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Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



Halong Bay, Vietnam

Photo Courtesy : Udai Bhanu Singh

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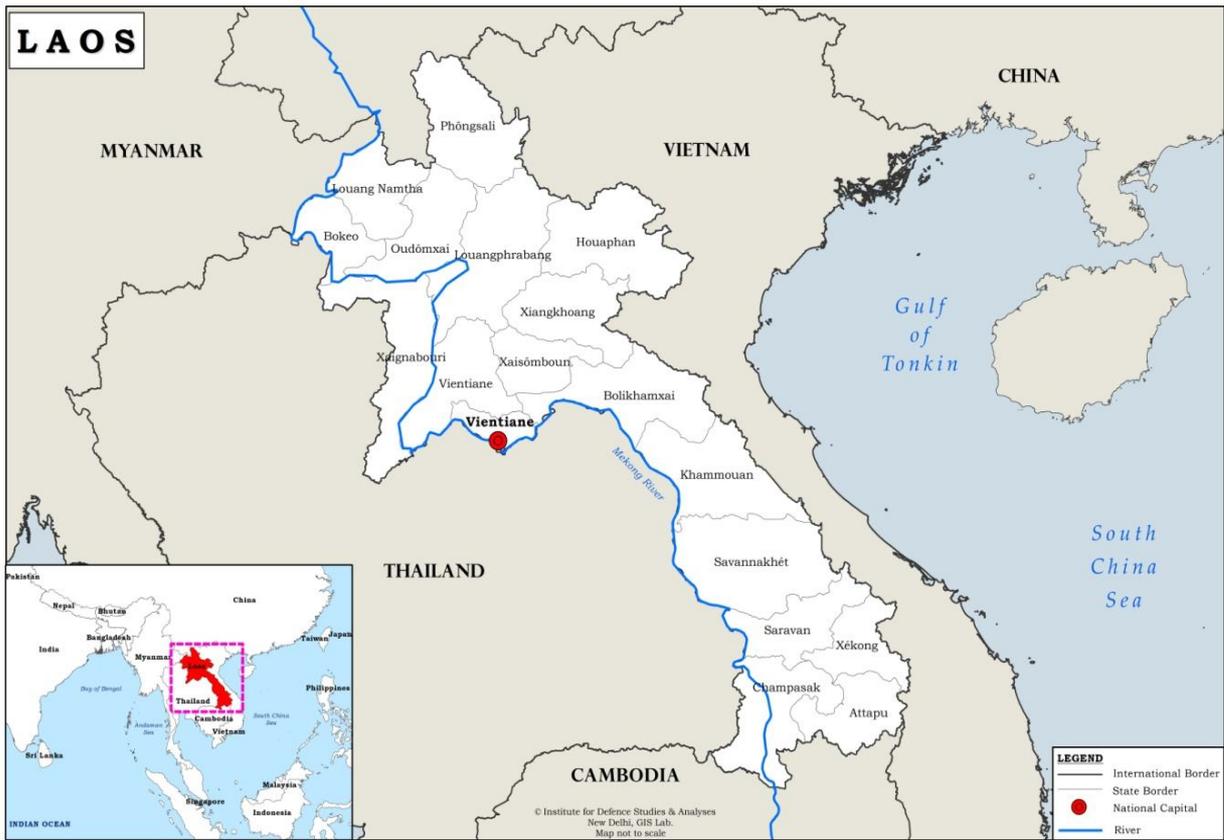
The new government at the Centre has commenced on a positive note by unveiling its version of the Look East Policy. The government has sent out a clear message that it intends to carry forward the growing linkages with not only Southeast Asia but the larger Asia Pacific/ Indo Pacific region. This was evident from the EAM Sushma Swaraj's visit to India's closest partners in the region- Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam.

Southeast Asia witnessed significant political developments with Indonesia holding its presidential elections and Thailand announcing a change of government. Joko Widodo became the new president of Indonesia amidst much fanfare signalling clearly the country's resolute intent to follow the path of democracy. Thailand on the other hand showed its resolute intent to do just the opposite as it once again leaned towards authoritarianism- and confounding observers. Coup leader Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha took over as PM in August.

Myanmar completed half of its term as chair of ASEAN this year. Other Asia-Pacific countries continued the well established process of consultation and dialogues (as for instance, between Singapore and Vietnam, and between Australia and Indonesia) even as tension brewed in the South China Sea. In sharp contrast, internal turmoil continued in Myanmar (Mandalay riots) with uncertainty about the political role that Aung San Suu Kyi might play (excluded from the Presidential race as of now; in Thailand the military felt constrained to intervene in the political process yet again; and the Moros continued to clash with the security forces in the Philippines. Like a duck calm above the water, but paddling furiously below the surface, countries of Southeast Asia can be seen calmly cooperating at the regional and bilateral plane, while strenuously trying to cope with the ethnic and political turmoil within.

Udai Bhanu Singh

LAOS



Capital: Vientiane

Land and geography: Laos is surrounded by China and Myanmar on its northwest, Vietnam on its northeast and east, Cambodia on its south and Thailand on its west. Total geographic area of Lao PDR/ Laos stands at 236,800 sq km.¹ Laos is a mountainous country. River Mekong flows through Laos for a stretch of 1500 km and forms boundary with Myanmar and

Thailand.²

Borders of Laos³

Myanmar	235 km
Cambodia	541 km
China	423 km
Thailand	1754 km
Vietnam	2130 km

Population: 6.4 million (UN, 2012)⁴

Politics and Government: Laos got limited

¹ Laos, available at <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blclaos.htm>, accessed on 28 July 2014.
² Laos, available at <http://www.infoplease.com/country/laos.html>, accessed on 4 August 2014.
³ Laos, available at <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blclaos.htm>, accessed on 28 July 2014.
⁴ Laos Profile, BBC News, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15351901>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

autonomy from the French on July 19, 1949 and full independence as a constitutional monarchy in 1954. A new Constitution was promulgated on August 14, 1991. Choummaly Sayasone, the president of Lao PDR and head of the ruling communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), was appointed by the National Assembly in 2006 and re-appointed in June 2011 which marked the continuation of the authoritarian rule in the country.⁵ President Sayasone served as defence minister and vice-president before he took over as the President. Khamtay Siphandon was his predecessor who became president for three consecutive terms. It was President Siphandon who witnessed Laos's entry into ASEAN in 1997. Laos has a one party rule.⁶ In Lao PDR, the president is elected by the National Assembly for five-year term and prime minister and council of ministers are appointed by the president and approved by the National Assembly.⁷

Religion and Ethnic Composition:

Six million people of Lao PDR are divided into 49 ethnic groups and four linguistic groups namely the Lao-Tai, Mone-Khmer,

Hmong-Ioumien and Tibeto-Burmese.⁸ Lao language is the national language. However, in Vientiane, languages like French, Chinese, English and Vietnamese are popular. Around 90% of the population professes Theravada Buddhism in Laos.⁹

Defence: The Lao People's Army (LPA) was reconstructed and restructured from the Lao People's Liberation Army in 1976 which was a guerilla force. LPA now has three wings of ground, water and air force.¹⁰

Foreign Relations: Until the collapse of erstwhile Soviet Union, Laos' foreign policy was based on opposition towards the west and maintaining close relations with the USSR and Vietnam. However, gradually Laos has started to build relations with countries like Australia, Japan, France, Sweden and India. In 2004, trade relations between Laos and the US were normalized. In 1997, Laos joined ASEAN, in 1998, it joined WTO and in 2005, it participated in the inaugural East Asia Summit.¹¹ Laos is also a member of Mekong River Commission and is home to its headquarter in Vientiane. With Vietnam, Laos shares a noteworthy relation which was started in 1977 with a treaty of friendship and cooperation to cover defence, economic assistance and other issues.¹²

⁵ Laos Profile, BBC News, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15351904>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

⁶ Laos Profile, BBC News, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15351904>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

⁷ Laos, available at <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blclaos.htm>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

⁸ Laos in Brief, Permanent Mission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations, available at http://www.un.int/lao/country_profile.php, accessed on 4 August 2014.

⁹ Laos in Brief, Permanent Mission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations, available at http://www.un.int/lao/country_profile.php, accessed on 4 August 2014.

¹⁰ Ministry of National Defence, Global Security.org, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/laos/mond.htm>, accessed on 4 August 2014.

¹¹

¹² Laos Country Brief, Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, available at https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/laos/laos_brief.html, accessed on 4 August 2014.

Relations with India:

PM Jawaharlal Nehru paid a visit to Laos in 1954 and reciprocal visits by the Laotian leaders were followed. India's participation in the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) as the chairman is still appreciated in the erstwhile Indochinese region which includes present-day Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Diplomatic relations between India and Laos were initiated in 1956.

Laos is one of the countries that supports India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.

India's former Prime Minister Dr.

Manmohan Singh visited Laos in 2004 on the occasion of ASEAN Summit and in 2010, the then President Ms. Pratibha Devisingh Patil visited Laos. Besides these high profile visits, several other dignitaries from India have paid visits to Laos including Mr. Salman Khurshid, former Minister for External Affairs and chief minister of Nagaland. The prime minister of Lao PDR visited India in 2012 to attend the ASEAN-India commemorative summit.

India and Laos have agreed to cooperate with each other in agriculture, culture, information and broadcasting, human resources, IT, tourism and several other areas. In addition, India has invested USD 161 million in Laos and it is the 8th largest FDI provider to Laos.¹³

¹³ India-Laos Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, government of India, available at http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Laos-April_2014.pdf, accessed on 4 August 2014.

The Mystic Land and the Never-Ending Interconnectedness...

