

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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EDITOR: SANJEEV KUMAR SHRIVASTAV

REVIEW ADVISOR: S. KALYANARAMAN

CONTRIBUTORS

PRANAMITA BARUAH – Southeast Asia

MEDHA BISHT- Maldives

SANJEEV KUMAR SHRIVASTAV - Afghanistan

PRIYANKA SINGH- Pakistan

PRASHANT KUMAR SINGH- China



**INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES,
1, DEVELOPMENT ENCLAVE, RAO TULA RAM MARG, NEW DELHI – 110010**

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1. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **Holbrooke: India can play an important role in Afghanistan; US Armed Services Committee Chairman describes Haqqani network as the "greatest external threat" to Afghanistan; Gen Petraeus calls for banning the Haqqani network; US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and EAM Krishna to attend Kabul conference; Reports: Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is one of the chief allies of Taliban; EU postpones 600 million Euros aid package to Afghanistan until September this year; Afghan cabinet approves a bill aimed at putting corrupt ministers on trial; Russia to cooperate with NATO on the issues of arms supplies to Afghanistan**

Ahead of a significant international donors' conference in Kabul on July 20 which is aimed at re-integration of Taliban, the US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke has said that India can play an important role in Afghanistan. Holbrooke stated, "India has a very real role in the region for historic and strategic reasons... and they can play an important role in resolving these issue." However he noted that it was for New Delhi to decide "who will represent India and how that will be done." Holbrooke made these comments during a meeting with the Indian ambassador to the US Meera Shankar while briefing her about his recent trip to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.¹

Meanwhile, Chairman of the US Armed Services Committee Senator Carl Levin who recently visited Af-Pak region has described the Haqqani network as the greatest external threat to Afghanistan. He stated "At the moment, the Haqqani network and their fighters coming over the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan is the greatest threat, at least external threat, to Afghanistan". He added that "More needs to be done by Pakistan" to curb their activities. However reports noted that under pressure from key lawmakers and top military commanders, the Obama administration is now considering putting the Haqqani group and the Taliban's Quetta Shura on the terror list.² Reports noted

¹ "India can play important role in Afghanistan: Holbrooke", *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2010 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/India-can-play-important-role-in-Afghanistan-Holbrooke/articleshow/6166049.cms>

² "U.S. May Label Pakistan Militants as Terrorists", *The New York Times*, July 13, 2010 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/14/world/asia/14diplo.html>

that top NATO commander in Afghanistan Gen David Petraeus has mooted the idea of blacklisting the Haqqani network.³

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and India's External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna would be among many foreign ministers and international leaders who will attend the Kabul conference on July 20. The Kabul conference is said to be largest gathering of international leaders in Afghanistan since 1970s. This conference is a follow up to the London conference held early this year. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will also attend the conference.⁴

According to an article published in US based Long War journal, Lashkar-e-Taiba is one of the chief Taliban allies which are fighting in Afghanistan against international coalition forces. This report confirms that LeT has morphed into a transnational jihadi force. The research also points out that LeT remains Pakistan's favourite terror group to be used against India. However, Hafiz Saeed's outfit Jamaat-ud-Dawa has grown over the years to emerge as a pan-Islamic jihad group which provides training to Al Qaida and Taliban operatives at its training camps, the article notes.⁵

The European Union aid package to Afghanistan worth 600 million Euros which was to be delivered in the next three years period has now been postponed until September this year. According to the EU's envoy in Afghanistan, "The EU deliberately postponed the three-year aid package from May until September to see what the Afghan priorities are and how our programme fits into those priorities."⁶

Meanwhile, Afghanistan cabinet has approved a bill which will allow ministers and senior officials accused of corruption to be put on trial. Once the bill passed by parliament, it will allow the creation of a special tribunal to try officials accused of graft, a presidential spokesperson Waheed Omar noted. It would be worth noting that under Afghan law, ministers are immune from prosecution in ordinary courts.⁷

³ "Blacklist pro-Pak Haqqani group: Petraeus", *The Economic Times*, July 15, 2010 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Blacklist-pro-Pak-Haqqani-group-Petraeus/articleshow/6169792.cms>

⁴ "Hillary, Krishna to attend Kabul conference", *The Hindu*, July 14, 2010 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article515102.ece>

⁵ "Lashkar main Taliban ally in Afghanistan: US forces", *The Times of India*, July 12, 2010 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Lashkar-main-Taliban-ally-in-Afghanistan-US-forces/articleshow/6155750.cms>

⁶ "EU suspends 600 mln euros in aid to Afghanistan: envoy", *AFP*, July 13, 2010 at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i43QhxNJP75mV_dFv3kHV_JD7YHA

