

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

March 30 – April 5, 4 (1), 2015

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Blogger and activists killed; four Bangladeshis named in charge sheet filed by the NIA; Bangladesh supports Saudi air strikes in Yemen; Bangladesh to import 600 MW from India; Bangladesh receives \$1.33 billion remittances in March.**

Barely a month after the brutal murder of Avijit Roy, another blogger and online activist Oyasiquir Rhaman was hacked to death in broad daylight on March 30, 2015. Two of the attackers were caught by the public and handed over to police. Immediately after his killing, social media was abuzz with condemnation. European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Pierre Mayaudon has condemned the killing.¹ The UN and the US also expressed concerns over the killing of the blogger. Meanwhile, the Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 said the murder of Oyasiquir was a continuation of the militants' campaign against liberal intellectuals and bloggers, which started through the attack on unorthodox writer Prof Humayun Azad in 2004. In a statement, the anti-war criminal platform reiterated that the murder was the result of past impunities, and demanded immediate arrest of all culprits.²

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a charge sheet against 21 people on March 30, including four alleged Bangladeshi nationals, in the Burdwan blast case. The Bangladeshi nationals named in the charge sheet, resided in Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia and Burdwan districts of West Bengal, the charge sheet said. Of them, only one was arrested by the NIA and the other three have been cited as absconding in the three-page charge sheet filed six months after a blast had taken place in a house at Khagragarh in Burdwan on October 2, 2014.³

Bangladesh declared its support to the Saudi-led coalition which launched air strikes against Shia Houthi rebels in Yemen on March 26 after the rebels took control of large parts of the country.⁴

The government of Bangladesh is going to import 600 megawatt more power from India to meet

1 "Knife Attack Kills Bangladesh Blogger Oyasiquir Rahman", *The Daily Star*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/online-activist-killed-again-74684>.

2 "Murders of Bloggers Worry UN, US", *The Daily Star*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/murders-bloggers-worry-un-us-74937>.

3 "4 Alleged Bangladeshis Among 21 Charged With Burdwan Blast", *The Daily Star*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/21-charged-burdwan-blast-74686>.

4 "Bangladesh Supports Saudi-led Efforts in Yemen", *The Daily Star*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/dhaka-backs-saudi-efforts-yemen-74714>.

the country's demand for electricity. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved two projects that would cost Tk 1,600 crore for setting up gridlines for importing the electricity. Of the power to be imported, 500 MW would come from Bahrampur in Indian state of West Bengal. For this purpose, the Ecneec has also okayed a Tk 1,405-crore project for increasing interconnection between Bheramara in Bangladesh and Bahrampur. The project is set to be completed by June 2018 with the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) assistance of Tk 845 crore. Under the project, a 12-kilometre Bheramara-Ishwardi 230 KV double circuit transmission line would be constructed. The Ecneec also approved another project "Tripura (India)-Comilla south substation (Bangladesh) grid interconnection project" that would cost Tk 179 crore for importing 100 MW electricity from the Indian state of Tripura. The project is set to be completed by June 2016. The Ecneec meeting held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair also gave nod to a project for building a land port road at Roumari-Tura at a cost of Tk 35 crore. The aim of the road is to increase sub-regional trade.⁵

Non-resident Bangladeshis sent home \$1.33 billion in March, the highest in six months, as migrant workers are finding jobs abroad in large numbers, according to Bangladesh Bank. The amount is 12 percent more than in the previous month and 3.41 percent more than a year ago. March's receipts take the fiscal year's total to \$11.25 billion so far, which is a year-on-year increase of 7.21 percent. A huge increase in manpower export has driven the remittance growth, which may pave the way for earning more foreign currency in the coming months. Bangladeshis going abroad for jobs rose 29 percent to 45,319 in March compared to February, according to figures from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the state agency which helps locals find employment overseas. Last fiscal year, the country received nearly \$14.23 billion in remittance. In the whole of 2014, the country saw some \$15 billion in remittances flow into the country, making it the world's eighth-largest remittance corridor, according to the World Bank.⁶

Sri Lanka

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **President Sirisena visits Pakistan; Talks on Sri Lanka organised in Singapore; Sri Lanka - EU Joint Commission held in Colombo; Haoliang Xu visits Sri Lanka.**

President Maithripala Sirisena made a three-day state visit to Pakistan on April 5 at the invitation of President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.⁷

Talks were held in Singapore between a group of political, civil society, academic, diaspora and other international stakeholders including an observer from the Government of Australia, on promoting reconciliation and strengthening of democracy in Sri Lanka. The Government of

5 "Bangladesh to Import 600MW More Power from India", *The Daily Star*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/more-electricity-india-74919>.

6 "Remittance Highest in Six Months", *The Daily Star*, April 3, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/remittance-highest-six-months-75271>.

7 "President Begins Visit to Pakistan", *Colombo Gazette*, April 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/05/president-begins-visit-to-pakistan/>.

Switzerland and the In Transformation Initiative (ITI) from South Africa invited the participants for the talks in Singapore from April 3 to 5, 2015.⁸

The Government Sri Lanka assured the European Union (EU) that it will remedy the root causes of injustice, discrimination and prejudice that have spawned hate and violence for many decades in Sri Lanka. Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera said that the Government is deeply committed to make its vision of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Sri Lanka based on the principles of equality, justice and meritocracy a reality for all Sri Lankans at the 19th Session of the Sri Lanka – EU Joint Commission held at the Foreign Ministry in Colombo on April 2 with the participation of a high level EU delegation, including Ugo Astuto, the Acting Managing Director of the Asia and Pacific Division at the European External Action Service.⁹

The 37 Indian fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan navy on April 3 for allegedly poaching in the country's waters, have been remanded till April 17. The fishermen were produced before a Magistrate on April 4 who had ordered that they be remanded for two weeks.¹⁰

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Chair, United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Haoliang Xu, arrived in Sri Lanka on April 4 on a 6 day visit.¹¹

Maldives

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

● More Maldivians are joining terrorist organisation abroad: UN report.

The expert report to the UN Security Council has raised concerns over an increase in fighters leaving the Maldives to join terrorist organisations including al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The Maldives police chief Hussein Waheed in January estimated some 50 Maldivians are fighting in foreign wars, but the main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party says the figure could be as high as 200. Waheed's comments came after reports of at least 13 Maldivians leaving for jihad surfaced in local media in early January. Since then, at least four more have travelled to the Middle East. Some seven Maldivians are reported to have died in the past year during battle in Syria, according to local media.¹²

8 "Talks Held in Singapore on Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, April 5, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/05/talks-held-in-singapore-on-lanka/>.

9 "Sri Lanka to Remedy Root Causes", *Colombo Gazette*, April 2, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/02/sri-lanka-to-remedy-root-causes/>.

10 "Judge Remands Indian Fishermen", *Colombo Gazette*, April 4, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/04/judge-remands-indian-fishermen/>.

11 "UN's Xu Takes Note of Key Change", *Colombo Gazette*, April 4, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/04/uns-xu-takes-note-of-key-change/>.

12 "UN Sees Increase in Maldivian Jihadists Overseas", *Minivan News*, April 4, 2015 at <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/un-sees-increase-in-maldivian-jihadists-overseas-95631#sthash.IF58IVZI.dpbs>.