Sonu Trivedi*

The lust and desire for the 'mystic' land of Myanmar arouses from the never-ending inter-connectedness that this exotic place has with the Indian subcontinent. Though the historical and cultural linkages abound our mythologies and contemporary literature but

this boundless relationship of the past should not be compromised in the light of the current realities. The amazing zeal of the early Buddhists from India having laid the foundation for this inexhaustible association between the two countries is eternal. Besides the shared cultural and historical roots, the country has much to offer. The traditional relation of friendship and cooperation between the two countries could be deepened and intensified further to each other's mutual benefit. Since both the nations share a common

thread of cultural ancestry, Myanmar may have to learn a lot in modern times from Indian experience of democratic development and consolidation. The charm and allure of this wonderful land is based on my personal experiences and inter-connectedness that I have developed during few of my previous visits to the country. Apart from the usual official meetings and designated calls, this fascinating land had much to offer which

left an everlasting impact on my memory. The overwhelming response from the people of Indian origin (almost the third generation) — was unforgettable. There is much to be treasured in the amazing hospitality which I received from the local Burmese community during each stint of my stay in Myanmar. Besides, the expats and the officials from India presently posted in Myanmar gave memories much to be cherished and made it a memorable experience. It was not only an opportunity meant for meeting of minds but rather for meeting of hearts too. No wonder why this magnificent land has inspired poets and writers like Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell. Kipling in this famous poem "Mandalay" conveys the lust of a British soldier for the grace and charm of a Burmese girl in the exotic land. The plot of the George Orwell's classic novel 'Burmese Days' is also build up in Burma (present day Myanmar). It is an excellent narrative set in the days of British Empire ruling in Burma. Our very own Amitav Ghosh is much to be treasured for his poignant novel 'The Glass Palace' based in Myanmar. It is set against the backdrop of the political changes in real- life Burma during colonial rule and the present.

The Indian film industry has also left an indelible mark with its popular black and white classic 'Patanga' where the actress moves along the fine tune of the everlasting song pining her desire for her lover visiting the splendid land "Mere piya gaye Rangoon kiya hai wahan se

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telephone.....". The song sung by Shamsad Begum has become a reference point for a deep connection in India and a much enduring and everlasting India-Myanmar relationship. Besides, there are many untold stories of Indians staying in Myanmar. There are families separated by the waves of repatriation each one unfolding their unique experience. References to 'Brahmadesh' and 'Swarnabhumi' abound our mythology and history about this captivating land. The magnitude of Indian influence is so great that in order to have a proper grasp of the cultural trends in Burmese history, it would be important to study the cultural progression in ancient India. In the words of Buddhist historian R. L. Soni, "there is certainly scope for further investigation and research.....". Because of the existence of diverse ethnic groups, numerous sub-groups and countless races, this mystic land has been called by Martin Smith as 'Anthropologists paradise'. From a researcher's perspective I would like to call it as a 'goldmine', not only in terms of foreign investment and capitalist penetration, but particularly in the context of the social, political and economic transformation taking place in the country. It has been considered as a laboratory for reforms in the administrative, judicial, legislative and the military organizations.

My subsequent visits to the country have validated this argument.

Moreover, looking at the speed with these changes taking place in the country, it may be observed that it has immense potential and resources to overpower many of the erstwhile Asian Tiger economies in the years to come. However, these reforms come with a caveat. Considered the last, large and untapped market in Asia, it has turned out to be a new battleground for foreign investors and capitalist penetration. This has opened a new chapter in the history of Myanmar. As foreign investments begin pouring in Myanmar in the wake of political reforms, Asia's last stronghold of biodiversity could be further lost and deteriorated. Development of sea ports, special economic zones and road-rail connectivity projects poses grave environmental challenges which demands immediate intervention and rehabilitation. Some of the famous tourist destinations are facing serious threats due to their delicate ecosystem. Nevertheless, a large part of my ravishing journey to this enchanting land included apart from the usual tourist destinations, many virgin spots known for their historic legacy and architectural heritage most of these sited in south western part of Myanmar in Rakhine State, Upper Myanmar and Shan Hills. But, a large part of this exquisite land still was left unexplored for the successive visits in future.

This commentary is being republished from *New Light of Myanmar*, August 15, 2014

Round Table at IDSA on India-Vietnam Relations on the Occasion of 60 Years of Geneva Accords, July 24, 2014

Keynote Address by Secretary (East)

Your Excellency, Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to India,

Ambassador Aftab Seth,
Dr. Arvind Gupta, DG, IDSA,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be speaking today at the Roundtable Conference for the 60th Anniversary of the Geneva Accords. It is a moment of history that was the kernel of nation-building as also an occasion for rekindling ties between our two nations and peoples. This built the foundation of trust and cooperation between our countries in modern times.

I would like to briefly recapitulate the genesis and purpose of the Geneva Accords. The Geneva Accords signed at the Geneva Conference of 1954, were conceived with an objective of finding



peace in the Indo-China region. Among other things, the Geneva Accords stipulated that Vietnam will be divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam by the 17th Parallel. With a view to creating a unified Vietnamese state, the Accords also decided that free election was to be held in both Vietnams in 1956. However, this Accord was slated for doom. The seeds of future discourse were sown which involved several skirmishes, clashes and wars that also saw the involvement of the US troops. This era of war ultimately reached its culmination when the Northern forces reached Saigon.

To oversee the implementation of the Geneva Accords, the delegates attending the Geneva Conference appointed the International Control Commission (ICC), formally called the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam. The ICC envisaged to represent the 3 blocks: Canada from the capitalist block, Poland from the communist block and India from the countries pursuing Non-Alignment Movement. While each of the 3 countries provided for 1/3rd of the ICC personnel, India also provided for its Chairman.



However, as time would tell, India was the only country that continued to abide by the responsibility entrusted on the ICC members and that was to ensure a lasting peace in Vietnam. Both Canada and Poland faced accusations of spying for their respective blocks. India assiduously continued to play the role assigned to her until the year 1973 when the Paris Peace Agreement replaced ICC by another organisation- the ICCS (International Commission of Control and Supervision- Hungary, Poland, Canada/Iran and Indonesia).

Now, as we stand here today, and now that we understand the causes why the Geneva Accords failed, it is pertinent for us to stop and reflect whether we have actually addressed these causes permanently for achieving global peace and ensuring that such repetitions do not occur. I am afraid that the answer may be mixed and the reason why I say so is that 7 decades ago the Indo-China region became the battleground for the superpowers of the time, who endeavored to establish their ideological supremacy and ensure their economic interests by jostling for space in these countries. Today, we see new challenges and unfortunately, similar infractions continue to be committed in other parts of the world as well. However, I am hopeful that through an evolved global conscience and a trend towards multipolarity involving greater say by every member of this international comity, we will be able to move towards the direction of the objective of global peace. This can be better achieved when development and progress is assured to all individuals as this will be the basis for peace and security. In the interim, we need to work on stable security structures that promote resolution of disputes through

negotiations based on law and without recourse to use of force.

India has always taken a pride in its principles of non-violence and global peace and continues to advocate for a more inclusive and broadly represented world order. We are glad that our Vietnamese friends have lent their trust and support to us in our legitimate demand for expansion in the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. An early reform of the United Nations so that it reflects contemporary geo-political realities, is the need of the hour.

India and Vietnam share a long tradition of close relations. I am glad to say that India has a trusted friend in Vietnam. The foundations of this trust were laid by our great leaders, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh. The rousing welcome that received Ho Chi Minh on his visit to Delhi in 1958 and the public rally which he attended with President Rajendra Prasad and PM Nehru was a reflection of the warmth between the two peoples. Successive generations of our leaders have nurtured this friendship.

We, in India have admiration for the indomitable spirit of the Vietnamese people, their determination to succeed against all odds, their tenacity and their courage against powerful adversaries.

With more than 40 years of establishment of full diplomatic relations behind us and our Strategic



Partnership in place, we are at a notable juncture in our bilateral relations. Our history along with our convergence on strategic and security interests, ever broadening and deepening economic ties and close cultural inter-linkages, form the pillars of this robust friendship. Our partnership, based on common vision stands for mutual benefit and regional peace, stability and prosperity. We share a strategic understanding and cooperation at regional and multilateral forums.

The recent past has been rather remarkable for our strategic partnership. India and Vietnam celebrated the 40th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations as the Year of Friendship in 2012. In 2013, we had several Cabinet level exchanges, including the landmark State visit of H.E. General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Mr. Nguyen Phu Trong in November, 2013. The series of high-level exchanges from both sides is a testimony to the priority attached by both our countries to our friendship. The two countries continue to work closely together to further accelerate the momentum of interaction between our leadership.

Vietnam is a key partner in our Look East Policy and strong ASEAN relations and a trusted friend in our inclusive vision for peace and prosperity in the region and the world. The India-Vietnam cooperation in defence and security areas is growing at a healthy pace and we are now implementing several new initiatives, including capacity building of the Vietnamese Armed Forces and extension to Vietnam of a US\$ 100 million Line of Credit for defence procurement. We also look forward to strengthening our development partnership with Vietnam and building cooperation in science and



technology and high technology areas.

India greatly values her economic interests in Vietnam. Several large Indian investment houses are now making their presence felt in Vietnam. Tata will set up a 1320 mw power plant in Soc Trang, a huge coffee establishment has come up, there is strong presence of IT majors and others. OVL has a long time presence in the hydro carbon sector. With the commencement of direct flights in the coming months, the issue of poor air connectivity between our Capitals will also be taken care of.

Buddhism is a valued strand of our shared heritage. The recently concluded Festival of India in Vietnam, which was a resounding success, brought thousands of devotees together in worship. I am happy that India will open a Culture Centre in Hanoi shortly. I am confident that this Centre will be pivotal in boosting India's cultural presence in Vietnam.

We are in the times when geo-political relations and space itself are undergoing change at a rapid pace. These geo-political changes have presented to us new opportunities as well as challenges. In order that we are able to exploit these opportunities to their fullest potential and in a mutually beneficial way, while at the same time, jointly overcoming the challenges that may threaten our common interests, India and Vietnam need to stand together. Vietnam must rest assured that India will continue to remain her all-weather friend.

Speech by Vietnam Ambassador Nguyen Thanh Tan at the Round Table on Geneva Conference

(Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 24 July 2014)

Excellency Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director-general of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses,

Excellency Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs,

Excellency Ambassadors, Members of the International Control Commission,

Professors,

Dear friends and colleagues,

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Arvind Gupta for his generous decision to give us a chance to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Signature of the Geneva Agreement in the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis. I am very grateful for the kind help and assistance the IDSA has rendered to the Embassy of Vietnam. I also would like to thank H.E. Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) for coming here to give us a key note speech. I highly appreciate the presence of Excellency Former Indian Ambassadors, Professors and our dear friends to the Round Table today.

The Geneva Conference on Indochina was inaugurated on 8th May 1954, only one day after the Dien Bien Phu victory. The negotiation at Geneva Conference were intense and tough. Finally, on 20 July 1954, the Geneva Agreement on ending hostilities in Vietnam was signed.

The Geneva Agreement is considered as a major victory of great significance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. For the first time, the French Government and other participants to the

Geneva Conference committed to respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam. This agreement also had legal significance and created the firm foundation for our people to continue our struggle to achieve the overall victory.

