to the Maldives on September 2, to observe the presidential election. A statement released by the Indian High Commission in the Maldives stated that the delegation includes former Chief Election Commissioners of India, Mr. J.M. Lyngdoh, Mr. B.B. Tandon, Mr. N. Gopalaswami, and former High Commissioner of India to Maldives, Mr. S.M. Gavai.¹²

B. West Asia

Iran

- **Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif and European Union foreign policy chief Ashton agreed to hold a meeting on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly meeting regarding Iran's nuclear programme**

According to reports, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has stated that Iran is ready to take measures to solve the dispute over the country's nuclear programme. His remarks came after the telephonic conversation with European Union foreign policy Chief Catherine Ashton. He mentioned that the two officials agreed to hold a meeting on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York this month. President Hassan Rohani has already announced that in his administration the Foreign Ministry would be in charge of the nuclear talks with the major powers. Ashton's spokesman Michael Mann also said "We are in touch with the Iranian side and as the high representative has already told the Iranian foreign minister in their phone conversation in August, we stand ready to resume negotiations." Ashton added that world powers wanted to move quickly to resume negotiations over the Iranian program.¹³

¹¹ "Maldives ousted president faces runoff election", *The Sun Online*, September 8, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/15763>.

¹² "High-level Indian delegation with three former EC chiefs arrive in Maldives to observe election", *The Sun Online*, September 2, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/15634>.

¹³ "Iran's Zarif, EU's Ashton to discuss nuclear talks at UN meeting," *Mehr News Agency*, September 7, 2013, at <http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1827491>

Iraq

- **18 people killed in bomb attacks in Baghdad**

According to reports, Iraqi official said militants bombed adjacent houses belonging to two brothers south of Baghdad on September 4, killing 18 members of their families. The bombs targeted the houses in the town of Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, shortly after midnight. Among the dead were at least five women and six children. Latifiyah lies within a confessionally-mixed region south of Baghdad known as the “Triangle of Death”, so named for the brutal violence that plagued the area during the peak of Iraq’s sectarian war in 2006 and 2007.¹⁴

Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Foreign Minister meets with Egypt Prime Minister and Defence Minister; discuss bilateral cooperation**

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with the Egyptian Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister General Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Prime Minister Hazem El-Beblawi on September 3, 2013 in Cairo. Prince Saud Al-Faisal stated that King Abdullah appreciated Egypt’s efforts to recover its leading role in the Arab world, and that Saudi Arabia will continue to provide financial and diplomatic support to Egypt. The Saudi foreign minister emphasised that Saudi-Egyptian relations are based on firm ties of fraternal feelings and coordination and cooperation. General Sisi also expressed his gratitude for the supportive diplomatic efforts undertaken by Saudi Arabia over the recent period towards the Egyptian people. He also thanked to Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for his economic and political support during this difficult period. Egyptian army spokesman Colonel Ahmed Mohamed Ali told that “cooperation between Cairo and Riyadh is a cornerstone of Arab national security, through which the Arab and Islamic nation can face all challenges.” He reiterated that “Egypt’s armed forces in particular, and the Egyptian people in general, are appreciative of the Saudi political and economic support.”¹⁵

GCC

- **GCC urges intervention in Syria**

According to reports, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has urged the international community on September 7 to intervene immediately to “rescue” the Syrian people from their government’s “oppression”. GCC Secretary General Abdul Lateef Al Zayani said, “The genocide, and grave human rights violations faced by the Syrian people necessitate an immediate intervention by the international community.” A statement from GCC noted, “The intervention would aim to “rescue the brotherly Syrian people from the oppression of its regime, and bring its suffering to an end.” Al Zayani further emphasised that “The Syrian regime is fully responsible for what is happening

¹⁴ “Bomb attack on families near Baghdad kills 18,” *Khaleej Times*, September 4, 2013, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2013/September/middleeast_September42.xml§ion=middleeast

¹⁵ “Saudi and Egyptian officials discuss cooperation”, *Asharq Al Awsat*, September 3, 2013, at <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/09/article55315649>

in Syria, for rejecting all attempts to solve the crisis, and continuing to practise killing and destruction, including the use of chemical weapons” and added that “Gulf nations support international measures to “deter the Syrian regime from committing its inhumane practices.”¹⁶

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

- **Chinese President Xi Jinping visits Central Asian nations; A French parliamentary delegation visits Uzbekistan**