⁷ "Afghanistan pass bill to try ministers for corruption", *AFP*, July 13, 2010 at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hzIp1CSZickZL4JnXQDBQy04YMGg>

In other developments, Russian ambassador to Afghanistan Andrei Avetisyan has noted that Russia is ready to cooperate with NATO on the issues of arms supplies to Afghanistan. Russia is ready "to cooperate with Afghanistan and NATO unilaterally in this respect," Avetisyan stated.⁸

PAKISTAN

- **US urges Pakistan to take stringent measures against the Haqqani network; US Department of Defence and ISAF acknowledge Lashkar-e Taiba's role in assisting the Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan; BNP (Balochistan National Front) leader Habib Jalib Baloch killed in Quetta; India and Pakistan pledge to "rebuild trust through dialogue"; Economic issues especially water likely to dominate the agenda of the upcoming Strategic Dialogue between US and Pakistan**

The United States urged Pakistan to take stringent measures against the Haqqani network which is noted to have links with the Al Qaeda and is active near the Af Pak border. This was stated by Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Armed Services Committee in Kabul on July 11. Levin further noted that the Haqqani group would be added to the US terrorist blacklist as there is no possibility for the group to support peace in the region.⁹ In a related development, US Department of Defence stated that Lashkar-e Taiba is assisting the Taliban insurgents in their fight against the US forces in Afghanistan. A Pentagon report clearly stated that an arrested Taliban commander was "associated with the recent influx of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives into the Nangarhar province".¹⁰

Meanwhile, leader of the BNP (Balochistan National Front), Habib Jalib Baloch was shot dead by unknown assailants in Quetta on July 14. Baloch was a former Senator and his assassination led to large scale protests across Balochistan.¹¹

In other developments, the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan met in Islamabad where both countries pledged to "rebuild trust through dialogue". Addressing a press conference after the meet, both Foreign Ministers noted that outstanding issues were discussed and the talks were quite "useful".¹²

⁸ "Russia ready to supply Afghanistan with arms", *Xinhua*, July 12, 2010 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-07/12/c_13396291.htm

⁹ 'Pakistan must take on Haqqani network: US', *Daily Times*, July 12, 2010 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\07\12\story_12-7-2010_pg1_3

¹⁰ Anwar Iqbal, 'Link with militants in Nangarhar claimed: US terms LeT threat to regional peace', *Dawn*, July 13, 2010 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/link-with-militants-in-nangarhar-claimed-us-terms-let-threat-to-regional-peace-370>

¹¹ Muhammad Ejaz Khan, 'BNP leader Habib Jalib shot dead in Quetta', *The News*, July 15, 2010 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp?arc_date=7/15/2010

¹² 'Pakistan, India vow to rebuild trust through dialogue', *Daily Times*, July 16, 2010 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\07\16\story_16-7-2010_pg1_1

In view of the Hillary Clinton's visit to Pakistan, it was noted that economic issues especially water is going to dominate the agenda of the upcoming US-Pak Strategic Dialogue. Preparing for the Strategic Dialogue, the army has prioritized economic issues over security concerns.¹³

MALDIVES

- **President Nasheed: Implementation of constitution is the biggest challenge in Maldives; Nasheed reappoints his cabinet; US Ambassador to Maldives mediated between MDP and opposition parties for talks; United States: Maldives should accept international mediations; Supreme court orders release of Ibrahim and Yameen from detention by Maldives National Defence Force; Abdulla Yameen continues to be detained by the MNDF**

After the mass resignation of the cabinet on June 29, 2010, President Nasheed in his weekly radio address stated that the biggest challenge lie in the implementation of the constitution. Nasheed also alleged that bribes had played a major role in shaping the decisions of the Majlis.¹⁴

In order to reconcile the differences between the executive and the legislature, the US Ambassador to Maldives Patricia Butenis mediated between ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and opposition parties. Representatives of the People's Alliance (PA), Dhivehi Quamee Party (DQP), Jumhooree Party (JP), along with Deputy Speaker Ahmed Nazim and leader of the Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party (DRP) Ahmed Thasmeen Ali met with President Nasheed. Reports noted that that Nasheed expressed interest in working with the opposition.¹⁵ The political crisis seemed to be in control as Nasheed reappointed his 13 member cabinet on July 8, 2010.¹⁶ The United States also urged Maldives to accept international mediation in resolving the ongoing political crisis.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa visited Maldives in order to end the political standoff between ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and the

¹³ Kalbe Ali, 'Water crisis more important than any other issue', *Dawn*, July 17, 2010 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/06-water-crisis-created-by-india-more-important-than-any-other-issue-770-rs-07>