Our successes in the Geneva Conference were the victory of great patriotism, determination for independence, desire for freedom and love for peace of the Vietnamese people. It was the victory for the young revolutionary diplomacy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. For the first time the revolutionary diplomacy of Vietnam stepped onto the international stage and participated in a multilateral conference. Our negotiation delegation had taken advantage of our victory in the battlefield.

This event took place when complexities are unfolding in global landscape. Major countries in the Conference had different goals and interests. But we succeeded. We upheld justice and flexibly used various diplomatic strategies. We stuck to a consistent negotiation policy with persuasive yet flexible arguments. The results were indeed of great significance under those circumstances.

To let you know more about significance of Geneva Accords and issues relating to it, our Senior Colonel Pham Thanh Luong, Defense Attache of the Embassy will talk on it soon. I also see in the program the articles presented by Ambassador S.K Bhutani, Professor Chintamani Mahapatra and Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh in this reference in our Round Table today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After nearly 30 years of implementing comprehensive reforms under the initiative and leadership of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, our country has recorded great achievements. Viet Nam has succeeded in maintaining political and social stability, reducing poverty, gradually

upgrading the material and spiritual living standards of the people and improving the nation's collective strengths. In international relations, Viet Nam has engaged deeper in international integration. We have established diplomatic relations with most of the countries, including strategic partnership and comprehensive partnership with major powers and our neighbours. We have actively participated in international organizations such as ASEAN, APEC, ASEM and the United Nations and made active contribution to the maintenance of peace, security in the region and in the world. Our international reputation and position have been constantly improved.

*Distinguishes Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Looking back the history, we are very proud to have India as a very close friend at that moment. In 1953, India proposed a 6 points program for the peace in Indochina. Later on, India participated to the International Control Commission for the implementation of the Geneva Agreement. In 1954, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Hanoi, followed by the visit to Delhi by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. Few years later, in 1958, our beloved President Ho Chi Minh visited India.

For the recent years, we have witnessed a development of the strategic partnership between Vietnam and India in depth and length. With every passing day, our relationship has become stronger and stronger for interest, prosperity of our two people, for peace and solidarity in the region and the world at large. Our

Ambassador Aftab Seth will give us a look to the strategic significance of the India's relationship with Vietnam and our Minister Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Tran Quang Tuyen will show us in general a comprehensive picture of the relationship and cooperation between Vietnam and India. Mr. M.K. Malhotra, President of India – Vietnam Friendship Society will also give us more on this.

Dear friends,

Walking out of the wars, the people of Viet Nam understand the value of peace. But we understand that peace must be associated with independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are vowed to do our best to maintain peace, stability, friendship and cooperation for mutual development.

Sixty years have passed from the signing of the Geneva Agreement, the international and regional situation has seen many changes but the Geneva Conference has left us with invaluable lessons for all the people of Vietnam. One lesson we have learnt that internal strengths shall be combined with external forces and we shall rally the support of people of the world, as well as peace and justice loving forces, in national defense and development.

With the power of great national unity, with the international support and with the lessons learnt from the 1954 Geneva Conference, we are fully confident in the absolute victories of our struggles of justice for independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and for the defense and development of our sacred Fatherland.

Thank you!

Negotiating and signing the Geneva Accords of 1954: Lessons from history

Sr. Col. Pham Thanh Luong
Defence Attaché

Embassy of the S.R. of Vietnam in India

Distinguished participants,

Facts show that war and violence, which are seen as uncivilized and irrelevant practices in today's world, cannot end all international disputes. Peaceful negotiations and cooperation are a more relevant way for the interests of each nation states and the humankind as a whole.

After 60 years since the signing of the Geneva Accords of 1954 on Indochina, international relations have been developed into a new stage. However, providing a rational assessment of both successes and shortcomings of the Geneva Conference in the Indochina war as well as the international context in late 1950s to learn most from the history remains an issue of both academic and practical significance for Vietnam during its ongoing integration and development process.

The 1953-1954 Winter - Spring strategic attack of Vietnamese army and people with the Dien Bien Phu campaign as its highlight did change the balance of power and lay substantive military foundation for diplomacy efforts to end the war

Dien Bien Phu was considered the last decisive battle for both sides, the Vietnamese and the French. Under the operational guide line campaign "Winter 1953-Spring 1954" of Politburo and Central Military Committee on "Fight at all strength if you sure to win otherwise

do not engage" and advice of Pres. Ho Chi Minh to Gen Vo Nguyen Giap "this battle is very important, a must-win one. Don't fight if victory is not secured ". Thanks to the advice, the General made a historic decision: change tactic from "rapid fight , rapid win" to "steady fight, steady advance". As a result, after 3 attacks to French troops during 13 Mar 1954 to 07 May 1954, VPA gained a decisive victory.

In Dien Bien Phu battle, total 16200 French troops were disabled and captured with whole command surrendered, including a Maj.General; 162 aircrafts shot down; destroyed most of weapons and ammunition stockpiles. Of the Campaign, total 128.200 French troops killed and captured; 19000 guns of all kinds; 162 aircrafts shot down and 81 field artilleries damaged. Prior campaign victories: Viet Bac (in 1947), Bien Gioi (in 1950), Winter-Spring 51-52 had partially contributed to the advancement of tactical and operational resistance war of Vietnamese People and Army.

Ultimate fear at the lost in Dien Bien Phu, French troops withdrew out of Lang Son, Vietnam-Laos northwest border, Central Highland, Inter-Region 5, Northern Plain, made huge areas of Vietnam and Indochina liberated, caused a big change in power balance in a considerable favor of Vietnamese and revolutionary forces at theaters of Indochina in general and of Vietnam in particular.

Dien Bien Phu Victory was the greatest one of Vietnamese people and Army during a 9 year resistance war against French colonialist and US interference. It made a total damage to Nava's war plan, crushed out the French ambition of extending the war against peoples in Vietnam and Indochina, pushed the French to table for concluding a long war, restored peace in Vietnam and Indochina.

The victory made itself "a wake-up bell, a pathfinder " to people all around the world with the same situation to the Vietnamese to line-up

and fight against the suppressors, for their freedom and independence. And, lastly, Dien Bien Phu victory omened a collapse of the colonialism system in the world./.

The signing of the Geneva Accords of 1954 is a great achievement. However, it did not reflect the on-going balance of power and Vietnam's advantages on the Indochina and Vietnam battlefield.

The Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954 is an international conference with the participation of 9 parties. The powerful countries participated to the conference towards peaceful settlement of the Indochina war with different motivations and aims of their own as well as their calculations for a new game. The Conference took place with the hard struggle by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) against the arrangements of the major powers. On July 21, 1954, the Geneva Accords on Indochina were signed. Participating countries approved the final declaration which recognized the respect to independence, sovereignty, unification and territorial integrity of the people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, specifying French troops' withdrawal and free elections in each Indochina countries towards national unification in their respective countries. Apart from its highlighted success , the Geneva Conference also showed some drawbacks:

- Negotiations to end the war should have been held mainly among relating resistance forces to the French in Indochina. But the two-Polar world order and the context of the Cold War turned the international conference for ending a war to talks among many powers with various interests of their own.
- The Conference decided on issues

related to the resistance forces in Laos and Cambodia without the involvement of their respective governments.

- The landmark for temporary military demarcation and division of military areas in Vietnam is the 17th Parallel, neither 13th or 16th Parallel as strongly requested by Vietnam. Vietnam must leave the whole free Zone V and many free areas in the south of the 17th Parallel which are made areas for gathering and moving French troops. In Laos, the resistance force could get only the two provinces of Sam Nua and Phongxaly. Cambodian resistance force must be demobilized on the spot.
- The deadline for elections towards national unification in Vietnam is 2 years, not 6 months as suggested by Vietnam.
- In fact, the Geneva Accords were only partially implemented in terms of ending the war and restoring peace in Indochina; gathering and moving troops by specified regions and time. The general election towards reunification of Vietnam could not be organized due to the US policy of intervention and invasion, leading to a new war.

Obviously the Geneva Accords did not fully reflect what won by the Vietnamese people in particular and Indochina's people in general on the battlefield and the ongoing trend of the war. Interests of the people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were all marginalized by the dominant trend of Deitente and compromise among powerful countries.

For Vietnam, the Geneva Accords only marked the end of a stage in the long and hard struggle towards independence and freedom. What happened in history provides many lessons for Vietnam to handle its world affairs in the current context of globalization and integration.

Lessons on rational assessment of the international situation, especially the views of major powers in foreign affairs

Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954 was badly affected by the trend of détente between the major powers and the structure of the Cold War. The major powers participated in the Conference with different interests and motives.

After the Chinese won its revolution in Oct 1949, while adopting the strategy of "Europe first", the US shifted the focus to the Asian region as well. After the Korea Armistice in July 1950, the US deepened its intervention in Indochina, increasing aid to France to extend and expand the war, given its fear of "losing Indochina to the communists" and "threats to the security of the US". However, the U.S. and French had different intentions in Indochina. The French needed the help of the U.S. to win, while the U.S. wanted to remove the old colonialism of the French and set up neo-colonialism by itself.

The British supported the French to invade Indochina, but with its own interests in Southeast Asia and did not want an expanded and internationalized war in this region. In its view, the Korean Armistice would lead to negotiations on broader issues, including Indochina.

The Soviet Union supported the people in Indochina to fight against the French. However, given its Deitente policy, the Soviet wanted a peaceful solution to prevent expansion of the war and promoted the trend of calming the world situation. The Soviet Union took the initiative to convene a conference of major powers (including the Soviet Union, Great Britain, USA, France and China) in search of measures to reduce tensions in the Far

East.

The U.S. strategic adjustment directly threatened China. China needed to escape from the U.S. blockade. National interests and international obligations pushed China to actively "support Korea against the US" and "support Vietnam against France". After the Korean War, China advocated early peaceful settlement of Indochina war to prevent U.S. attempt to expand the war, thus ensuring peace and security for China and the Far East. Given the influence of the trend of détente, both the Soviet Union and China did not want to continue to provide military aid to Vietnam to gain greater victory on the battlefield.

For the French, with an extended and expanded war in Indochina, the French troops would get more deeply stuck in this "tunnel without exit". France had to ask for and thus got more dependent on the US aid, which faced strong protests among the public in the country and the world over, leading to domestic unrests and repeated changes of government. The Indochina War became economic and psychological burdens for the French. Since the Nava military plan failed, the French colonist ambition and hope for military victory came to an end. The French had to come to negotiations to end the war and ensure safe withdrawal of French foreign legion troops.