B. East Asia

Japan

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Indian Defence Minister visits Japan; Japan's renewed claim over Takeshima/Dokdo islands could upset the recent rapprochement between Tokyo-Seoul.**

Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar embarked on a four-day official visit to Japan on March 30. During his visit, he held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani. During Parrikar's talk with Prime Minister Abe on March 30, the latter emphasized that India-Japan bilateral ties are extremely vital in ensuring peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.¹³ On the same day, Parikkar also held talk with Gen Nakatani at the Defence Ministry in Tokyo. Both the leaders agreed to speed up the ongoing bilateral talk on the export of US-2 rescue flying boat from Japan to India. Gen Nakatani emphasized on the need to bolster the bilateral cooperation in order to ensure the rule of law at sea.¹⁴ On March 31, Parikkar met with Kishida and talked about bilateral defence cooperation. During the talk, Kishida conveyed Japan's desire to deepen bilateral defence and security cooperation with India and to work jointly in order to enhance regional connectivity. Parikkar on his part insisted that Japan has been an important partner in India's "Make in India" initiative, including the defence technology sector.¹⁵

On April 1, Japan's News agency- Kyodo News-reported that the Japanese Foreign Ministry, in its Diplomatic Bluebook of 2015, has reiterated the country's claim of sovereignty over the Takeshima/Dokdo islands, which is also claimed by South Korea. The Bluebook reportedly states that the Takeshima/Dokdo islands are part of Japanese territory "both in terms of historical facts and international law." Interestingly Japan is currently reviewing middle school textbooks and might plan to incorporate Japan's claim that the said islands are occupied by South Korea "illegally". Such developments could clearly upset the recent moves made by both Japan and South Korea towards improving their bilateral ties.¹⁶ The Blue book is set to be released in early

13 "Japan Eyes Defence Ties With India To Counter China", *The Economic Times*, March 31, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-31/news/60682552_1_defence-minister-manohar-parrikar-india-and-japan-india-japan

14 "Japan, India to Spur Talks on US-2 Exports", *The Yomiuri Daily*, March 31, 2015, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002047033>

15 "Japan Eyes Defence Ties With India To Counter China", *The Economic Times*, March 31, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-31/news/60682552_1_defence-minister-manohar-parrikar-india-and-japan-india-japan

16 "Japan Repeats Dokdo Claim in Diplomatic Blue Book, School Textbooks", *Donga Ilbo*, April 2, 2015, at <http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?biid=2015040249208>

April this year. In the meantime, South Korean Foreign Ministry has expressed its determination to deal resolutely with any such territorial provocation.¹⁷

South Korea

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **South Korean cabinet approves the creation of a new presidential post to deal with cyber security affairs; Seoul hopes to hold dialogue with Pyongyang to resolve the dispute over Kaesong wages.**

On March 31, the South Korean cabinet approved the creation of a new presidential post to handle issues pertaining to cyber security. This step was taken to deal with threats posed by cybercrimes more effectively. While justifying the step, President Park Geun-hye's special advisor on security-Lim Jong-in insisted that it would ensure greater coordination throughout the South Korean government to deal with possible cyber-attacks.¹⁸

Despite North Korea's refusal to join an inter-Korean dialogue at the governmental level in recent times, Seoul continues to push for talks between them at the agency level in order to resolve the ongoing dispute over wages of North Korean labourers at the Kaesong Industrial Complex, a joint venture of the two Koreas. The dispute emerged in February this year as Pyongyang unilaterally decided to increase the wages for North Korean labourers at the complex from \$70.35 to \$74 per month. The new wages were to be offered from March onwards. However, this move could create labour problems for the 124 South Korean firms who were supposed to pay wages to their own 53,000 labourers for the month of March on April 10. That is why Seoul hopes to hold dialogue between the Kaesong Industrial District Management Committee and North Korea's Central Special Development Guidance Bureau before April 10 to bring out some solution to the current crisis.¹⁹

North Korea

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **North Korea criticizes South Korea and the US over the possible deployment of THAAD; North Korea test fires four short range missiles.**

On April 4, North Korea strongly condemned the US' recent move towards deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) in the Korean Peninsula. In the last few months, there has been a rising concern within North Korea that deployment of such missile system could jeopardize

17 "Seoul Vows Stern Response To Japan's Claim To Dokdo", *The Korea Herald*, April 1, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150401000777>

18 "Cabinet OKs Creation Of New Presidential Post Of Cyber Security", *The Korea Herald*, March 31, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150331000873>

19 "S. Korea Seeks Talks With N. Korea On Kaesong Wages", *The Korea Herald*, April 3, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150403000505>

the North's own defence. The North Korean state media has reported that Pyongyang has reportedly vowed to take revenge even "a blaze of fire" from South Korea and the US hits North Korean territory.²⁰

On April 3, South Korea test fired four short range missiles into the West Sea. Those missiles are believed to have a range of around 140 kilometres and were fired from Dongchang-ri of North Pyongyang province. The step was seen to be North Korea's retaliation against the ongoing joint military exercise between South Korea and the US and the South Korean civic groups recent move to initiate anti-Pyongyang leaflet campaign.²¹

C. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia & Oceania

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Cambodia gets \$230million aid from Japan; Indonesia rescues 300 slaves from remote island, mostly Burmese; Indonesia military vows war on IS; 17 arrested in suspected terror plot in KL; Myanmar and Russia boost nuclear cooperation; Myanmar apologizes to China for deadly strike; Myanmar govt. rebels sign draft nationwide ceasefire accord; China's Air Force conducts exercise between Taiwan and the Philippines; Vietnam seeks deepened security cooperation with India; India to train Vietnamese intelligence forces; Russian Prime Minister visits Vietnam; NZ soldiers train in Australia for attack on IS; Major earthquake hits Papua New Guinea.**

The Japanese government, on March 30, awarded nearly US\$230 million in grant aid and loans to Cambodia. The agreement was signed by Japanese ambassador to Cambodia Yuji Kumamaru and Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong. The assistance is divided into grant aid worth \$36 million and concessional loans amounting to \$193 million. Since the early 1990s, Japan has been one of the leading donors for many rehabilitation and development projects in Cambodia²².

Indonesia, on April 4, rescued more than 300 fishermen from forced labour and slavery in the remote island of Benjina. The group of fishermen, who mainly came from Myanmar, as well as from Cambodia, and Thailand, were freed following an investigation into claims of human trafficking by the *Associated Press* news agency. The exploited workers, who were trapped in forced labour for up to 10 years, say they were forced to work without pay, severely abused and locked up in cells. Asep Burhanudin, the director general of Indonesia's Ministry of Fishery and Maritime

20 "N. Korea Condemns S. Korea's Move To Deploy THAAD", *The Korea Herald*, April 4, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150404000054>

21 "N. Korea Fires 4 Short-Range Rockets Into West Sea", *The Korea Herald*, April 3, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150403001091>

22 "Japan Awards Cambodia \$230m In Infrastructure Aid", *Bangkok Post*, March 30, 2015, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/512492/japan-awards-cambodia-230m-in-infrastructure-aid>

Affairs, said the fishermen were “given electroshocks and tortured” if they complained of being ill and were treated “inhumanely” if they became sleepy during work. The International Organisation for Migration has reported that as many as 4,000 people in the areas surrounding Benjina have been exploited in the fishing industry²³.

The Indonesian military has vowed to wage war on followers of the extremist Islamic State group in Indonesia. “The TNI [Indonesian Military] believes ISIS should not be given any opportunity to develop in Indonesia. ISIS should not be given room anywhere,” TNI commander General Moeldoko said at the armed forces’ headquarters in Cilangkap, East Jakarta, on March 30. Moeldoko said Indonesians currently in Syria and Iraq to join IS would likely try to spread at home what they have learned in the war-torn nations. “We cannot let this happen. That is why the TNI is conducting training there [in Poso]. We’re conducting large-scale quick-response strike force training there. It is to send [the militants] a message: ‘don’t even try to enter Poso,” Moeldoko said. He added that the training was also in preparation of the military’s planned anti-radicalism operations²⁴.