Reports noted that Chinese President Xi Jinping is on a tour of Central Asia on the invitation of the Presidents of all the five Central Asian countries from the September 3-13, 2013.¹⁷ Xi Jinping began his tour of Central Asia at Turkmenistan by inaugurating the Galkynysh gas field with the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov. It would be worth noting that China, the biggest trading partner of Turkmenistan, has managed to get into a contract with Türkmengaz, the national gas company of Turkmenistan, which will allow them to get 25 billion cubic metres of gas every year in addition to the 40 billion cubic metres of gas which China was already receiving.¹⁸

In another development, according to reports, a visiting French parliamentary delegation, headed by Senator André Dulait, chairman of the “France-Central Asia” friendship group in the French Senate, met with the Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan Ilgizar Sabirov. During the talks it was noted that cooperation between Uzbekistan and France has been consistently on the rise in all directions, in particular, in parliamentary sphere. The parties exchanged views on the issues of interaction between legislative bodies of the two countries at the meeting. As was noted, the parliamentary cooperation plays a main role in strengthening legal basis of bilateral relations.¹⁹

Russia

- **Russia’s Foreign Ministry urges the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to analyze risks of a potential US military operation in Syria; President Putin accuses that US Secretary of State Kerry ‘lied’ on presence of Al Qaeda in Syria; Russia does not rule out backing**

¹⁶ “GCC urges intervention to ‘rescue Syrians’”, *Gulf News*, September 7, 2013, at <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/syria/gcc-urges-intervention-to-rescue-syrians-1.1228372>

¹⁷ “Kyrgyzstan waits in anticipation for the visit of Xi Jinping”, *Xinhuanet* September 9, 2013 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-09/09/c_132705124.htm *Kabar* September 7, 2013 at <http://kabar.kg/eng/economics/full/8135>

¹⁸ “Xi Jinping’s visit to four Central Asian countries starting with Turkmenistan”, *China.org.cn*, September 10, 2013 at http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2013-09/10/content_29983779.htm *Stratrisk*s, September 8, 2013 at <http://stratrisk.com/geostrat/15288>

¹⁹ “Chairman of the Senate of the Uzbekistan Parliament meets French Parliamentary delegation”, *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, September 6, 2013 at <http://uza.uz/en/politics/3750/>

military action in Syria; Russia criticizes the shelling of its embassy in Damascus; Russia warns about the dangers of playing with missiles after Israel launches missiles; Russia and Venezuela have backed UN/LAS special envoy's actions to settle Syrian crisis; President Putin has declared that Russia will not engage in conflicts in other countries; Three Russian naval ships to enter Mediterranean; Gazprom ready to negotiate lower gas prices with Lithuania; Russia and Japan to continue consultations on South Kurile; Russia and China signed a strategic aerospace cooperation agreement; Russia may retaliate to arrests of its citizens in third countries at US request; A naval task force from Russia's Northern Fleet heading towards the eastern Arctic; Armenia is ready to join Customs Union

According to reports, Russia's Foreign Ministry has urged the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to analyze risks of a potential US military operation in Syria, noting that such a strike would threaten nuclear security throughout the Middle East.²⁰

In another development, according to reports, President Vladimir Putin has accused US Secretary of State John Kerry of "lying" in Congress by saying there was no al-Qaida in Syria. Putin added that the Syrian rebels' "main combat unit is al-Nusra which is an al-Qaida unit."²¹ Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia does not rule out agreeing to a military operation in Syria, provided Damascus' responsibility for using chemical weapons is proven - but only with United Nations approval.²²

According to reports, Russia's Foreign Ministry has condemned, as a "barbaric act," the shelling of the country's embassy in Damascus. It was reported that a mortar shell, apparently launched by Syrian rebels, had landed close to the Russian Embassy building.²³

According to reports, Russia's Defense Ministry has spoken out against "playing with arms and missiles" in a "volatile" region like the Middle East. This was hours after Israel fired "ballistic targets", on September 3, that resembled missiles in the Mediterranean.²⁴

Russia's Foreign Ministry, on the backdrop of a telephone conversation between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Venezuelan counterpart Elias Jaua, has said that Russia and Venezuela uphold the actions taken by U.N./LAS Special Envoy for the Middle East Lakhdar Brahimi to settle the crisis in Syria.²⁵

²⁰ "Moscow Says US Strike on Syria Threatens Nuclear Security", Rianovosti, September 4, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130904/183168440/Moscow-Says-US-Strike-on-Syria-Threatens-Nuclear-Security.html>

²¹ "Kerry 'Lied' on Al-Qaida Presence in Syria - Putin", Rianovosti, September 4, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130904/183168334/US-Lied-When-It-Said-Theres-No-Al-Qaida-in-Syria-Putin.html>

²² "Russia Does Not Rule Out Backing Military Action in Syria - Putin", Rianovosti, September 4, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130904/183157113/Russia-Does-Not-Rule-Out-Backing-Military-Action-in-Syria-Putin.html>