The Geneva talks neither brought about the victory of anti-colonialist forces in Indochina nor met desires for independence and unification of the people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Objective context limited the outcomes of the Geneva Conference. However, it should be seriously admitted that Vietnam did not have adequate experience in understanding the situation and policies of major powers.

This practice did not only show in the Cold War but in the post-Cold War period and the current context of globalization. Thus, in foreign affairs, the world situation and particularly the

strategies of major powers should be rationally assessed, legitimate interests of the stakeholders respected, and appropriate responses provided for specific period of time and specific issues to ensure national interests. Good understanding of yourself and your partners (i.e. not only “know yourself” but “know others” as well) is a significant requirement for integration.

Lessons on peaceful negotiations, promoting dialogue and cooperation to deal with conflicts in international relations, maintaining stability and mutual development

Peace is not the aspirations of the people of Vietnam but of the humankind as a whole. Having decided to start the 1953-1954 Winter-Spring Strategic Attack, Ho Chi Minh and Vietnam Labor Party advocated peace negotiations to end the war.

Since the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina to Asia - Europe Meeting in late 1990s, the East - West relationships has changed from confrontation to dialogue, from “possible enemies” to partners’ perspective. Peace, dialogue and cooperation is a major trend of the world after the Cold War and Vietnam has been working with countries and organizations at international fora to develop its nation while taking part in maintaining world peace. Vietnam has joined many regional and international groupings, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia - Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), the Asia - Europe Meeting (ASEM), the International Trade Organization (WTO). Integration is a demand pushed by globalization, with the participation of all countries regardless of their political

regimes or economic levels.

To handle international relations during integration process, “the principles of respecting independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, not using force or threatening to use force, equality and mutual benefit; resolving disagreement and disputes through peaceful negotiations, and defeating every attempts and actions to coerce and impose through power politics” must be upheld. To protect their legitimate interests, the least developed countries are mobilizing forces and fighting against the pressures from developed countries in order to establish a fair economic order in the world. It is the parallel process of collaboration and competition for peaceful co-existence.

Lessons on strengthening the national strength, creating strong foundation for foreign affairs, protecting national sovereignty, international peace and security

For all the time, the national synergy is the basis for external activities. There will be no victory on the negotiating table without a victory on the battlefield. Before the nationwide resistance war, the DRV Government made all efforts to salvage a fragile peace and took all diplomatic steps to resolve the conflict with France but did not get expected results, because the French were expecting its military victory. They responded by sending an ultimatum demanding the Vietnamese people to surrender. But towards the final stages of the war, the situation completely changed. The 1953-1954 Winter - Spring strategic attack of Vietnamese army and people with the Dien Bien Phu campaign as its highlight did change the balance of power and lay substantive military foundation for diplomacy efforts to end the war.

In the context of globalization with deeper and wider integration, Vietnam is becoming a

reliable friend and partner, and a responsible member of the world community. Hardships during the war have been replaced by major challenges in development and integration. Military front has given its place for economic and cultural development for the goals of “peace, unification, independence, democracy and prosperity” put by President Ho Chi Minh, international cooperation does not limit to a certain areas but covers all areas.

For successful integration, Vietnam has been building and strengthening its national strength in all areas. The renewal process has brought changes to Vietnam's economy. However, its quality of growth, efficiency and competitiveness remain low. The economy growth remains unsustainable. Investment and funds from other countries and international organization are required but only on the basis of adequate resources which can be mobilized within the country. The big downside of globalization also posed new challenges to the national defense and security to become more inclusive of all other aspects: political, economic, cultural, social, technology, communication, and environment. In this globalized context, Vietnam cannot be isolated from the international community. Instead, it must proactively integrate in the region and the world economy, taking advantages of favorable external conditions and arrangements while minimizing their negative impacts. This process must go hand in hand with the demand for strengthening national defence and security. Through integration, national synergy must be strengthened, national sovereignty and security be enhanced.

Given both the opportunities and risks of globalization, the goals of external affairs are not limited to making full use of favorable conditions for national development but also to actively integrate and proactively take part in maintaining international peace and security, “making contributions to building a democratic and fair international political and economic structure”. Despite the dominance of the major powers, the correlative key in international relations is that small countries with their own efforts can react by playing their own part. The joined efforts of Vietnam and other countries in the region together with our friends towards building a strong Southeast Asian community is the basis for promoting the initiatives, taking advantage of favorable conditions, and working to overcome challenges from international context so as to maintain sovereignty, peace, stability and development./.

Bilateral relations between Vietnam and India

**Speech by Mr Tran Quang Tuyen
Deputy Head of Mission**

Embassy of the S.R. of Vietnam in India

With its active involvement, India contributed to the signing of the Geneva Agreement for the restoration of peace in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in 1954. India was elected as the Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam.

Vietnam - India relations, since then, have been exceptionally friendly and cordial with their foundations were laid by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Immediately after peace had been restored in Vietnam thanks to Dien Bien Phu victory and the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954, the two countries carried out many important high-level meetings. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was the first statesman to visit Vietnam in October 1954. In February 1958, President

Ho Chi Minh paid an official visit to India and in 1959, President Rajendra Prasad visited Vietnam.

In this backdrop, consular relations were established between Vietnam and India, in 1956, and full diplomatic relations were established on 7th January 1972. Vietnam and India have enjoyed good political relations and exchanged lots of high-ranking visits.

Visits to India are those paid by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong in 1978, 1980, General Secretary of CPV Le Duan (1984), General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh (1989), General Secretary Do Muoi (1992), Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam Nong Duc Manh (1994), Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet (1997), President Tran Duc Luong (1999), General Secretary of CPV Nong Duc Manh (2003), Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (2007); Recently visits to India are those paid by Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong (2010), President Truong Tan Sang (10/2011), Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung attended the 20th Ceremony Summit of Indian-ASEAN relations (12/2012) and in the capacity as General Secretary of CPV, H.E. Nguyen Phu Trong again paid a state visit to India in 11/2013.

Visits to Vietnam are those paid by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1985, 1988), President R. Venkatraman (1991) Vice-President K.R. Narayanan (1993), Prime Minister Narsimha Rao (1994), Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee (2001), Speaker of Lok Sabha Shri Somnath Chatterjee (2007), President Pratibha Patil (2008), Prime Minister Dr. Mamohan Singh in October 2010, Lok Sabha Speaker Mrs. Meira Kumar in May 2011 and Vice President Hamid Ansari in 2013.

Entering the 21st century, the two nations enjoined a new height in their relations that has been transformed into a strategic partnership highlighted by the Joint Declaration on the framework of comprehensive cooperation between India and Vietnam for the 21st century, signed during General Secretary Nong Duc Manh's visit to India in 2003, and the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of India-Vietnam Strategic Partnership signed during the Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's visit to India in 2007.

These high-level visits have paved the way for multi-faceted cooperation and mutual trust of the traditional relations between the two countries.

Economic and Commercial

India-Vietnam Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific & Technical Cooperation was established with the first session held in New Delhi in December 1982. The latest 15th meeting of the Joint Commission was co-chaired by Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh when he paid an official visit to India in July 2013.

Bilateral trade has been growing rapidly from 72 million US\$ (1995) to over 1 billion US\$ in 2006 and 5.3 billion US\$ in 2013. The two countries are looking to 7 billion US\$ in trade by 2015 and 15 billion US\$ by 2020.

India's first direct investment in Vietnam began in 1988 with the oil and gas exploration project of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) in the East Sea. Now as of June 2014, India has 81 investment projects with total registered capital of 2.05512 billion US\$, ranking 12th among 101 countries and lands who are investing in Vietnam.

Science and Technology

The bilateral Agreement on cooperation in Science and Technology between Vietnam and India, which was first concluded in 1976, was renewed in 1996. The Joint Committee on

Science and Technology was constituted in 1997 with the first Programme of Cooperation (POC) in S & T between the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India and the Ministry of Science, Technology & Environment (MOSTE, now renamed as Ministry of Science and Technology - MOST), Govt. of Vietnam was concluded in September 1997. The 9th meeting of the Joint Committee, which held in Hanoi in 2012, adopted the POC in S & T for period of 2013-14 that provides joint projects, seminars, workshops and exploratory visits of experts in the fields of biotechnology, material science, ICT, ocean development and oceanographic research, pharmaceuticals and medical research.

In 2011, a 2 million US\$ Advanced Resource Centre in Information and Communications Technology (ARC-ICT), set up by the India's Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), was inaugurated in Hanoi. In 2013, the High Performance Computing facility at Hanoi University of Science & Technology, with estimated cost of Rs. 4.7 crore was inaugurated as a gift to Vietnam by Indian Government.

Defence Cooperation

Vietnam and India have exchanged Defence Attaché since 1980. Various agreements have been signed by two nations, such as: Protocol on Defence in April 1994, MoU on defence cooperation in November 2009 and MoU on navy cooperation in June 2011. Both sides have set up the mechanism of Defence Policy Dialogue between Deputy Ministers of Defence. The 8th Dialogue was held in Ho Chi Minh City in November 2013.

The Indian Armed Forces have been engaged with the capacity building of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, particularly the Navy, focusing in the areas such as training, repairs and maintenance support, exchanges between think tanks, study tours and ship visits. Four India Naval ships which included the indigenously built stealth frigate INS SATPURA and fleet tanker INS SHAKTI with a complement of around 1200 officers and sailors visited Da Nang in June 2013.

Lines of Credit: Since 1976, India has offered several Lines of Credit (LoCs) to Vietnam. So far, India has extended 17 LoCs worth more than 165 million US\$ to Vietnam. The last major LoC extended by India was in July 2013 for 19.5 million US\$. In addition, India has also extended lines of credit of 100 million US\$ for infrastructure and Defence procurement.

Security cooperation also has new breakthroughs. Vietnam and India signed Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters in 2007, Memorandum on Crime Prevention Cooperation in 2008, MoU on Cooperation between Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security and India's Ministry of Home Affairs in 2011.

India has expressed willingness to help Vietnam in training and modernising its police force, and in holding specialised courses on security in Vietnam. Two countries are completing the construction of Indira Gandhi Centre for Criminal Evidence Recovery in Ho Chi Minh City.

Education

Vietnam has been a large scholarship-recipient of training courses under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Presently, 150 ITEC slots are being offered to Vietnam every year along with 16 scholarships under the General Cultural Scholarship Scheme

(GCSS), 14 scholarships under the Educational Exchange Programme (EEP) and 10 scholarships under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation Scholarship Scheme (MGCSS).