Police in Malaysia, on April 5, arrested 17 suspected militants who were believed to be planning terrorist attacks in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Home Minister Zahid Hamidi said those arrested, the youngest just 14, were planning to attack police stations and army bases to gather weapons. Two of the suspects had just returned from Syria, police said. This is at a time, when Malaysia is in process of debating tough and disputed new anti-terrorism laws in its parliament. The *Bernama news agency* quoted Mr Zahid as telling parliament that those arrested, who were aged between 14 and 44, were also planning to kidnap high-profile individuals. The targets were not named²⁵.

Defying objections from Western countries, Myanmar appears to be stepping up its collaboration with Russia in the nuclear field. Nay Pyi Taw insists that the cooperation is entirely in the energy and health sectors. On March 26, the deputy director of the Russian atomic energy agency Rosatom, Nikolay Spassky, told *World Nuclear News* that Myanmar had agreed to cooperate in nuclear matters. The statement came after a two-day visit to Myanmar by Mr Spassky. The visit, the second by a Russian official, came despite objections from the United States and the European Union. On April 2, Myanmar Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut confirmed that Myanmar was seeking to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. “If we collaborate with Russia, it will be on energy,” he said. “Concerns have been expressed in the past about our supposed relations with North

23 “More Than 300 Slave Fishermen Now Safe On Indonesian Island”, *Yahoo News*, April 4, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/ap-investigation-prompts-emergency-rescue-300-plus-slaves-052136674.html>; “Hundreds of Enslaved Fishermen Rescued in Indonesia”, *Aljazeera*, April 4, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/indonesia-slavery-fishermen-150404074236914.html>

24 “Indonesia Military Vows War on is as Survey Shows Sympathy Among Students”, *UCA News*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesia-military-vows-war-on-is-as-survey-shows-sympathy-among-students/73285>

25 “17 Arrested In Suspected Terror Plot in KL”, *The Sun Daily*, April 6, 2015, <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/1375990>; “Malaysia arrests 17 terror suspects”, *BBC News*, April 6, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32197167>

Korea, but we have given repeated guarantees that we have no such relations. I can assure you that any cooperation we may have with Russia will be in the health and energy sectors.”²⁶

Myanmar, on April 2, issued a formal apology to China acknowledging that one of its warplanes had killed five Chinese farm workers in a cross-border bombing attack last month during fighting with Kokang rebels. It also said it would punish those responsible. “On behalf of the Myanmar government and military, I officially apologise to China and express my deep sympathy to the families of the victims and the injured,” Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin said in talks in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, according to *Xinhua news agency*. The bombing and an exodus of tens of thousands of ethnic Chinese refugees from Myanmar triggered an outpouring of criticism of Beijing on Chinese social media that censors struggled to control. Despite the obvious tensions, Myanmar and China have made efforts to keep their diplomatic relations and strong commercial ties on track. Myanmar officials had initially sought to blame the incident on the rebel Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), which denied responsibility. The ethnic Chinese militia has been engaged in often intense fighting with the Tatmadaw since early February, with both sides taking heavy losses in the Kokang border region²⁷.

The Myanmar government and representatives of 16 armed ethnic groups signed a draft ceasefire agreement, on March 30, aimed at ending more than six decades of conflict in some of the world’s longest-running civil wars. President U Thein Sein, whose reformist government sees the agreement as a key step toward holding inclusive parliamentary elections in November, attended the signing ceremony between negotiators for both sides at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon, which hosted the talks. The president said the final agreement would pave the way for political dialogue. The process would take time but will “ensure the peace builders a place in Myanmar’s history”, he said²⁸.

On March 30, China’s air force held its first exercise in western Pacific Ocean airspace. As reported by the South China Morning Post, the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) carried out drills in the air over the Bashi Channel, the body of water between Taiwan and the Philippines archipelago, considered the rim of the first island chain. The purpose of the exercise was to boost the PLAAF’s capability to carry out far-sea operations. Little is known about the specifics of the exercise. Colonel Shen Jinke, the PLAAF spokesperson who was quoted by a Chinese military news outlet, gave little information about the number of aircraft involved or specific types²⁹.

26 “Myanmar and Russia Boost Nuclear Cooperation”, *Myanmar Times*, April 3, 2015, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/13885-myanmar-and-russia-boost-nuclear-cooperation.html>

27 “Myanmar Apologises To China Over Cross-Border Bombing”, *Myanmar Times*, April 3, 2015, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/13884-myanmar-apologises-to-china-over-cross-border-bombing.html>

28 “Myanmar Govt. Rebels Sign Draft Nationwide Ceasefire Accord”, *Reuters*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/31/us-myanmar-peace-idUSKBN0MR09F20150331>

29 “First China Air Force Drills In ‘Far Offshore’ Pacific Ocean”, *The Economic Times*, March 31, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-31/news/60682472_1_south-china-sea-bashi-channel-xinhua; “China’s Air Force Conducts Exercise Between Taiwan and the Philippines”, *The Diplomat*, March 31, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/chinas-air-force-conducts-exercise-between-taiwan-and-the-philippines/>

Vietnam wants to deepen cooperation with India in all fields on the basis of their special trust, particularly in national defence and security, according to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. At his meeting on April 3 with India's national security adviser Ajit Kumar Doval, who was on a visit to Vietnam, the PM said Vietnam and India has a special friendship relationship that has been built up through many generations of leaders. He affirmed that Vietnam always remember the great support and assistance the Indian people gave to Vietnam during its struggle for independence as well as national reconstruction. The PM made it clear that Vietnam supports India's "Act East" policy as well as its strengthening of strategic partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. While suggesting the two sides should boost cooperation in all fields from politics-foreign affairs to economy-trade and investment, the PM asked India to increase cooperation with Vietnam in defence and military technology, particularly in personnel training in the air force, navy and intelligence. He also wanted stronger cooperation in cyber security and preventing and fighting terrorism and hi-tech crimes³⁰.

Adding teeth to its Act East Policy, India could train intelligence officials from Vietnam besides providing more training slots to the Navy and Air Force personnel from the Southeast Asian country. India may also provide military and defence technology, besides providing support for effectively countering cybercrimes as requested by Vietnam, according to officials privy to National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's discussions with the country's top leadership recently. Doval met Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh, in Hanoi as part of his trip to Bangkok and Hanoi to firm up strategic partnerships. According to reports, the request for training of Vietnamese intelligence officials and increasing training slots for its Naval and Air Force personnel came from PM Dung. The NSA is understood to have expressed India's willingness to assist Vietnam's military and security apparatus. In an indirect reference to China, Doval stated that India was against any unilateral action to change status quo in the seas of the region and called for freedom of navigation, reports said.³¹

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev arrived in Hanoi on April 5, beginning his three-day official visit to Vietnam. The visit, at the invitation of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, was to strengthen and consolidate the comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and Russia. He was accompanied by Deputy PM and Head of the Russian Government Office Prikhodko S.E., Deputy PM and Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to Russia's Far East Federal District Trutnhev Y.P, Minister of Industry and Trade Manturov D.V., and Energy Minister Novak A.V., and other senior officials. Political relations between the nations have been continually consolidated as evidenced by regular all-level delegations exchanged. The countries established an annual strategic dialogue on diplomacy-defence-security at the deputy foreign ministerial level in 2008 and set up a strategic dialogue at the deputy defence ministerial level in 2013.³²

30 "Vietnam Seeks Deepened Security Cooperation with India", *Vietnam Net*, April 5, 2015, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/127285/vietnam-seeks-deepened-security-cooperation-with-india.htm>

31 "Bolstering Act East Policy: India to train Vietnamese intelligence forces", *The Economic Times*, April 6, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-06/news/60866058_1_indian-ocean-region-south-china-sea-pm-dung

32 "Russian Prime Minister Begins Vietnam Visit", *Vietnam Net*, April 6, 2015, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/127368/russian-prime-minister-begins-vietnam-visit.html>

Approximately 120 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel have departed Ohakea Air Force Base to conduct defence staff training with Australia prior to the forthcoming deployment to Iraq. According to local media, the contingent consisted of trainers, health, logistics and force protection personnel, as well as headquarters staff. NZDF said in a statement: "The group includes a large number of personnel who will deploy to Iraq in the Building Partner Capacity training mission, as well as exercise support staff." The three-day exercise at Enoggera military camp near Brisbane will include a series of scenarios designed to ensure the trainers in the Building Partner Capacity mission are ready, and to demonstrate to their senior commanders that they are fully prepared for the tasks and environment they will face in Iraq." In February, the New Zealand Government confirmed plans to deploy 143 soldiers to Iraq by the end of May to train the local security forces to better fight the Islamic State militants³³.