¹⁴ "Maldives facing biggest challenge to its constitution: President Nasheed", *Minivan News*, July 4, 2010, at <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/maldives-facing-biggest-challenge-to-its-constitution-president-nasheed-8891>

¹⁵ "US Ambassador mediates between President and opposition parties", *Minivan News*, July 6, 2010, at <http://minivannews.com/politics/us-ambassador-mediates-between-president-and-opposition-parties-9049>

¹⁶ "Maldives President reappoints his cabinet", *BBC News*, July 8, 2010, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10551210>

¹⁷ "Maldives crisis: US calls for Int'l mediation", *Yahoo News*, July 18, 2010, at http://in.news.yahoo.com/32/20100718/1069/twl-maldives-crisis-us-calls-for-int-l-m_1.html

opposition parties. He suggested forming of a committee of six members of the parliament to address the pending issues.¹⁸

Meanwhile the Supreme Court of Maldives reversed the decision of the High Court to detain two MPs Gasim Ibrahim and Abdulla Yameen who are under house arrest for fifteen days. The court ordered their release from the detention by the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF).¹⁹ However, despite the Supreme Court orders Yameen continues to be detained by the MNDF. However, the opposition has launched series of protest against the continued detention of Yameen.²⁰

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **China rules out a joint military exercise with DPRK; The 3rd China-Singapore Defense Policy Dialogue held in Beijing; Argentina and Germany sign important agreements with China; The first high level strategic dialogue between China and Britain held; Chinese navy repulsed suspected pirate vessels; Joint training programmes between Chinese and foreign forces yield results; The 7th peacekeeping troops left for Sudan**

China has ruled out the possibility of holding a joint military exercise with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as a countermeasure to forthcoming drills by the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Dismissing any such possibility, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said on Thursday that there was no single country or military alliance that could solve issues related to regional security. Issues related to regional security need collective efforts.²¹

The 3rd China-Singapore Defense Policy Dialogue was held in Beijing last week. Gen. Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of general staff of the Chinese PLA and Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary of Singapore's Ministry of Defense co-chaired this

¹⁸ “Maldives praises Rajapaksa's role in ending pol stand-off “, *Hindustan Times*, July 9, 2010, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Maldives-praises-Rajapaksa-s-role-in-ending-pol-stand-off/Article1-569852.aspx>

¹⁹ “Supreme Court orders release of MPs”, *Minivan News*, July 11, 2010 at <http://minivannews.com/politics/supreme-court-orders-release-of-mps-9238>

²⁰ “Opposition coalition launch “continual protest”, *Minivan News*, July 18, 2010, at <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/opposition-coalition-launch-continual-protest-9499>

²¹ “China has ‘No Plan’ to Hold Sino-DPRK Exercise”, *China Daily* (Online), July 16, 2010, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/16/content_10113552.htm

dialogue. The two sides discussed the issues related to regional security and relationships between them and their two militaries.²²

During the Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's first state visit to China, the two countries signed 12 agreements on Tuesday covering the areas such as transportation infrastructure, fishery, energy, plant quarantine, freight rail line etc.²³ However, the development of transportation infrastructure in Argentina figured prominently in these agreements. In fact, the two countries signed railway deals totaling \$10 billion, which cover 10 railway projects in which China will sell railway technology to Argentina and invest in electrification projects of Argentinean railway.²⁴

China and Germany also signed ten cooperation agreements on Friday during the visit of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. These agreements range from green energy, culture to the establishment of joint venture on truck and lorry production. It also includes a financial cooperation agreement which involves 124 million Euros of green fund. This financial cooperation is intended to encourage emission reduction and energy saving of enterprises.²⁵

However, China and Britain held their first high level strategic dialogue on Wednesday. Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo and British Foreign Secretary William Hague co-chaired this dialogue. Earlier, the two countries had a mechanism of strategic dialogues at the level of vice foreign ministers, which was later elevated to the present higher level during former British Foreign Secretary David Miliband's visit to China in March.²⁶ Later on the same day, Foreign Secretary Hague and his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi held talks. Incidentally, after this meeting Yang Jiechi, at a press briefing, urged countries not support Tibetan separatists and called Tibet as China's internal matter.²⁷

Meanwhile, reports noted that the 6th Chinese naval escort taskforce successfully repulsed some suspected pirate vessels in the waters to the west estuary of the Gulf of Aden on July 18, 2010 and safely escorted all of the 14 merchant ships

²² "3rd China-Singapore Defense Policy Dialogue held in Beijing", *PLA Daily* (Online), July 14, 2010, at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-07/14/content_4258999.htm