²³ "Shelling of Russian Embassy in Damascus 'Barbaric Act' - Moscow", Rianovosti, September 4, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130904/183169152/Shelling-of-Russian-Embassy-in-Damascus-Barbaric-Act-Moscow.html>

²⁴ "Russia Defense Ministry Warns About 'Playing With Arms' After Israel Launch", Rianovosti, September 3, 2013, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130904/183151257/Russia-Defense-Ministry-Raps-Playing-With-Arms-After-Israel-Launch.html

²⁵ "Russia and Venezuela back UN/LAS special envoy's actions to settle Syrian crisis", Itar-Tass, September 4, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/863930.html>

President Putin has declared that Russia will not engage in any armed conflicts, in reply to the question over the situation in Syria.²⁶

Two Ropucha-class amphibious assault ships of Russia's Black Sea and Baltic Sea fleets and one reconnaissance ship will enter the Mediterranean during September 5-6, 2013. They will be involved in monitoring and covering the situation in areas near Syria.²⁷

According to reports, Gazprom's CEO Alexei Miller has said that the organization is open for negotiations with Lithuania on lowering the price of the natural gas supplied from Russia. Lithuania's gas networks has been integrated only eastbound as yet, thus the country depends fully on supplies of the Russian gas. Lithuania pays US\$ 500 per 1,000 cubic metres; one of the highest in Europe.²⁸

President Putin has said that Russia and Japan will continue consultations on South Kurile Islands at the level of ministers' deputies. During the G 20 summit, it was also decided that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu will visit Japan on November 1-2 to meet their counterparts within the 2+2 format.²⁹

In other developments, according to reports, Rostekhnologii Corporation has signed an agreement on strategic cooperation with China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. The document was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit in St. Petersburg on September 5.³⁰

Russia's Foreign Ministry's commissioner for human rights, democracy and the rule of law Konstantin Dolgov has said that further arrests of Russian citizens in third countries on the basis of U.S. requests is "an unacceptable practice" that may force Moscow to retaliate.³¹

A naval task force from Russia's Northern Fleet is heading towards the eastern Arctic. The voyage is part of Defense Ministry's program under Russia's Arctic policy and is designed "to uphold Russia's status as a leading arctic power, strengthen its security... and ensure national interests".³²

²⁶ "Putin: Russia will not engage in any conflicts in other countries", Itar-Tass, September 4, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/863603.html>

²⁷ "Three Russian naval ships to enter Mediterranean September 5", Itar-Tass, September 4, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/864240.html>

²⁸ "Gazprom ready to negotiate lower gas prices with Lithuania", Itar-Tass, September 6, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/866918.html>

²⁹ "Japan and Russia to continue consultations on South Kurile", Itar-Tass, September 5, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/865650.html>

³⁰ "Rostekhnologii and Chinese Aerospace Corporation sign agreement on strategic cooperation", Itar-Tass, September 5, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/865776.html>

³¹ "Russia may retaliate to arrests of its citizens in third countries at US request", Itar-Tass, September 4, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/864703.html>

³² "Russian Naval Task Force Sets Sail for East Arctic", Rianovosti, September 3, 2013, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130903/183142070/Russian-Naval-Task-Force-Sets-Sail-for-East-Arctic.html

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan has said that his country is ready to join the Customs Union comprising of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and later take part in establishing the Eurasian Economic Union.³³

D. United States of America (USA)

- **President Obama: World set a red line against the use chemical weapons; US Secretary of State John Kerry makes the case on strike on Syria; Kerry: Sarin gas used in Syria chemical attacks; United States Congressman discuss Syria strike; President Barack Obama appeals to an undecided American public to back his bid to use military force in Syria; United States and Baltic States sign joint political declaration**

According to reports, US President Barack Obama said on September 4 that the world set a red line against chemical weapons use that he now seeks to apply to Syria, while a Senate committee approved a resolution authorizing the U.S. military attack that he is planning. By a 10-7 vote, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the resolution that authorizes a limited military response, giving Obama an initial victory in his push to win congressional approval. The measure now goes to the full Senate for debate next week. "The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use, even when countries are engaged in war," President Obama said at a joint news conference with Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt on the first day of a four-day trip that includes the G-20 summit in Russia.³⁴