A major earthquake with a recorded magnitude of 7.5 hit Papua New Guinea on March 30 morning. A tsunami alert was issued soon after. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the epicentre of the 40-km deep quake that took place in the morning of March 30 was near Rabaul, a town northeast of Papua New Guinea. Initially, the recorded magnitude was at 7.7, but it was later reduced to 7.5. The quake struck 55 kilometres southeast of Kokopo, with population of 26,000 people, based on the report by the US Geological Survey. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre initially gave a warning that waves measuring as high as three meters could hit PNG and less than 0.3 metres of waves could hit some Pacific countries. However, the warning was lifted a few hours later after a report that a 3-centimetre tsunami wave was recorded 280 miles from the epicentre, at a wharf in the Solomon Islands. In the epicentre town, residents observed that the sea level slightly increased causing flood in the parking lot of shopping centres located near the beach, "but nothing beyond that no damage caused," said Mika Tuvi, an employee of the Rabaul Hotel.³⁴

D. Russia

National

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Gazprom's net profit down by 70 per cent in 2014; Average social pensions in Russia raised to US\$ 144; World Bank predicts increase in poverty in Russia for the first time since 1998 crisis; Russia to start construction of new small-size missile ship on April 10; Number of contract servicemen in Russia's armed forces to be increased to 300,000; Russia to launch first satellite of Missile Attack Warning System later this year; Russia's Orenburg Strategic Missile Forces unit undergoes comprehensive check; President Putin unveils a US\$ 1.7 billion**

33 "New Zealand Soldiers Arrive In Australia For Training Before Joint Mission In Iraq Against ISIS", *International Business Times*, March 31, 2015, <http://au.ibtimes.com/new-zealand-soldiers-arrive-australia-training-joint-mission-iraq-against-isis-1435448>

34 "Major Earthquake Hits Papua New Guinea", *International Business Times*, March 31, 2015, <http://au.ibtimes.com/major-earthquake-hits-papua-new-guinea-1435379>

relief package for Russia's biggest aircraft maker; Almost 100 military units and organizations created in Crimea; Final test launch of Russia's new RS-26 Rubezh ballistic missile successful.

Gazprom's net profit, calculated under Russian Accounting Standards (RAS), fell 70 per cent last year to 189 billion roubles (US\$ 3.3 billion). The net profit under RAS is attributed to the parent company only and not its subsidiaries such as Gazprom Neft or its power business. Gazprom uses the profit figure as a base for dividend pay-out calculations. It said that it had bought Eni's 20 per cent stake in the South Stream charter capital for 22.42 billion roubles (US\$ 388 million), Wintershall's 15 per cent for 16.85 billion roubles and EDF's 15 per cent for 16.82 billion roubles. The company also said that it had booked reserves of 22.3 billion roubles for a possible write-down on the Shtokman project that was supposed to produce offshore gas in the Barents Sea. It scrapped the plans due to cost overruns.³⁵

The press service of Russia's Ministry of Labour has said, on April 1 that pensions for around 3.7 million retirees will be indexed by 10.3 per cent starting that day. This will result in the average social pensions increasing to US\$ 144, social pensions for handicapped children to US\$ 214, and for military service-disabled people and war participants, who receive two pensions, to US\$ 509 and US\$ 546, respectively.³⁶

The World Bank, in a report published on April 1, has predicted an increase in poverty in Russia during the year 2015-16. This will be the first such increase since the crisis of 1998. It also projects the economic growth to fall by 3.8 per cent in 2015. The report stated that the main risk to the medium-term forecast of Russian economic growth is the continued shortage of available credit resources and low investment demand.³⁷

Russia will start the construction of the new generation Grayvoron small-size missile ship from April 10 at the Zelenodolsky shipyard in Tatarstan. These project 21631 small-size missile ships will be used to guard the littoral area.³⁸

The head of Russia's Ministry of Defence main personnel department Viktor Goremykin has said, on April 3, that the Russian army will increase its contract personnel number to 300,000 with all junior command personnel to be replaced with contract servicemen in 2015.³⁹

Russian Defence Ministry has issued a report on a forthcoming expansion of the national orbital grouping of the space echelon of the Missile Attack Warning System (MAWS). It states that the

35 "Russia's Gazprom Says Net Profit Plummeted 70% in 2014", *The Moscow Times*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-gazprom-says-net-profit-plummeted-70-in-2014/518289.html>

36 "Average Social Pensions In Russia Raised to \$144", *Itar-Tass*, April 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786365>

37 "World Bank Predicts Increase In Poverty In Russia For The First Time Since 1998 Crisis", *Itar-Tass*, April 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/786410>

38 "Russia to Start Construction Of New Small-Size Missile Ship on April 10", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786644>

39 "Almost 300,000 Contract Servicemen in Russian Armed Forces — Defence Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, April 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787003>

launch of the first spacecraft has been scheduled for the second half of 2015.⁴⁰

Defence Ministry's spokesman for Strategic Missile Forces Igor Yegorov has said, on March 30, that the Orenburg branch of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces have undergone a comprehensive check-up adding that the main purpose of the exercise is to estimate the real state of affairs and combat readiness and check the commanders' competence. The Orenburg strategic missile unit is armed with Topol and Voevoda missiles.⁴¹

President Vladimir Putin has said, on March 29, that Russia's largest aircraft manufacturer - United Aircraft Corporation- will receive a 100 billion ruble (US\$ 1.7 billion) capital boost from the government to stimulate production of passenger airliners. The move comes as Russia seeks to curb its dependence on foreign-made airliners amid tensions and tit-for-tat sanctions with the West over Ukraine. It also aims to rebalance the aviation industry away from military orders that are increasingly dominating Russian manufacturing due to a multibillion-dollar rearmament programme.⁴²

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said, on March 30, that Russia has strengthened its defences around Crimea. He noted that nearly 100 units and organizations have been created under a programme for deploying a self-sufficient group of forces in Crimea.⁴³

A senior official at the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology Vladimir Georgiyevsky has said that the final test launch of Russia's solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile RS-26 in mid-March was deemed successful. The missile is based on the previous RS24 Yars and is expected to be put on combat duty in 2015.⁴⁴

International Affairs

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Russia calls for complete implementation of Minsk agreements for resolving the Ukrainian standoff; Russia says there are no legal restrictions on a military-technical cooperation with Syria; Naftogaz and Gazprom sign contract for deliveries in the second quarter of 2015; Russia plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25-30 per cent by 2030; CSTO foreign ministers meet in Dushanbe; Foreign Minister Lavrov pays a working visit to Slovakia;**

40 "Russia will Launch First Satellite of Missile Attack Warning System in July-December 2015", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786746>

41 "Russia's Orenburg Strategic Missile Forces Unit Undergoes Comprehensive Check", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/785821>

42 "Putin Unveils \$1.7 Billion Boost for Russia's Biggest Aircraft Maker" *The Moscow Times*, March 29, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/putin-unveils-1-7-billion-boost-for-russia-s-biggest-aircraft-maker/518202.html>

43 "Almost 100 Military Units And Organizations Created In Crimea — Defence Minister", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/785884>

44 "Final Test Launch Of Russia's New RS-26 Rubezh Ballistic Missile Successful — Designer", *Itar-Tass*, March 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786100>

Russia to explore greater economic cooperation with Iran; Federation Council speaker says West employing extremism to bring in colour revolution in Russia; Russia preparing to ease food embargo for Greece; Russian air force practises tactical manoeuvres in Armenia; Russian and Iranian Presidents discuss key bilateral and regional issues; Russia to join Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; Afghan heroin worth US\$ 1 billion seized in Russia in 2014; Russia and Belarusian Prime Ministers discuss trade and economic cooperation; Chinese military studies Russia's snap military exercises; Australia expands sanctions against Russia; Russia charts new course for BRICS during its 2015 presidency.

Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN Vladimir Safronkov has said, on March 31, that the February 12 Minsk agreement is the cornerstone for the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict and must be fully implemented.⁴⁵

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, on March 30, that there are no restrictions on military-technical cooperation with Syria. He was responding to Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal comments that Russia continues to arm the Syrian regime that had lost legitimacy and was killing its own people.⁴⁶

Russia's Gazprom and Ukraine's Naftogaz have signed a contract, on April 2, for gas deliveries to Ukraine in the second quarter of 2015. Under the terms of the contract, gas price has been fixed at US\$ 248 per 1,000 cubic meters. Other provisions of the contract mirror the so-called 'winter package'.⁴⁷

According to Russia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), released on April 2, by the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Moscow plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25-30 per cent by 2030 when compared to the level 25 years ago. According to UNFCCC data, Russia's contribution means that two thirds of industrialised countries covering nearly 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions from the industrialised part of the world have now set out their ambition for the new agreement that countries are expected to reach in Paris in December and which will come into effect in 2020.⁴⁸

Foreign ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member countries met, on April 2, in Dushanbe. The key issues discussed include strengthening cooperation between international and regional organizations and improving security in Central Asia against the backdrop of the uncertain security situation in Afghanistan.⁴⁹

45 "Russia Stands For Complete Implementation Of Minsk Agreements On Ukrainian Settlement", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/785999>

46 "No Legal Restrictions Apply to Russia-Syria Military-Technical Cooperation — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/785833>

47 "Naftogaz and Gazprom Sign Contract For Deliveries In Second Quarter of 2015", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/786612>

48 "Russia Plans To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions By 25-30% From 1990 Levels By 2030", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/786651>

49 "Russia-led Military Alliance Diplomats Discuss Foreign Policy Coordination Within Group", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786670>

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has paid a working visit to Slovakia on April 3. The key issues discussed during the meeting with his Slovak counterpart Miroslav Lajcak include developments in Ukraine and OSCE's role in implementing the Minsk agreements, Russia-EU relations, situation in the Middle East and the Balkan region and plans of further interaction at international organizations. A Russian Foreign Ministry statement added that 'Russia highly appreciates the respect and attention of the people of Slovakia to the memory of Soviet soldiers and officers who died for the liberation of that country. We are grateful to them for their careful upkeep of war graves and attitude of care to military cemeteries and memorials'.⁵⁰

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich has said, on April 3, that the proposed agreements on Iran's nuclear programme and the plausible removal of international sanctions offer new prospects for economic projects between Moscow and Tehran.⁵¹

Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko has said, on April 1, that the West employs political, ethnic and religious extremism as a geopolitical instrument in order to usher in colour revolutions in Russia. She added that there are no plans to suppress dissent and the government is ready for a dialogue with the opposition.⁵²

Russia's veterinary and phytosanitary watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor will launch an inspection of Greece's agro-industrial enterprises on April 20. This move comes against the backdrop of Economic Development Minister Alexey Ulyukayev's statement that Russia will explore ways of easing the food embargo for Greece and Hungary. Russia's food embargo is in force until August 8, 2015. In 2014, the Russian government had banned the imports of key foods from the European Union, Canada, United States and Australia in retaliation against the Western economic sanctions.⁵³

Russia's Air Force has launched tactical manoeuvres in Armenia on April 2. It involves more than 100 troops of flight and service personnel of the Southern Military District and more than 30 units of special military and aircraft equipment. Russian troops have been deployed at the Erebuni airbase since 1995 under a bilateral treaty that was extended in 2010 to ensure Russian military presence in Armenia through 2044.⁵⁴

President Putin had a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Iran Hassan Rouhani, on March 26, at the initiative of the Iranian side. The key issues discussed include prospects of developing the Russian-Iranian relations, ongoing nuclear talks and the situation in Yemen.⁵⁵

50 "Lavrov Pays Working Visit to Slovakia", *Itar-Tass*, April 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/787159>

51 "Russia Sees New Economic Prospects For Ties With Iran After Sanctions Lifted", *Itar-Tass*, April 3, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/787150>

52 "West Tries To Use Extremism For Colour Revolutions in Russia – Federation Council Speaker", *Itar-Tass*, April 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786390>

53 "Russia Preparing To Ease Food Embargo for Greece", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/786712>

54 "Russian Air Force Tactical Manoeuvres Begin in Armenia", *Itar-Tass*, April 2, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/786738>

55 "Telephone Conversation With President of Iran Hassan Rouhani", *Itar-Tass*, March 26, 2015 at <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/news/23774>

First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov has said, on March 28, that Russia has made a decision to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.⁵⁶

Russia's Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) head Viktor Ivanov has said, on March 30, that law enforcement agencies have seized 3.5 tons of Afghan heroin worth more than US\$ 1 billion in 2014.⁵⁷

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev had a telephone conversation, on March 30, with his Belarusian counterpart Andrey Kobyakov wherein they discussed issues of trade and economic cooperation.⁵⁸

A military delegation headed by deputy commander of the Beijing Military Area Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, Lieutenant-General Bai Jianjun has paid a visit to the Central Military District of Russia from April 1 to 3. The key objective of the visit was to familiarise themselves with Russia's snap checks of its military units and formations combat readiness as well as integrated combined-arms and joint-service operational training.⁵⁹

Australia has expanded economic sanctions on Russia's arms, petroleum and financial sectors as well as a ban on Australian business activity in Crimea from April 1, 2015. The new round of sanctions is in response to 'Russia's ongoing threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine'. The measures restrict the export or import of "arms and related material" to and from Russia, the export to Russia of items used for petroleum exploration and production and Russian state banks' access to the Australian capital market.⁶⁰

The Russian Foreign Ministry has talked about grand plans for BRICS grouping as it takes over the presidency of the group on April 1. The press release stated that 'transforming the BRICS assembly of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa into a full-scale mechanism of strategic interaction on key issues of global policy and economics is a top priority for Russia's presidency' that is expected to culminate at a summit in the city of Ufa in early July. It added that there are plans to open new tracks for multilateral industrial cooperation and launch the group's development bank and currency reserve pool. The BRICS agenda under the Russian presidency includes plans to strengthen strategic stability and international information security, reinforce the non-proliferation regime, and combat international terrorism.⁶¹

56 "Shuvalov: Russia to Join Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank", *Itar-Tass*, March 28, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/785562>

57 "Some 3.5 Tons of Afghan Heroin Worth \$1 Billion Seized in Russia in 2014", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/785803>

58 "Russia, Belarusian PMs Discuss Trade And Economic Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/785966>

59 "Chinese Military To Study Russian Snap Check Practices", *Itar-Tass*, March 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/785903>

60 "Australia Expands Sanctions on Russia Over Ukraine", *The Moscow Times*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/australia-expands-sanctions-on-russia-over-ukraine/518296.html>