Cultural Relations and People to People Exchanges

Agreement on cultural cooperation signed in 1976 has been basic for the periodically-renewed cultural exchange programmes (the latest renewed during General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's visit to India in 2013) for annual cultural exchanges between artists from both countries.

The year 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relations as the "Year of Friendship between Vietnam and India" with activities such as: commemorative seminars, performances by cultural troupes, organizing film festivals, culinary week and art exhibitions.

India has decided to open a Cultural Centre in Hanoi in 2014 that will strengthen India's cultural presence in Vietnam and constitute an important dimension of the friendly partnership between the two countries.

Direct flight

Vietnam Airlines and Jet Airways signed MoU in October 2011 on comprehensive cooperation which includes commencing direct flights proposed to begin on Nov 5, 2014 for Jet Airways and in 2015 for Vietnam Airlines.

Regional and International Cooperation

India and Viet Nam have enjoyed close and good cooperation and coordination in regional and international fora. India

supported Viet Nam's candidature for non-permanent membership of the United Nation Security Council for the term 2008-2009. Viet Nam always supports India's "Look East Policy" and India's efforts to strengthen its relations with ASEAN and its engagement with East Asian cooperation. Viet Nam has been regularly reiterating its support for India's candidature for permanent membership of an expanded UNSC.

Viet Nam and India have consented to ensuring peace, stability, maritime security and safety in the East Sea, as well as settling disputes by peaceful means in line with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They have committed to fully abiding by the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea and working out the Code of Conduct in the East Sea soon.

In conclusion

Vietnam-India relations have constantly developed and deepened in past more than 40 years since the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two nations. The developments and historical challenges have proved that India is a traditional, loyal and trustworthy friend of Vietnam. The effective and comprehensive cooperative ties between the two countries are built upon mutual trust, whose foundation was laid by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, which have been continuously nurtured by various

generations of leaders and peoples from both countries. The bilateral relations aim at attaining peace, stability and prosperous development in both nations, in the region and in the whole world.

Round Table on India-Vietnam Relations on the 60th Anniversary of the Geneva Accords: A Report

by Sampa Kundu

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre organised a round table on India-Vietnam Relations to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Geneva Accords in partnership with the Embassy of Vietnam in New Delhi. Geneva Accords symbolised a milestone in the history of Vietnam vis-a-vis Indochina region. The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director General, IDSA chaired the round table. Other panelists of the Round Table included His Excellency Mr Nguyen Thanh Tan, serving Ambassador of Vietnam to India, Ambassador SK Bhutani (retd.), Ambassador Aftab Seth (retd.), Mr Tran Quang Tuyen, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Vietnam to India, Prof Chintamani Mahapatra, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr Udai Bhanu Singh, Centre Coordinator, Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre, IDSA, Senior Colonel Pham Thanh Luong, Defence Attache, Embassy of Vietnam to India and Mr. K L Malhotra, Chairman, India-Vietnam Friendship Society, New Delhi. A short film was also shown on Geneva Accords by the Embassy of Vietnam. DG, IDSA initiated the round table by saying that India supported attempts for peaceful resolution of the

Indochinese crisis at that time which signaled India's concern for Vietnam and other countries in the region and even today, in the changed geo-political scenario, India's friendship with Vietnam has only been strengthened over the time.

Major Discussion Points

- The government of Vietnam considers Geneva Agreement as a major victory and of greater significance. For the first time, the French government and other participants in Geneva Conference admitted Vietnam as an independent country. Also, for the first time, Democratic Republic of Vietnam participated in a multilateral forum at the international level.
- Seven decades ago, the Indochina region became the battleground of the then super powers who wanted to establish their own ideological supremacy as well as ensure their economic interests. United States was not in favour of the Geneva Accords and elections in Vietnam for its re-unification. ASEAN was formed to contain communism in the region. Today instead of these old challenges, the region faces several new ones. Multipolarity, equal opportunity for all and promotion of peaceful settlement of disputes may solve some of the problems to which the world is exposed.
- Amb. Bhutani was asked to chair the ICC in 1969 which had two primary objectives- ceasefire and withdrawal of the empirical forces from Indochina as well as holding the election.
- India and Vietnam share a very cordial relationship. In 1953, India suggested a 6-point programme for Vietnam. India also participated in the International Control Commission for the Implementation of the Geneva Accords. PM Jawaharlal Nehru visited Vietnam in 1954 and President Ho

Chi Minh visited New Delhi in 1958.

- India appreciates Vietnam's support for India's bid for an extended United Nations Security Council and India considers Vietnam as a trusted friend. The foundation of this great friendship was established by PM Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh.
- India has established diplomatic relationship with Vietnam forty years back and the strategic partnership has made this friendship more valued and critical. India's defence and security relations with Vietnam are momentous as well. India and Vietnam also share cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy.
- Bilateral trade between India and Vietnam stood at US\$5.3 billion in 2013 and both are expecting to increase the bilateral trade to US\$ 7 billion by 2015 and US\$ 15 billion by 2020.
- All major powers of the world regard Vietnam a country of great strategic importance including US and Japan. The territorial skirmishes in East and South China Seas may escalate severe conflicts in the region. China's assertive behaviour is evident as it sends Chinese tourists to the islands claimed by Vietnam, deploys oil rig in the disputed water and restrict movements of the Vietnamese fishermen. In this background, the strategic and security relation between India and Vietnam gains more implications.
- India has lot to learn from Vietnam when it comes to dealing with the US. Despite past damages done to the relationship, today US and Vietnam share noteworthy economic relationship. Vietnam's leaders are pragmatic and US is happy that Vietnam has opened its market for it. At the same time, China's policy towards Vietnam and South China Sea is pushing Vietnam towards US in a more concrete way.
- In the successive years after the Geneva Accords, US initiated SEATO, which was a NATO-like military alliance involving many countries including several nations from Southeast Asia, and wanted to restrain the spread of communism in the region. Gradually, Southeast Asia became a vital spot of Cold War in the years to come.
- Despite all feel-good factors, however, it was agreed that the Geneva Accords did not fully reflect the interests of the people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In fact, their voices were marginalised by the dominant trend of De'tente and compromise among powerful countries.

ASEAN

Increasing Incidents of Piracy

A Malaysian tanker, which was on its way from Singapore to Sandakan in Borneo Island was attacked and its gas oil cargo was stolen by the pirates. Noel Choong, head of the International Maritime Bureau's Kuala Lumpur-based Piracy Reporting Centre warned that this is the ninth incident in these waters in recent times. In the first week of July itself, pirates attacked one Singapore-managed tanker in South China Sea and damaged its communication equipments in addition to stealing its cargo.¹

North Korean Foreign Minister Visited ASEAN Nations

The North Korean Central News Agency reported that North Korean foreign minister Ri Su-yong visited Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore in the first week of August 2014. This visit began with Laos and Vietnam. Then the North Korean delegation attended ASEAN Regional Forum meeting in Myanmar on August 10. Visits to Indonesia and Singapore came later. The foreign minister also met his Japanese counterpart in Myanmar during the ARF meeting and

both sides had a discussion on the infamous abduction cases of few Japanese citizens by North Korea decades ago.²

First Six Months of Myanmar's Chairmanship of ASEAN Completed

Myanmar has done reasonably well in managing the ASEAN affairs as the Chair of the grouping and proved its efficiency after a long wait of almost 17 years. The most gruesome problem was the recent spat in South China Sea which has been managed in a diplomatic way. Even, this year's joint communiqué has been more encompassing than the previous year's, as mentioned by some scholars and observers.³ In July-August, Myanmar hosted ASEAN Regional Forum meeting, ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting, ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting and many other meetings as per the schedule. On August 26, at the ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting, ASEAN, New Zealand and Australia decided to amend the existing trade pact and signed the First Protocol to Amend the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA). The protocol will facilitate trade by ensuring timely update of the Product Specific Rules and the Schedules of Tariff Commitments using the most recent version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, mentioned ASEAN Secretariat. It will be effective from March 31, 2015.⁴

¹ "Pirates attack Malaysia tanker in South China Sea, steal cargo", First Post.com, 16 July 2014, available at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/pirates-attack-malaysia-tanker-south-china-sea-steal-cargo-1621161.html>, accessed on 18 July 2014.

² "N. Korean FM to Tour SE Asia", The Chosunilbo, available at http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/08/04/2014080401523.html, accessed on 5 August 2014.

³ Chongkittavorn, Kavi (2014), "Mid-term review of Myanmar's Asean chair", The Nation, 19 August 2014, available at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Mid-term-review-of-Myanmars-Asean-chair-30241115.html>, accessed on 19 August 2014.

⁴ "ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand Sign Protocol to Improve Trade Pact", ASEAN Secretariat, September 1, 2014, available at http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-australia-and-new-zealand-sign-protocol-to-improve-trade-pact?category_id=27, accessed on September 4, 2014.

Indian Cinema Week in Cambodia

Cambodia welcomed the first Indian Cinema Week in Phnom Penh on August 16. The film festival lasted for five days and featured 15 movies. As the Indian cinema has completed 100 years, the Indian Embassy in Cambodia along with Cambodian Film Commission and Bophana Center organized the festival. Besides, the other reason was to enhance Indo-Cambodian cultural ties.⁵

ASEAN-India

Xi Invited India to Attend APEC Summit in China in November 2014

Ahead of BRICS summit in Brazil, Chinese President Xi Jinping invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the upcoming APEC summit in China later this year. The official spokesperson of ministry of external affairs of India, Syed Akbaruddin said that this is a significant step. This indicates more comprehensive partnership involving India, China and the Asia-Pacific. For the first time in the history of APEC, India has got an invitation from China to participate in its summit.⁶

BIMSTEC BTILS Seminar in New Delhi

BIMSTEC BTILS seminar was held in New Delhi on July 14, 2014. Previous meetings were conducted in Yangon, Myanmar in June 2013, Mae Sot, Thailand in March 2014 and Dhaka, Bangladesh in May 2014. The workshop was addressed by the Secretary (East) of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Anil Wadhwa who appreciated Asian Development Bank's efforts to finalize the BIMSTEC transport infrastructure and logistics study which will enable the joint working group on transport and connectivity of BIMSTEC to design their action plan and act accordingly.⁷

EAM Sushma Swaraj Visited Myanmar for ARF Meeting

External Affairs Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj visited Nay Pyi Taw to attend the 21st session of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) between 8-11 August 2014. This was EAM's first visit to any Southeast Asian country after the new government in India came in power. Some consider this visit as the stage rehearsal for PM Modi's upcoming visit to Myanmar in November for India-ASEAN Summit and East Asia Summit. In her statement, the EAM mentioned about terrorism, unification of Korean peninsula, ongoing situation in West Asia, recent developments in South China Sea and

⁵ "First Indian cinema week kicks off in Cambodian capital", Global Post, 16 August 2014, available at <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/140816/first-indian-cinema-week-kicks-cambodian-capital>, accessed on 19 August 2014.