In another development, according to reports, maintaining that the United States is "more than mindful of the Iraq experience," US Secretary of State John Kerry made a compelling case for President Barack Obama's ordering a military strike against Syria, saying the cost of doing nothing in the face of the regime's use of chemical weapons would bring greater trouble in the future in other parts of the world. While laying out evidence of the Bashar Assad regime's use chemical weapons on August 21 against a rebel stronghold in a Damascus suburb, Kerry also gave a staggering death count -1, 429 Syrians were killed in the attack, including at least 426 children, he said. There was no doubt that the Syrian government used chemical weapons on opposition controlled areas it had long been unable to tame, he said. "We know what the doctors and the nurses who treated them didn't report, not a scratch, not a shrapnel wound, not a cut, not a gunshot wound. We saw rows of dead lined up in burial shrouds, the white linen unstained by a single drop of blood. Instead of being tucked safely in their beds at home, we saw rows of children lying side by side sprawled on a hospital floor, all of them dead from Assad's gas and surrounded by parents and grandparents who had suffered the same fate," Kerry said, in a graphic description

³³ "Armenia Ready to Join Russia-Led Customs Union – President", Rianovosti, September 3, 2013, at <http://www.en.rian.ru/politics/20130903/183147413/Armenia-Ready-to-Join-Russia-Led-Customs-Union—President.html>

³⁴ "Obama: It's the world's 'red line' on Syria; Senate panel backs military strike plan", CNN, September 5, 2013 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/04/politics/us-syria/index.html>

of what transpired in nearly a dozen rebel-held areas outside Damascus on August 21.”³⁵ Further Kerry noted that blood samples provided to the United States from the scene of last month’s Damascus attacks “have tested positive for signatures of Sarin.” Kerry said that the “case is building” for military action, adding that he was confident Congress “will do what is right” in an upcoming vote on US intervention.³⁶

Meanwhile, reports noted that US lawmakers on September 5, appeared divided over a possible military strike on Syria as debate over the issue entered a Congressional committee of the US House of Representatives. “We’re all troubled by the unfortunate lack of international support. Although the proposed action aims to uphold an international norm, there is no United Nations resolution of support, nor NATO backing,” Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said during a Congressional hearing on Syria. “As we’ll hear today, the President views striking the Syrian regime as a way to strengthen deterrence against the future use of chemical weapons by Assad and by others. That is an important consideration,” he said adding that there are too many bad actors out there. “Even worse, those we sacrificed for are not grateful. Getting involved in Syria would be even worse because it would indicate we haven’t learned our lesson. America should not retreat from the world, nor can we police the world. Our military should not be engaged in any way in the Syrian conflict,” Rohrabacher said. Chairman emeritus of the Foreign Relations Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen said the US has been aware of Assad’s chemical weapons stockpile for years, yet the US has failed to hold him accountable.³⁷

According to reports, President Barack Obama appealed to an undecided American public to back his bid to use military force in Syria while supporters scrambled to persuade lawmakers to authorize the move on September 7 during his weekly radio address. Obama said that America needs to use force to deter future chemical weapons attacks there. “This would not be another Iraq or Afghanistan,” Obama declared, previewing arguments he will make in a nationally televised address on Tuesday. “I know that the American people are weary after a decade of war, even as the war in Iraq has ended, and the war in Afghanistan is winding down. That’s why we’re not putting our troops in the middle of somebody else’s war,” Obama said. President Obama had said last week that he would seek congressional approval for a strike, but early vote counts in do not look encouraging for the president, with scores of lawmakers still undecided.³⁸

In other developments, reports noted that the Presidents of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the United States of America signed a joint political declaration at the White House, reaffirming the commitment of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the United States to strengthen their strategic

³⁵ “Anti-war John Kerry makes the case on Syria”, The Times of India, september 1, 2013 at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-01/us/41662504_1_chemical-weapons-syrian-government-assad-regime-survives

³⁶ “US: Sarin gas used in Syria chemical attacks”, Deutsche Welle, September 1, 2013 at <http://www.dw.de/us-sarin-gas-used-in-syria-chemical-attacks/a-17058842>

³⁷ “US Congressman debate Syria strike”, Zee News, September 5, 2013 at http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/us-congressman-debate-syria-strike_874283.html

³⁸ “Obama appeals to country to back U.S. military force in Syria”, Reuters, September 7, 2013 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/07/us-syria-crisis-usa-idUSBRE9850VK20130907>

cooperation on defence as well as on energy, cyber and economic security. The statement also highlights the achievements of the Baltic States and recognizes their growing role in addressing critical global security and economic issues. "It is an important political document which proclaims the continuity of strategic cooperation between the Baltic countries and the United States on the basis of values endorsed in the Baltic Charter. It recognizes the contribution made by the Baltic States to global security and the well-being of people. It brings the United States and the Baltic countries together in fighting new military, energy and cyber security threats," the President Obama said.³⁹