61 "Russia Charts New Course For BRICS Nations As Presidency Begins", *Itar-Tass*, April 1, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/786335>

India-Russia Relations

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Russia offers to build Project 11356 frigates at India's shipyards; Russia calls for continuation of dialogue between India and Pakistan.**

The head of the regional department of Rosoboronexport Vladimir Ereshenko has enumerated on Russia's proposal to build Project 11356 frigates at Indian shipyards. Russia had supplied India with six Project 11356 ships between 2003 and 2013. The first three ships are equipped with the Russian Club-N cruise missiles while the next three frigates are armed with BrahMos missiles.⁶²

Welcoming the resumption of dialogue between Pakistan and India, Russian ambassador to Islamabad Alexey Y. Dedov has, on March 29, called for continuation of efforts for resolution of outstanding issues between them. He added that SCO, wherein India and Pakistan are expected to become full members in July, can contribute towards stabilising the situation in Afghanistan.⁶³

E. Iran, Iraq and the Gulf

Iran

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Iran and P5+1 reach at solutions on key parameters of a joint comprehensive plan of action; Syria, Hezbollah hail nuclear deal with Iran; Nethanyahu calls nuclear deal as "Dangerous, Historic Mistake".**

Iran and the 5+1 group of world powers on April 2 adopted a joint statement after eight days of hugely complicated talks in Lausanne. The statement was read out in a joint press conference in the Swiss city by EU high representative Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. The joint statement mentioned "Today we have taken a decisive step. We have reached solutions on key parameters of a joint comprehensive plan of action. The political determination, the goodwill and the hard work of all parties made it possible and let us thank all delegations for their tireless dedication".⁶⁴

Syria and the Lebanese Shi'ite Hezbollah movement hailed a framework nuclear agreement reached between Iran and with six world powers. Syria's state news agency SANA quoted an unnamed

62 "Russia Offers To Build Project 11356 Frigates In India's Shipyards", *Russia and India Report*, April 2, 2015 at http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/04/02/russia_offers_to_build_project_11356_frigates_in_indias_shipyards_42363.html

63 "Russia Calls For Continuation Of Dialogue Between Pakistan, India", *Daily Times*, March 29, 2015 at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/29-Mar-2015/russia-calls-for-continuation-of-dialogue-between-pakistan-india>

64 "Full Statement Of The Nuclear Deal Framework", *Tehran Times*, April 3, 2015 <http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/122715-full-statement-of-the-nuclear-deal-framework>

official as saying that Damascus “highly appreciates the efforts made by representatives of the Iranian government in advocating their country’s right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.” Hezbollah, meanwhile, called the nuclear deal a “victory for the will of free people.” The movement’s Deputy Secretary-General, Naem Kassem, said the agreement is also “a victory for the rejection of dependency on the West.”⁶⁵

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced his opposition to the mutual understanding newly reached between Iran and P5+1 states, claiming that the framework agreement seriously endangers the very existence of the regime in Tel Aviv. A final deal “based on this framework would threaten the survival of Israel,” Mark Regev, a spokesman for Netanyahu, quoted the Israeli premier as telling US President Barack Obama in a phone conversation.⁶⁶

Iraq and Syria

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Iraq army hunts ISIL fighters after Tikrit breakthrough; Islamic State seizes Palestinian refugee camp in Syria.**

Iraqi forces battled the last Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters in Tikrit to seal a victory the government described as a milestone in efforts to rid the country of armed group. Iraqi fighters picked their way through the rubble-strewn streets of the city on, wary of any last-ditch attack from ISIL fighters and of the thousands of bombs they left behind. A major military push saw Iraqi police and allied forces retake the city centre on March 31 but pockets of jihadist militants remained.⁶⁷

Islamic State militants have seized most of a sprawling Palestinian refugee district in the southern part of the Syrian capital, Damascus, an area that has been under siege and bombardment for nearly two years already, according to Palestinian and United Nations officials and residents. The officials called for quick action by international organizations, the Syrian government and all armed groups to head off an unfolding catastrophe. Reports of killings and even beheadings were beginning to circulate, worsening what is already a longstanding humanitarian nightmare for the 18,000 residents of the Yarmouk refugee camp.⁶⁸

65 “Syria, Hezbollah Hail Nuclear Deal With Iran” , *Hareetz*, April 4 , 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.650474>

66 “Israel Angered By Iran-P5+1 Mutual Understanding” , *Presstv* , April 3 , 2015 <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/04/03/404469/IranP51-statement-infuriates-Israel>

67 “Iraq Army Hunts ISIL Fighters After Tikrit Breakthrough” , *Aljazeera* , April 1 , 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/iraq-army-hunts-isil-fighters-tikrit-breakthrough-150401113349148.html>

68 “Islamic State Seizes Palestinian Refugee Camp in Syria” , *The New York Times*, April 4 , 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/world/middleeast/islamic-state-seizes-palestinian-refugee-camp-in-syria.html?_r=0

The Gulf

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Saudi Arabia becomes world's biggest arms importer; Dozens killed in Saudi airstrike at a refugee camp in Northern Yemen.**

Saudi Arabia overtook India in 2014 as the world's biggest importer of defence equipment, fuelled by tensions in the Middle East, according to a study published by respected analysts IHS Jane's. Global defence trade currently stands at \$64.4bn, said the report from the London-based defence specialists. The figure has been driven by "unparalleled demand from the emerging economies for military aircraft and an escalation of regional tensions in the Middle East and Asia Pacific," IHS expert Ben Moores said. The report, which examines the defence market across 65 countries, found that Saudi Arabia spent more than \$6.4bn on defence kit in 2014, overtaking India on \$5.57bn.⁶⁹

At least 40 people were killed in an attack on a camp for internally displaced people in north Yemen, as a Saudi-led coalition continued to strike Houthi targets around the country for the fifth day. An air strike struck the Al-Mazraq camp in the northwestern province of Hajjah, close to the Saudi border, but Yemen's foreign minister, Riyadh Yasin, insisted it was caused by Houthi artillery fire. Pablo Marco, the manager of the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) programme in the Middle East said: "It was an air strike," adding that dozens of Yemenis were injured.⁷⁰

F. The United State of America

National

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Study finds no link between military suicide rate and deployments; DARPA uses open systems, 'plug and fly' to boost air power; Defence Secretary Carter outlines future force's needs at fort drum; Disaster preparedness mirrors military readiness, official says; Kendall: workforce development needed to sustain tech superiority; Obama: solar programme to train troops for civilian careers.**

The largest study to date of a rising suicide rate among military personnel, published on April 1 in JAMA Psychiatry, found no connection between suicide and deployment overseas in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The findings are the latest in a series of studies prompted by a military suicide rate that has nearly doubled since 2005. The study's authors and others cautioned, however, that the findings do not rule out combat exposure as a reason for the increase in suicides,

69 "Saudi Arabia Becomes World's Biggest Arms Importer" , *The Guardian* , March 9 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/09/saudi-arabia-becomes-worlds-biggest-arms-importer>

70 "Many Dead In 'Airstrike On Refugee Camp' In North Yemen" , *Aljazeera* , March 31 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/dead-airstrike-refugee-camp-north-yemen-150330131111582.html>

adding that more information was needed. The suicide rate for troops deployed in support of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, the study found, was only slightly higher than for troops who did not deploy to that area or remained stateside – 18.86 deaths versus 17.78 deaths per 100,000. The national average is about 13 deaths per 100,000. Earlier studies produced contrasting results, with one finding an increased risk after deployment among young Army soldiers, others finding no increase and one finding deployment actually lowered suicide risk. The latest study, which analysed records of 3.9 million military personnel who served from 2001 to 2007, did find that troops who left the military within four years, especially under less-than-honourable conditions, were at much higher risk of suicide than those who continued to serve.⁷¹

The Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is unveiling a new programme to boost U.S. air superiority by separating payloads such as weapons and sensors from the main air platform, and using open-system architectures to seamlessly integrate plug-and-fly modules into any kind of platform. The programme, called System of Systems Integration Technology and Experimentation, or SoSITE, aims to develop and demonstrate concepts for flying combinations of aircraft, weapons, sensors and mission systems that distribute air-warfare capabilities across interoperable manned and unmanned platforms. The SoSITE programme has two phases, and it is now in the two-year-long first phase, which has two technical areas, or TAs. TA1 is architecture analysis, and TA2 is integration technology. The programme is less than a quarter of the way through the first phase. In the second phase, the plan is for the two Phase 1 technical areas to come together for the programme's experimentation portion. The DARPA vision is to integrate new technologies and airborne systems with existing systems faster and at a lower cost than advanced adversaries can counter them, Dr. Nils Sandell Jr., director of DARPA's Strategic Technology Office, told *DoD News* in a recent interview.⁷²

During a troop talk at Fort Drum, New York, on March 30, Defence Secretary Ash Carter thanked the soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division and shared his vision for building what he calls "the force of the future." Carter said the United States has "the finest fighting force the world has ever known, and that's you. But I must think ahead by one or two generations to make sure our country has what you represent: the best of the best in every generation." The secretary said he doesn't want to lose the best people with the best skills, acknowledging that those people have other places in society where they can apply their skills. "If we want to keep you," he said, "we need to think carefully and be innovative, because you have other choices." The Defence Department must be open for new ideas and keep the "wonderful traditions" it has as one of the nation's oldest and most-respected institutions, the secretary said. But it also much change so the military is more relevant, attractive and exciting to service members and later generations, he added.⁷³

71 Philipps, Dave, "Study Finds No Link Between Military Suicide Rate and Deployments", *The New York Times*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/02/us/study-finds-no-link-between-military-suicide-rate-and-deployments.html>

72 Pellerin, Cheryl, "DARPA Uses Open Systems, 'Plug and Fly' to Boost Air Power", *DoD News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128493>

73 Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter Outlines Future Force's Needs at Fort Drum", *DoD News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128495>

The Defence Department takes pride in its readiness to defend the nation against military threats, and also in its role as a partner in emergency and disaster response, a DoD official said. In an interview with *DoD News* on the April observance of the “America’s PrepareAthon!” campaign, Robert G. Salesses, deputy assistant secretary of defence for homeland defence integration and defence support of civil authorities, talked about the importance of being prepared for unexpected events such as storms. Annual preparedness campaigns in April and September aim to increase individual and organizational preparedness, he said, adding that such preparedness is “synonymous with military readiness.” A grass roots, national campaign through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, “America’s PrepareAthon!” involves all federal agencies, state and local governments, the private sector and individuals, Salesses explained.⁷⁴

On March 31, the Defence Department’s top acquisition official Frank Kendall made his third visit to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, home to U.S. Navy Naval Air Systems Command, or NAVAIR. Undersecretary of Defence for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Frank Kendall spoke to members of the base’s civilian and military workforce, many of whom conduct acquisition, testing and development work for several next-generation aircraft and weapons systems, including the Navy and Marine Corps variants of the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter and the MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicle. Kendall outlined the importance of developing the next generation of engineers, scientists and acquisition professionals to ensuring that the nation maintains its technological superiority.⁷⁵

As the solar industry continues to create new jobs and spur the economy, President Barack Obama announced April 3 at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, significant strides to prime separating service members for entry into the workforce. Obama reported an overall goal to train 75,000 workers for the renewable energy industry by 2020. “As part of this, we’re creating what we’re calling a ‘Solar Ready Vets’ programme,” he said, “... modelled after some successful pilot initiatives ... established over the last several years.” Hill is one of 10 military installations slated to participate, he noted. Solar Ready Vets, the president said, is “one of the many steps we’re taking to help nearly 700,000 [service members,] veterans and military spouses get a job.” “As part of this effort, we’re also going to work with states to enable more veterans to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for solar job training,” he said. That educational funding would enable more veterans to participate in the job-driven training programme.⁷⁶

International: Asia

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Carter Asia trips to affirm defence ties, build on initiatives; Carter: demographics, economics boost Asia’s global profile; On Afghanistan: a call for more humanitarian aid; Operation**

74 Cronk, Terri Moon, “Disaster Preparedness Mirrors Military Readiness, Official Says”, *DoD News*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128510>

75 Roulo, Claudette, “Kendall: Workforce Development Needed to Sustain Tech Superiority”, *DoD News*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128515>

76 Lyle, Amaani, “Obama: Solar Program to Train Troops for Civilian Careers”, *DoD News*, April 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128529>

Inherent Resolve airstrikes continue in Syria, Iraq; US, South Korean forces conduct joint landing exercise; US cites growing N. Korea Long-Range Missile threat; South Korea man charged in knife attack on US Ambassador; Defence Secretary Carter, Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani discuss U.S.-Japan defence issues; US Treasury Secretary in China for talks; US Admiral: China 'creating a great wall of sand' in sea.

Defence Secretary Ash Carter will visit Asia twice over the next two months to affirm defence relationships with allies and build upon key initiatives of the U.S. strategic rebalance to the region, Pentagon officials announced on April 3. In a written statement, officials said Carter will begin his first trip April 6 for visits to Japan and South Korea that will focus on strengthening and modernizing America's alliances in Northeast Asia. On the way to Japan, the statement said, Carter will speak to students and faculty at the McCain Institute of Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, about the strong link between national security and economic security and the full-court press that President Barack Obama's administration will continue to take on the rebalance. In May, Carter will travel again to focus on building and strengthening growing partnerships in South Asia and Southeast Asia, the statement said. Carter will address the annual Shangri-La Dialogue security conference in Singapore, which officials said he views as an important opportunity to engage with Singapore and other key partners in Southeast Asia. Carter also will visit India, where officials said he is looking forward to building on Obama's visit earlier this year by further strengthening U.S.-India defence cooperation.⁷⁷

Demographic changes in Asia will make the region more important to the United States, defence Secretary Ash Carter said at the State Department recently. As Carter prepared to depart on April 6 for his first trip to Asia as defence secretary, he reiterated that the United States is a Pacific power and will remain one, adding that this is in the best interests of Asian nations and of the United States. Demographic trends show that Asian nations will only become more important globally in the 21st century, as Asian nations – enjoying peace provided by American presence – prosper and grow, Carter said. In the future, he added, no region will affect U.S. prosperity more, and it is in American interests to maintain a strong security presence in the region. The math is inescapable, Carter said at the State Department. "We know that 95 percent of the world's customers live beyond our borders, and the spending power of middle-class consumers in today's emerging markets is expected to increase by \$20 trillion over the next decade," he said.⁷⁸

In a response to *The New York Times* joint editorial titled "Afghanistan's Next Chapter" published on March 29, about the next steps in the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan, does not mention one absolutely vital pillar of any sustainable strategy: assistance to the millions of Afghans uprooted and impoverished by 30 years of civil war and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe. David Miliband, a former British foreign secretary, in a letter to the editor wrote that no strategy can succeed unless it addresses this issue, yet levels of American civilian assistance to Afghanistan have been slashed in half over the past few years, and the 2015 United Nations humanitarian appeal for the country is so far funded at only 20 percent. Some 700,000 people in

77 "Carter Asia Trips to Affirm Defence Ties, Build on Initiatives", *DoD News*, April 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128526>

78 Garamone, Jim, "Carter: Demographics, Economics Boost Asia's Global Profile", *DoD News*, April 3, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128528>