²³ "China, Argentina Sign Series of Agreements", *China Daily* (Online), July 13, 2010, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/13/content_10101963.htm

²⁴ "China, Argentina Sign \$10 Billion Railway Deals", *China Daily* (Online), July 14, 2010, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/14/content_10102220.htm

²⁵ "China, Germany Ink Ten Agreements amid Merkel's Visit", *China Daily* (Online), July 16, 2010, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/16/content_10116652.htm

²⁶ "China, Britain Hold Strategic Dialogue in Beijing", *China Daily* (Online), July 14, 2010, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/14/content_10107377.htm

²⁷ "China Urges Not Giving Stage to Tibetan Separatists", *China Daily* (Online), July 15, 2010, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/15/content_10108957.htm

which could have become targets of the pirates.²⁸ In another development, Ma Jian, commandant of the Air Force Command College of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), recently said that joint training programmes of Chinese and foreign forces had proved very productive and yielded rich results. In specific terms, such programmes have proved helpful in increasing mutual understanding of servicemen of different backgrounds through communication and broadened their vision.²⁹

In other developments, the 220 peacekeepers of the first echelon of the 7th Chinese peacekeeping troops have left for Sudan to replace the 6th Chinese peacekeeping troops deployed in the mission area of the United Nations Mission in Sudan since last October.³⁰

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- **Malaysia to send 40 armed forces personnel to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid; RIMPAC Naval exercise begins in Hawaii; Malaysia to provide technical assistance to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina to promote bilateral relations; Thailand makes efforts towards strengthening trade and investment ties with Myanmar; US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell: India should encourage interlocutors inside Myanmar to embrace democratic reforms**

Malaysia is to send 40 armed forces personnel as a part of an Interim National Support and Assistance operation mission to Afghanistan to work along with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) from New Zealand. The Malaysian contingency would be in Afghanistan exclusively for humanitarian aid and not for combat exercises. Malaysian government expressed hope that its armed forces' contribution would be instrumental in bringing peace and harmony to Afghanistan.³¹

Fourteen countries are currently participating in the multilateral Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise in Hawaii. The exercise is hosted by the US and involves countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Canada, South

²⁸ "6th Chinese Naval Escort Taskforce Dispels Suspected Boats", *PLA Daily* (Online), July 19, 2010, available at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-07/19/content_4261989.htm

²⁹ "Training in Mixed Formation of Chinese and Foreign Officers Yields Rich Fruits", *PLA Daily* (Online), available at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-07/16/content_4260480.htm

³⁰ "First Echelon of 7th Chinese Peacekeeping Force to Sudan Sets Out", *PLA Daily* (Online), available at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2010-07/19/content_4261930.htm

³¹ "Malaysia to send 40 Armed Forces personnel to Afghanistan", *Bernama.com*, July 14, 2010, at <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsindex.php?id=513640>

Korea, etc. More than 30 ships, five submarines, 150 aircraft and 20,000 personnel from the participant countries are participating in RIMPAC exercise, which will conclude on August 1, 2010.³²

During Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman's recent four-day long visit to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began on July 10, Malaysia decided to provide technical assistance to these countries. In order to encourage the Bosnian businessmen interested in setting up their own business enterprises, Malaysia is also considering launching of a small and medium enterprise to provide economic assistance to them. Such assistance will not only help Malaysia to promote and strengthen capacity building with the two Balkan states, it will also enhance their bilateral relations.³³

Recently, the US has encouraged India to play an important role in bringing about democratic reforms within the junta-ruled Myanmar. In this context, US assistant secretary of state Kurt Campbell stated that "India's very important role in the international community" should be used to penetrate the tight military clique that runs Myanmar.³⁴ He further suggested that India should encourage interlocutors within Myanmar "to embrace reform, to free political prisoners and to engage more responsibly with the international community."³⁵

³² "Singapore Navy in RIMPAC Naval exercise in Hawaii", Bernama.com, July 14, 2010, at <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsindex.php?id=513493>

³³ "Malaysia to extend technical assistance to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina", Bernama.com, July 18, 2010, at <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsindex.php?id=514500>

³⁴ "US 'looks east' to break Burma deadlock", Indo-Burma News, July 18, 2010, at http://www.indoburmanews.net/archives-1/2010/july_2010/us-2018looks-east2019-to-break-burma-deadlock/

³⁵ "Indian role in Myanmar expanding, says US", Indo Burma News, July 18, 2010, at http://www.indoburmanews.net/archives-1/2010/july_2010/indian-role-in-myanmar-expanding-says-us