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Defence Minister Antony calls induction of the C-17 Globemaster III in the Indian Air Force as a 'defining moment'; Defence Minister: With this, the IAF has taken a giant stride towards its goal of acquiring multi-spectrum strategic capabilities, essential to safeguard India's growing areas of interest; Defence Minister Antony: Shri Shyam Saran has not stated in this report that China has occupied, or has denied access to India to any part of Indian territory**

According to reports, the Indian Air Force formally inducted the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III at a special ceremony held at Hindan airbase of the IAF on September 2. Describing the induction of the C-17 Globemaster III in the Indian Air Force as a 'defining moment', Defence Minister AK Antony said, "With this, the IAF has taken a giant stride towards its goal of acquiring multi-spectrum strategic capabilities, essential to safeguard India's growing areas of interest". The minister appreciated the stellar role played by the IAF in rescue and relief operations during the recent Uttarakhand flash floods and said, "Today's induction of C-17 will further boost IAF's capability for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief". The C-17 would form an extremely important component of the strategic airlift capability and reach of the IAF. The government accorded approval to buy 10 C-17 Globemaster III along with associated equipment for the IAF in June 2011. The first of the 10 aircraft touched down in India on 18th June 2013 and the delivery of all 10 is expected to be completed by November 2014. The newly inducted C-17 Squadron (81 Squadron) will be based in Hindan.⁴⁰

In another development, according to reports, Defence Minister Shri A K Antony in a statement noted, "Shri Shyam Saran, Chairman, National Security Advisory Board visited Ladakh from August 2 to 9, 2013. He has submitted a report on infrastructure in Ladakh, a copy of which has been sent by the Prime Minister's Office to the Ministry of Defence, among others, on the 2nd September 2013. The report is primarily focused on the border infrastructure but also deals with

³⁹ "U.S. and Baltic Presidents sign joint political declaration", The Baltic Course, September 2, 2013 at <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics/?doc=79868>

⁴⁰ "C-17 Globemaster III Inducted into the IAF, PIB, September 2, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99048>

several aspects relating to the region covering a broad spectrum of activities and requirements... I would like to state categorically that Shri Shyam Saran has not stated in this report that China has occupied, or has denied access to India to any part of Indian territory. I would like to assure the House that there is no question of India ceding to China any part of Indian territory. Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it. I would further like to assure the House that Government would continue to strengthen our capabilities in border areas to protect our national interest."⁴¹

International

- **Iran's foreign minister has slammed potential US-led air strikes against Syria as illegal; US ambassador to the United Nations criticises the UN Security Council for its failure to condemn Syria**

According to reports, Iran's foreign minister has slammed potential US-led airstrikes against Syria as "illegal" on a visit to Baghdad on September 8, while his Iraqi counterpart warned they would hinder efforts towards a political solution. Mohammad Javed Zarif said military action was barred under the United Nations charter, but Washington is pressing for the strikes in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack the White House says was carried out by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. "Civilized countries, 65 years ago, took the options off the table when they rejected in the charter of the United Nations resort to force as an illegal practice," Zarif said, speaking in English at a joint press conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. Zarif made these remarks during a one-day trip to Iraq, his first since being appointed foreign minister by President Hassan Rowhani in mid-August, and after meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki earlier on September 8.⁴²

In another development, according to reports, US ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power on September 6, delivered a strong rebuke to the UN Security Council for its failure to condemn Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against his own people. Power also said that the United States has all but given up on any political solution to the Syrian civil war that isn't brought about by the use of American arms to force the Assad regime to the negotiating table. Over the past year the United States has repeatedly reached out to the Assad regime both directly and through proxies like Russia, the United Nations, and even Iran to seek a diplomatic solution she said, but the Assad regime has ignored or rejected the overtures. Speaking at the Center for American Progress in Washington, Power said that "we have exhausted the alternatives" short of war, and given the UN Security Council's refusal to act it is up to the US to "employ limited military means to achieve very specific ends – to degrade Assad's capacity to use these weapons again, and deter others in the world who might follow suit."⁴³

⁴¹ "Statement by Raksha Mantri on the Report by Shri Shyam Saran, Chairman, National Security Advisory Board," PIB, September 6, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=99146>

⁴² "Iran Foreign Minister Slams Syria Strikes as 'Illegal,' Defense News, September 8, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130908/DEFREG04/309080005/Iran-Foreign-Minister-Slams-Syria-Strikes-Illegal->

⁴³ "American UN Ambassador Slams Security Council On Syria," Defense News, September 6, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130906/DEFREG02/309060015/American-UN-Ambassador-Slams-Security-Council-Syria>