⁶ "China invites India to APEC summit for the first time", DNA, 15 July 2014, available at <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-china-invites-india-to-apec-summit-for-the-first-time-2002314>, accessed on 15 July 2014.

⁷ "Keynote Address by Secretary (East) at BIMSTEC BTILS Seminar in New Delhi (July 14, 2014)", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, available at <http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/23623/Keynote+Address+by+Secretary+East+at+BIMSTEC+BTILS+Seminar+in+New+Delhi+July+14+2014>, accessed on 15 July 2014.

overall regional security architecture. On the sidelines of the ARF summit, the EAM had bilateral meetings with her counterparts from China, Japan and Australia amongst many others.⁸

EAM Sushma Swaraj Visited Singapore

The External Affairs Minister of India paid a 24 hours visit to Singapore on August 16 and requested the city-state government to help India in its new venture of building 100 smart cities as satellites of the larger ones. As Singapore has vast experience in city-planning, this cooperation from Singapore, if grounded, will be extremely beneficial for India. The NDA government in its July budget has allocated INR 7060 Crore for its 100 smart cities project.⁹

EMA Sushma Swaraj Visited Vietnam

On August 25, EAM Sushma Swaraj visited Vietnam for a bilateral on issues like trade, connectivity and defence and security cooperation. She met her counterpart, Pham Binh Minh and Vietnamese PM Nguyen Tan Dung. She mentioned about the new government's 'Act East Policy' in which Vietnam will be an essential component. Few days back, Vietnam has renewed OVL's lease of two

oil blocks in South China Sea. Therefore, this visit by the Indian external affairs minister comes at a right time.¹⁰

Northeast India- Look East Policy

The 5th Indo-Myanmar regional Border committee meeting

The 5th Indo-Myanmar Regional Border Committee Meeting was held on July 25 in Imphal. Lt Gen SL Narasimhan, AVSM, VSM, GOC 3 Corps led the Indian delegation and Maj Gen Min Naung, Commander North West Command led the Myanmar delegation. This meeting happened after the MoU signed on border cooperation between India and Myanmar was signed on May.¹¹

Indo-Myanmar Meeting

A meeting was held between India and Myanmar at Tamu Army Headquarters on August 4, 2014 to discuss about the proposed hydro power plant sponsored by India in Myanmar. Manipur's commerce and industry minister Govindas Konthoujam also requested the Myanmar delegation to support the opening of integrated check post at Moreh in order to enhance border trade between two countries.¹²

⁸ "Intervention by External Affairs Minister at 21st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Meeting, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar", Ministry of External Affairs, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtI/23882/Intervention+by+External+Affairs+Minister+at+21st+ASEAN+Regional+Forum+ARF+Meeting+Nay+Pyi+Taw+Myanmar>, accessed on 11 August 2014.

⁹ "Singapore to help India in smart cities project", The Economic Times, 16 August 2014, Available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-16/news/52873573_1_smart-cities-singapore-india-today, accessed on 19 August 2014.

¹⁰ "Sushma Swaraj to discuss trade, defence issues with Vietnam during her visit", First Post, 25 August 2014, available at <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/sushma-swaraj-discuss-trade-defence-issues-vietnam-visit-1679575.html>, accessed on 25 August 2014.

¹¹ "Indo-Myanmar meeting asserts on maintaining good ties", 27 July 2014, Morung Express, available at <http://www.morungexpress.com/local/119358.html>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

¹² "Indo Myanmar Meet", The Sangai express and E pao, 4 August 2014, available at <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=18..050814.aug14>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

Myanmar's Information Minister Mentioned Myanmar's Desire to Help India in Curbing Insurgency

Myanmar's Information Minister U Ye Htut commented that Myanmar government is fully aware of the Indian government's concern about existence of nexuses between insurgents along the border of the two countries and Myanmar is willing to help India in handling these issues. However, India has to provide right information about the movements of the insurgents and terrorists, he mentioned in an interview with Press Trust of India after the ARF meeting in Myanmar.¹³

Brunei

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah Met China's Foreign Minister

Foreign minister of People's Republic of China, Wang Yi met the foreign minister of Brunei Mohamed Bolkiah on the sidelines of ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Nay Pyi Taw. Since China and Brunei signed the strategic partnership agreement in 2013, both countries have exchanged several high level delegations. Both China and Brunei agreed that 'dual track' approach needs to be taken to solve the South China Sea dispute which includes consultations and safeguarding

peace and stability in the region.¹⁴

Defence Cooperation between Brunei and Indonesia

The inaugural Joint Defence Committee Meeting between Brunei and Indonesia was held in Brunei in the last week of August. Bilateral defence and military cooperation, joint operations and exercises and training and education were some of the issues discussed at the meeting. The MoU on defence cooperation signed between Indonesia and Brunei in 2003 formed the foundation of this joint defence committee.¹⁵

Cambodia

Two Khmer Rouge Leaders Sentenced For Their Acts

The top two surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, Nuon Chea, now 88 and Khieu Samphan, now 83, have been sentenced to jail for their actions during the brutal Khmer Rouge which was responsible for at least 2.2 million deaths in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. The UN backed tribunal, after many delays, finally gave the verdict which is supported by the international community. Judge Nil Nonn said, "There were widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population of Cambodia, attacks through many forms - forced transfer, murder, extermination, disappearances, attacks

¹³ "Myanmar to act against NE militant groups if provided inputs: Information Minister U Ye Htut", The Economic Times, 24 August 2014, available at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/myanmar-to-act-against-ne-militant-groups-if-provided-inputs-information-minister-u-ye-htut/articleshow/40858189.cms>, accessed on 25 August 2014.

¹⁴ "Wang Yi Met with Brunei Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Prince Mohamed Bolkiah", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, August 8, 2014, available at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1181557.shtml, accessed on September 4, 2014.

¹⁵ "Brunei, Indo hold inaugural joint defense cooperation meeting", Free Malaysia Today.com, August 23, 2014, available at <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/world/2014/08/23/brunei-indo-hold-inaugural-joint-defense-cooperation-meeting/>, accessed on September 4, 2014.

¹⁶ Thul, Prak Chan (2014), "U.N.-backed tribunal in Cambodia jails Khmer Rouge duo for life", Global Post, 7 August 2014, available at <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/thomson-reuters/140807/un-backed-tribunal-cambodia-jails-khmer-rouge-duo-life>, accessed on 8 August 2014.

against human dignity and political persecution” Nuon Chea was the Brother Number Two and Khieu Samphan was the President during Khmer Rouge.¹⁶ Pol Pot, who was the Brother Number One, died in 1998.

Cambodia Japan Friendship Bridge to be Renovated

Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Sen, in a meeting with Japan’s minister of land management, infrastructure, transport and tourism, requested Japan to renovate the Cambodia Japan Friendship Bridge that was built during the 1960s with support from Japan. However, now the bridge is in a failing state and henceforth the request came from Cambodian side.¹⁷

International Committee for Preah Vihear Temple

Cambodia will set up an international committee for safeguarding and developing Preah Vihear temple site in partnership with UNESCO. This will be an international committee which will coordinate all assistance given by other countries to preserve and develop the heritage site of Preah Vihear. In November 2013, the International Court of Justice has given its rule that Cambodia has sovereignty over the temple and its adjacent land. However, since then,

Cambodia and Thailand have not taken any step to start negotiation or discussion to implement the ICJ rule.¹⁸

Indonesia

Presidential Election in Indonesia

On July 9, the presidential election was conducted in Indonesia and within few hours, both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto have claimed victory. Joko Widodo aka Jokowi’s patron and former President Megawati Sukarnoputri have said, “even though this is still in the vote-counting process, we already can say that Jokowi will be president”. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the Chair of PDI-P appointed Jokowi as the party’s presidential candidate in March 2014.¹⁹ On July 22, Jokowi was declared as the winner in the presidential election.

Leaders from US, Australia and Japan congratulated Jokowi as he won the race for the position of the President in Indonesia with almost 53% of the votes. Singapore and some other ASEAN countries too congratulated Jokowi. However, interestingly India, China and South Korea did not congratulate Jokowi as they were presumably waiting for the other contestant Prabowo Subianto to file his lawsuit in the Constitutional Court of Indonesia.²⁰

In the meantime, People in Sukoharjo, near the city of Solo, voted once again for the presidential

¹⁷ Bopha, Phorn (2014), “Hun Sen Asks Japan for Help Renovating Bridge”, The Cambodia Daily, available at <http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/hun-sen-asks-japan-for-help-renovating-bridge-66707/>, accessed on 19 August 2014.

¹⁸ “Cambodia to establish int’l committee for safeguarding, developing world heritage Preah Vihear”, 19 August 2014, englishnews.cn, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/culture/2014-08/19/c_133568463.htm

¹⁹ Sebastian, Leonard C. (2014), “Indonesia’s Disputed 2014 Presidential Elections: What Next?”, RSIS, No. 137, 11 July.

²⁰ “World Leaders ‘Slow’ in Congratulating Jokowi”, 24 July 2014, The Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/07/24/world-leaders-slow-congratulating-jokowi.html>, accessed on 24 July 2014.

candidate on July 17 as allegations of fraud forced the Indonesian election commission to conduct re-voting and re-counting in some places. Besides several people who were found to be involved in election fraud have been fired.²¹

The losing candidate Prabowo Subianto filed a complaint in Indonesia's Constitutional Court challenging the official result of the presidential election.²² On August 21, the Constitutional Court of Indonesia declared that Joko Widodo has won the presidential election and thereby the claim of Prabowo Subianto got dismissed.

Finally, by the first week of August, Jokowi appointed a high-powered advisory committee to handle his transition to power. The five-member committee will design a roadmap to realize the promises made by the president-elect Joko Widodo during his campaign.²³ Jokowi will take over the charge as the president of Indonesia on October 20, 2014.

Indonesia's Capital Will Get its First Chinese-Christian Governor in October

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama will become the first Christian- Chinese Governor of

Jakarta after Joko Widodo, the president-elect will take charge of his office in October. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama aka Ahok is a Chinese-Christian who is known in Indonesia's politics. Sources say, he has never tried to hide his ethnic Chinese identity; but, at the same time, he has not used his identity to rise to the political platform. During Suharto's era, only indigenous Indonesians were encouraged to be in the forefront of Indonesian politics and other aspects of life. Though this policy is not in practice now, rise of a non-Muslim Chinese Christian as a Jakarta Governor will add more flavor of multiculturalism to Indonesia's politics.²⁴

Laos

Presidents of Lao PDR and China Met in Beijing

Laotian President Choummaly Sayasone who is also the General Secretary of Lao People's Revolutionary party (LPRP) met Chinese President Xi Jinping in the first week of August in Beijing and both leaders pledged to enhance greater cooperation and connectivity between two countries. Closer cooperation at the borders was one of the concerns discussed during the meeting.²⁵

²¹ Satriawan, Y. (2014), "Indonesia Conducts Limited Re-vote Due to Fraud", Voice of America, 17 July 2014, available at <http://www.voanews.com/content/indonesia-conducts-limited-revote-due-to-fraud/1959866.html>, accessed on 18 July 2014.

²² "Indonesia's Prabowo challenges election result at Constitutional Court", 27 July 2014, available at <http://www.allmediany.com/news/28459-indonesia039s-prabowo-challenges-election-result-at-constitutional-court>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

²³ Kapoor, K. (2014), "CORRECTED-Indonesian president-elect unveils high-powered transition team", Reuters, 4 August 2014, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/05/indonesia-president-team-idUSL4N0QA1AD20140805>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

²⁴ Basuki, T. (2014), "First Ethnic Chinese Governor of Jakarta Takes Indonesia Forward", Jakarta Globe, 22 August 2014, available at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/opinion/first-ethnic-chinese-governor-jakarta-takes-indonesia-forward/>, accessed on 25 August 2014.

²⁵ "Laos and China Explore Closer Ties during Beijing Meetings", Chinatopix.com, 6 August 2014, available at <http://www.chinatopix.com/articles/5875/20140806/laos-china-explore-close-ties-during-beijing-meetings-politics.htm>, accessed on 7 August 2014.

Malaysia

MH 17 Struck by Missile

Malaysian Airlines Flight MH 17 was shot down by a surface-to-air missile in Ukraine near the Russian border when it was on its way to Kuala Lumpur from Amsterdam on 17 July 2014. A total of 298 people were on board.²⁶ Out of them, 195 were from Netherlands and the Dutch Safety Board is leading an investigation of the crash which was masterminded by some pro-Russian separatists. On the other hand, experts who were trying to recover remaining bits and pieces from the crash site, could not do so because of the clashes between the Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian rebels.²⁷ Reports of bomb explosion and gun battles are coming from areas near the site. Representative of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is negotiating between the Ukraine army and the rebels on giving safe passage to the rescuers for removal of human remains from the crash site, confirmed the report of bomb explosion.²⁸

According to some reports, Malaysia

Airlines is losing between \$1 million and \$2 million per day due to lost ticket sales after the tragic events of MH 370 and MH 17 happened within less than four months.²⁹

Malaysia and Thailand to Improve Cooperation on Border Management

The 30th High Level Committee Meeting (HLC) on border security and management was concluded in Kota Kinabalu on August 16 in an order to enhance ties between Malaysia and Thailand. Sabah Defence Ministry's corporate communications unit mentioned, "The objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for the HLC joint chairmen and its members to meet, exchange ideas and discuss matters of mutual interest pertaining to border security along the shared border areas of both countries."³⁰

Myanmar

Sectarian Riot in Mandalay

The Myanmar authority has charged 34 people for a sectarian riot that hit Mandalay on July 1. The riot broke out in retaliation of an incident of rape. All the accused were charged with murder, arson, causing harm, incitement and illegal possession of arms. Government declared

²⁶ Curry, C and Martinez, Luis (2014), "Malaysian Airlines Plane Brought Down by Missile in Ukraine: US official", ABC News, 17 July 2014, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/malaysian-air-loses-contact-passenger-plane-ukraine/story?id=24599558>, accessed on 18 July 2014.

²⁷ Deutsch, Antony (2014), "Trial over Malaysian plane crash not likely at ICC – Dutch", Reuters and Chicago Tribune, 30 July 2014, available at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-ukraine-crisis-airplane-trial-20140730,0,5517800.story>, accessed on 31 July 2014.

²⁸ "MH17: war escalating near Malaysia Airlines crash site", News.Com.Au, 4 August 2014, available at <http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/mh17-war-escalating-near-malaysia-airlines-crash-site/story-fnizu68q-1227012274668>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

²⁹ Veysey, S. (2014), "Malaysia Airlines leads with biggest aviation losses for 2014", Business Insurance, 3 August 2014, available at <http://www.businessinsurance.com/article/20140803/NEWS07/308039984?tags=|312|303>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

³⁰ "Malaysia, Thailand enhance close ties on border management" The Rakyat Post, 16 August 2014, available at <http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2014/08/16/malaysia-thailand-enhance-close-ties-border-management/>, accessed on 19 August 2014.

curfew for all seven townships in Mandalay.³¹ By the first week of August the government has arrested a total of 56 people for the riot.³²

Workers' Outrage in Yangon

Master Sports Footwear Company, a South Korean entrepreneur has closed their factory in Myanmar in May without paying the wages to the laborers and that caused a protest by the workers in front of the South Korean Embassy in Yangon in July 2014. U Htay, the lawyer for the workers said, "This is because the government never stands for the grassroots people.... It's all because they cannot handle the rule of law and there is even more corruption and bias on the part of government officials and the businessmen. The only victims are the workers and grassroots people."³³

Future of Aung Saan Suu Kyi Still Unclear

After a parliamentary committee decided that the charter relating to the criterion of becoming president of the country as described by the present constitution of Myanmar will not be changed the future

of Daw Aung Saan Suu Kyi remains unclear as she will not be able to run for presidency because of her marriage and two sons who are British citizens. NLD's central executive committee member Win Htein mentioned that within the party, there is no alternative for Suu Kyi and henceforth, the party is still trying to convince the government for amending Article 59(f) that is barring her from running for presidency.³⁴

Generation 88 has launched a signature campaign and claimed that it has gained around 5 million support for Daw Aung Saan Suu Kyi's candidature for presidency. The election commission has however said that it would not consider this signature campaign as any valid reason to amend the constitution.³⁵

Informal Talk between NCCT and Government

The Nation-wide Ceasefire Coordination Team, (NCCT) a 16-member team comprising of ethnic leaders hold an informal meeting with minister Aung Min, a member of the Union Peace Working Committee, (UPWC) the government appointed committee which is working for a nation-wide ceasefire programme by the end of 2014 and a political talk which is expected to begin by early next year. This informal talk, conducted in Myitkyina, is supposed to be one

³¹ "Myanmar Arrests 34 Suspects Involved in Mandalay Riot", Xinhua News Agency and Global Post, 14 July 2014, available at <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/140713/myanmar-arrests-34-suspects-involved-mandalay-riot>, accessed on 15 July 2014.

³² "56 suspects arrested for Myanmar's riots", Two Circles.net, 3 August 2014, available at http://twocircles.net/2014aug03/56_suspects_arrested_myanmars_riots.html#.U-Br56N5TGg, accessed on 5 August 2014.

³³ "700 Protest S. Korean Factory Closure in Myanmar", The Associated Press and The State, 17 July 2014, available at <http://www.thestate.com/2014/07/17/3568894/700-protest-s-korean-factory-closure.html>, accessed on 18 July 2014.

³⁴ Blake, C and Thu, K. (2014), "Myanmar Charter Bar a Dilemma for Suu Kyi Party: Southeast Asia", Business Week, 3 August 2014, available at <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2014-08-03/myanmar-charter-bar-a-dilemma-for-suu-kyi-party-southeast-asia>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

³⁵ "Myanmar's Suu Kyi gains 5m signatures in presidency fight", CHannel News Asia, 6 August 2014, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/myanmar-s-suu-kyi-gains/1299936.html>, accessed on 7 August 2014.

of the last talks between NCCT and UPWC. However, even when the informal negotiation was going on, two NCCT members, which have not signed bilateral ceasefire agreements with president Thein Sein, the Kachin Independence Army and Ta'ang National Liberation Army were having clashes with the Tatmadaw. Another powerful armed ethnic group, the United Wa State Army is not a part of the NCCT. Henceforth, despite all feel-good approaches, the real peace settlement will undoubtedly take time in Myanmar.³⁶

New Central Economic Zone in Muse to Boost Trade with Yunnan

Myanmar has recently set up a Central Economic Zone (CEZ) in Muse, a border town linking Ruili in Yunnan, China and Shan Province of Myanmar. The new CEZ has been established in an area covering 120 hectares of land and the Myanmar government has spent almost USD 51.54 million. It has 18 estates including jade trading facilities, markets, shops, hotels, restaurants and housing complexes. Muse is the largest border trade point between China and Myanmar and border trade via Muse was estimated at USD 3 billion in 2013-14.³⁷

Thai-Myanmar Talk on Defence and Security

Thai Supreme Commander Tanasak Patimapragorn visited Myanmar to attend a high-level committee meeting to talk on peace along the border between Thailand and Myanmar. The meeting was held in Bagan between August 20-22, 2014 and Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing led the delegation from Myanmar side. Both sides agreed to exchange information on illegal activities, increase cooperation to handle narcotics trafficking, promote joint military participation in disaster response as well as enhance border trade and establish free border trade areas to facilitate cargo movement across the borders. General Tanasak Patimapragorn is now holding the position of deputy chief in National Council for Peace and Order in Thailand. Thailand also agreed to train Myanmar soldiers.³⁸

Philippines

Clash between Rebels and Military

In a sudden fight between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (previously known as Moro Islamic Liberation Front/MILF) and the Filipino military troops, at least 18 people were killed and 13 injured in the last quarter of July.³⁹

³⁶ "Myanmar Government Expects Cease-Fire Deal Soon", Radio Free Asia, 4 August 2014, available at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/ceasefire-08042014172042.html>, accessed on 5 August 2014.

³⁷ "Myanmar implements central economic zone in border town with China", Shanghai Daily.com, 19 August 2014, available at http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=236136, accessed on 19 August 2014.

³⁸ Nanuam, W (2014), "Thai-Myanmar ties tightened", Bangkok Post, 23 August 2014, available at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/428308/thai-myanmar-ties-tightened>, accessed on 25 August 2014.

³⁹ "18 Killed in Philippines Clash", 22 July 2014, IANS, http://www.ianslive.in/index.php?param=news/18_killed_in_Philippines_clash-433528/LatestNews/31, accessed on 24 July 2014.

Filipino Proposal for Settlement of South China Sea Disputes

In the ARF meeting, Manila proposed to freeze all activities that can raise tension in the disputed waters of South China Sea. Filipino foreign secretary Albert del Rosario mentioned that “We have this plan to submit a suggestion on a moratorium and that would be the immediate approach to the exacerbating problems in the South China Sea.” This proposal is a part of three-pronged action plan which also includes implementation of a code of conduct in the South China Sea and arbitration to settle disputes.⁴⁰ However, the Philippines did not get much support for this plan.

Peace Deal at Stake in the Philippines

The Filipino President Benigno Aquino's efforts to ensure peace deal with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has been stalled as the rebel leaders are accusing the government for revising and redrafting the peace deal in such a way which is not acceptable to them. The Bangsamoro law which is supposed to be enacted does not have the necessary articles on territory, resources and government infrastructures which were included in the peace deal earlier. The revisions made by Aquino's legal team will make Bangsamoro more dependent on the central assistance. The rebels, on the other hand, want full

autonomy for the proposed Bangsamoro region.⁴¹

Singapore

CARAT Exercise between Singapore and US

The naval forces of Singapore and United States have initiated this years' CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) exercise in parts of South China Sea on 29 July 2014. Exercise CARAT Singapore was initiated in 1995. Besides Singapore, US Navy also does the same exercise with Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste. Rear-Adm Timothy Lo, Fleet Commander, RSN (Republic of Singapore Navy) mentioned, “Today, CARAT Singapore features an array of serials spanning all dimensions of maritime warfare, maritime security, force protection and base defence. The CARAT series of exercises is in keeping with this spirit of building friendship and cooperation,”⁴²

Thailand

Support for Military Junta in Thailand Evident

An interim charter has been issued in Thailand which would form an interim government in the country. However, the Thai military would remain in power in the form of National Council for Peace and Administration in Thailand even after the interim government takes the charge.

⁴⁰ Mogato, Manuel, (2014), “Philippines to propose no action to raise tension in sea disputes”, 29 July, Reuters, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/29/us-philippines-southchinasea-idUSKBN0FYOW620140729>, accessed on 31 July 2014.

⁴¹ Mogato, M (2014), “Philippine peace deal in jeopardy as Muslim rebels cry foul”, Reuters, 6 August 2014, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/06/us-philippines-rebels-idUSKBN0G60F720140806>, accessed on 7 August 2014.

⁴² Fai, L.K. (2014), “Singapore, US Kick Off Joint Military Exercise in South China Sea”, Channel News Asia, 29 July 2014, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-us-kick-off/1287056.html>, accessed on 31 July 2014.

The National Institute of Development Administration of Thailand has concluded some surveys and came to the decision that majority of the Thais support the military junta that came into power on 22 May. The poll said that almost 66% of the people surveyed are happy that the Junta governs the country. The two-month performance of the Junta government in Thailand has received an approval rate of 8.87 out of 10 which is significant.⁴³

General Named as PM in Thailand

A parliament consisted of handpicked members chosen by the Junta has selected General Prayuth Chan-Ocha as the prime minister of the country. As a prime minister, he will now form an interim government and the army will continue to enjoy advantageous position in that government. On May 22, the Thai army staged a coup under the leadership of General Prayuth Chan-Ocha and ousted the government of the Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.⁴⁴

Border Consortium with Myanmar in the First Week of August

The 24th Thai Myanmar Border Consortium was conducted in Kayah State, Myanmar with the aim to accomplish greater cooperation at the local level. Both sides agreed to promote cooperation at

military level as well as at people's level to improve the quality of life at the border areas. Border trade was another topic for discussion.⁴⁵

Vietnam

8th Political Consultation between Singapore and Vietnam

Vietnam and Singapore conducted the 8th Political Consultation in Singapore on July 10-11 where both sides reviewed their strategic partnership; spoke on improving bilateral ties and cross-cultural linkages. In September 2014, Singapore's former PM Goh Chok Tong will visit Vietnam. Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Quang Vinh led his country's delegation for this consultation. Besides other things, both sides reiterated the necessity of maintaining the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (DOC) and trying to achieve a Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC) to resolve the disputes in South China Sea. Singapore and Vietnam established their strategic partnership in September 2013 during Singaporean PM Lee Hsein Loong's visit to Vietnam.⁴⁶

Australia

Code of Conduct with Indonesia

Australian foreign minister Julie Bishop signed

⁴³ "Thailand Military Junta gains Majority Support", 27 July 2014, available at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/thailand-military-junta-gains-majority-support/articleshow/39123257.cms>, accessed on 28 July 2014.

⁴⁴ Neuman, Scott (2014), "Thailand's Parliament Hands Prime Minister Post To Coup Leader", 21 August 2014, available at <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/08/21/342169782/thailands-parliament-hands-prime-minister-post-to-coup-leader>, accessed on 22 August 2014.

⁴⁵ "24th Thai-Myanmar Border Consortium meeting held to improve relationship", National News Bureau of Thailand, 3 August 2014, available at http://thainews.prd.go.th/centerweb/newsen/NewsDetail?NT01_NewsID=WNPOL5708040010001, accessed on 5 August 2014.

⁴⁶ "Singapore Vietnam Hold 8th Political Consultation", Vietnam Net, 14 July 2014, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/107356/singapore-vietnam-hold-8th-political-consultation.html>, accessed on 15 July 2014.

a code of conduct with her Indonesian counterpart Marty Natalegawa to enhance cooperation between the two countries on issues covering intelligence and counter-terrorism. This CoC between Australia and Indonesia is important as Australia allegedly spied on the Indonesian president and his family recently. The rise of ISIS in Iraq and their suspected relations with the Indonesian terrorists definitely served as a backdrop of this Code of Conduct.⁴⁷

Defence Dialogue between Australia and US

At the annual AUSMIN talks held between US and Australian defence ministers and defence officials in the middle of August, both sides decided to increase US military presence in Australia. As China rejected US idea of restraining itself from provocative actions in South China Sea, this annual defence dialogue between US and Australia decided to boost US military presence in the region.⁴⁸

New Zealand

Russia and Other Countries Objected to New Zealand's MPA Formation in Ross Sea

As New Zealand was trying to create a marine protected area (MPA) in the Ross

Sea, Russia, Japan, China and Ukraine joined hands together to resist the country in doing so. The Commission for the Conservation on Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) could not reach to a decision on the agenda. Russian side claimed that by creating a MPA New Zealand would try to expand its geo-political control over southern Polar Regions.⁴⁹

Fiji

Fijian Peacekeepers Detained in Syria

44 Fijian soldiers, working as UN peacekeepers have been captured in Syria by the rebel forces. The soldiers are reportedly unharmed by the rebels and negotiations have been started to de-escalate the situation. Fiji has a small army of only 3500 soldiers and out of them around 434 have been sent to Golan Heights on UN peacekeeping operations. The soldiers are equipped with enough arms and weapons to defend themselves. Along with the Fijian soldiers, around 81 Filipino soldiers have also been detained by the rebels.⁵⁰

Fijian Election will have Multination Observers from Australia, India and Other Countries

A multinational observation group has been formed under the leadership of Australia to supervise the general election to be held in Fiji. Other members of the observation group include

⁴⁷ "Australia, Indonesia Sign a Code of Conduct Over Intelligence", August 27, 2014, The Wall Street Journal, available at <http://online.wsj.com/articles/australia-indonesia-sign-a-code-of-conduct-over-intelligence-1409125163>, accessed on September 8, 2014.

⁴⁸ Hellman, Mellisa, The U.S. Will Increase Its Military Presence in Australia, August 12, 2014, Time.com, available at <http://time.com/3102616/us-military-presence-australia/>, accessed on September 8, 2014.

⁴⁹ Field, Michael, Russia accuses New Zealand of territorial games, stuff.co.nz, August 26, 2014, available at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/60869126/Russia-accuses-New-Zealand-of-territorial-games>, accessed on September 8, 2014.

⁵⁰ LIGAIULA, Pita and PERRY, Nick, 44 Fijian Soldiers Held Captive by Rebels in Syria, Associated press and ABC News, August 29, 2014, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fiji-43-soldiers-captured-golan-heights-25170123>, accessed on September 8, 2014.

India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and other ten countries. The poll is expected to be held on September 17 and this will be the first election in Fiji since the coup happened in 2006.⁵¹

Papua New Guinea

Volcanic Eruption Caused Flight Diversion and Evacuation

A volcanic eruption in Mount Tavurvur on August 28 forced the authorities in Papua New Guinea to evacuate people and divert flights to avoid any major accident and fatalities. Mount Tavurvur is one of the most active volcanoes in the region and in 1994 along with nearby Mount Vulcan, it destroyed the entire city of Rabaul.⁵²

⁵¹ "Australia, India to co-lead observers team to monitor Fiji polls", Zee News, August 14, 2014, available at http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/australia-india-to-co-lead-observers-team-to-monitor-fiji-polls_954552.html, accessed on September 8, 2014.

⁵² "Papua New Guinea volcano erupts, locals evacuate", Newsobserver.com, August 29, 2014, available at <http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/08/29/4104992/papua-new-guinea-volcano-erupts.html>, accessed on September 8, 2014.

Centre Activities for July and August

1. Second Preparatory Meeting for Delhi Dialogue VII was conducted on 16 July 2014. Representatives from MEA, IDSA, ICWA, FICCI, CII, ICC, ASEAN-India Center were present in the meeting. ISIS (Malaysia), ISAS (Singapore) and AIAI (Mumbai) participated in the meeting through video conferencing.
2. Brig. (Retd.) Rahul Bhonsle delivered a talk on Implications of Chinese Presence in Myanmar and Bangladesh on 17 July 2014.
3. A Round Table was organized to celebrate 60 years of Geneva Accords and India-Vietnam bilateral relations at IDSA on 24 July 2014 in partnership with the Embassy of Vietnam, New Delhi.
4. An interaction was organized with Ms. Kavita Kewal, Assistant Secretary, and Australian Ministry of Defence on 22 July 2014.
5. Amb. Aftab Seth delivered a talk on 'Security Cooperation in the Region and the China Factor' on 31 July 2014.

ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

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