Afghanistan remain displaced, and the country ranks among the lowest globally in terms of human development indicators. He added, the Afghan government, with the partnership of international donors, should redouble efforts that put communities at the centre of their own development and that have proved successful even in the most volatile areas of the country.⁷⁹

U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on April 5.⁸⁰

U.S. and South Korean forces held a landing drill on March 30 near the port city of Pohang, as part of the annual Foal Eagle military exercise. "In the event of a crisis, probably the Korean military as well as the United States military, will be involved in... obviously meeting whatever the threat is, as well as keeping the people of Korea safe, doing our best to provide protection and again, just to meet the crisis," said Justin Whitaker, 1st Lieutenant U.S. Marine Corps, based in Okinawa, Japan. South Korean military officials said the drill mobilized about 7,600 navy and marine personnel and 30 naval vessels, as well as several landing craft.⁸¹

President Obama's National Intelligence Director recently told the U.S. Congress that North Korea has made advancements toward developing a long-range ballistic missile that could reach the U.S. At the same time, a possible deployment of a U.S. missile defence system in South Korea is being debated, but for officials in Seoul, these two issues are not necessarily related. In written testimony to Congress, James Clapper, the U.S. National Intelligence Director, said that North Korea has taken steps to deploy a long range, inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) called the KN-08 that will be capable of reaching the U.S. Around the same time David Stilwell, the Pentagon's deputy director for Politico-Military Affairs for Asia, said the North Korean missile threat has created a "demand" for the THAAD missile defence system on the Korean Peninsula.⁸²

South Korean prosecutors on April 1 indicted a man who slashed the U.S. ambassador in Seoul last month on charges of attempted murder. Kim Ki-jong, 55, was also indicted on charges of assaulting a foreign envoy and obstruction, according to an official at the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office, who did not want to be named, citing department rules. Police say Kim chose Lippert as a target to highlight his opposition to ongoing U.S.-South Korean military drills. North Korea has angrily reacted to the drills, calling them an invasion rehearsal. Anti-U.S. activists such as Kim have long blamed the presence of 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in the South as a deterrent to the North for the continuing split of the Korean Peninsula.⁸³

79 Miliband, David, "On Afghanistan: A Call for More Humanitarian Aid", *The New York Times*, April 3, 2015 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/03/opinion/on-afghanistan-a-call-for-more-humanitarian-aid.html>

80 "Operation Inherent Resolve Airstrikes Continue in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, April 5, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128531>

81 "US, South Korean Forces Conduct Joint Landing Exercise", *VOA News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-south-korean-forces-conduct-joint-landing-exercise/2699477.html>

82 Padden, Brian, "US Cites Growing N. Korea Long-Range Missile Threat", *VOA News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-cites-growing-north-korean-icmb-threat-missile-defense-needs/2699538.html>

83 "S. Korea Man Charged in Knife Attack on US Ambassador", *Associated Press*, April 01, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/south-korea-man-charged-in-knife-attack-on-us-ambassador-mark-lippert/2702703.html>

Defence Secretary Ash Carter called Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani to thank him for his long-term support and to discuss the upcoming major events in the U.S.-Japan alliance, according to a Defence Department statement issued on April 1. Carter reaffirmed commitment to the U.S.-Japan alliance and to the Asia-Pacific rebalance, the statement said, and both leaders highlighted the upcoming revision of the guidelines that define the U.S.-Japan defence relationship as a major milestone in modernizing the alliance. Carter and Nakatani noted that they look forward to meeting during Carter's upcoming visit to Japan, the statement said.⁸⁴

U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew is meeting with top officials in Beijing for a visit aimed at pressing Chinese authorities to adopt a more market-determined exchange rate policy. In a statement issued before the talks on March 30 with Deputy Chinese Premier Wang Yang, Lew said the United States and China "must work to achieve a mutually beneficial economic relationship," adding that it is "critical" to move to a more transparent exchange rate policy. Lew also expressed concern about what he said were "attempts to bar technological competition."⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Harry Harris Jr. on March 31 said that China is "creating a great wall of sand" through land reclamation in the South China Sea, causing serious concerns about its territorial intentions. Admiral Harris told a naval conference in Australia that competing territorial claims by several nations in the South China Sea are "increasing regional tensions and the potential for miscalculation." "But what's really drawing a lot of concern in the here and now is the unprecedented land reclamation currently being conducted by China," he said. "China is building artificial land by pumping sand onto live coral reefs - some of them submerged - and paving over them with concrete. China has now created over 4 square kilometres [1.5 square miles] of artificial landmass," he said.⁸⁶

Indo-US Relations

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **India skips Iran oil imports in March under US pressure; Indo-US relationship in a strategic plus phase: Ambassador Verma; Deepening Indo-US ties will shape global balance of power: Assistant Secretary Talwar; Ambassador Ashok talks vision in US, India relations.**

India halted oil imports from Iran for the first time in at least a decade in March as New Delhi responded to U.S. pressure to keep its shipments from Tehran within sanction limits during the last month of negotiations on a preliminary nuclear deal. Iran and six world powers have ramped up the pace of negotiations this week ahead of the March 31st deadline for reaching an initial accord on a final nuclear agreement. Both sides have warned it was crucial to overcome differences that could still wreck any chance at a deal. India is Iran's second-biggest buyer on an annual basis

84 "Carter, Nakatani Discuss U.S.-Japan Defence Issues", *DoD News*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128509>

85 "US Treasury Secretary in China for Talks", *VOA News*, March 30, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-treasury-secretary-in-china-for-talks/2699832.html>

86 "US Admiral: China 'Creating a Great Wall of Sand' in Sea", *Associated Press*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-adminral-china-creating-a-great-wall-of-sand-in-sea/2700920.html>

after China, yet it did not take any crude from Tehran in March, according to tanker arrival data from trade sources and ship tracking services on the Thomson Reuters terminal. It was reported that the halt in March comes after February imports hit a 1-1/2-year low for monthly imports, which together brought India's annual crude and condensate purchases from Iran in the year to March 31 to an average 220,000 barrels per day (bpd) or 11 million tons, slightly below shipments in the previous year.⁸⁷

US Ambassador to India Richard Verma said in Mysore, India on March 31 that both India and the United States have entered into a "strategic plus" phase in their relationship, sharing a common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and a stable world. He was speaking after inaugurating the renovated building of the Oriental Research Institute (ORI). The renovation was funded by the US Consulate, which donated 50,000 dollars in 2012. The ORI, which is affiliated to the University of Mysore, was established in 1891 and is a treasure trove of more than 50,000 manuscripts. Mr. Verma said the two countries have recognised that they not only share democratic values but certain common objectives that could be best realised by elevating the long-standing strategic partnership. The US Ambassador described a 'strategic plus' relationship as one not merely shaped by convergence of a few common interests but from sharing a common vision. "How we work together to achieve this common vision defines our strategic-plus partnership, be it with regard to economic and trade relations, energy space, climate change, space, science and technology, etc.," he added.⁸⁸

The deepening India-US ties are among the most significant strategic developments of the past several years and will shape the global balance of power in the years to come, US Assistant Secretary as well as Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Puneet Talwar has said on April 2. "In South Asia, we're strengthening our security, economic, and people-to-people ties with India. In my view, India's revival and deepening US-India ties are among the most significant strategic developments of the past several years," Assistant Secretary Puneet Talwar said. "They will shape the global balance of power for many years to come," the Indian-American diplomat said while addressing a session in San Francisco on US foreign policy priorities in 2015. He said that as the oldest and largest democracies, the US and India are seeing a natural convergence not only of values, but of "our vision for the future".⁸⁹

According to Ambassador Venkatesan Ashok, the Consul General of India, the India-U.S. relations have graduated to a global partnership since they share similar democratic values, which reach both regionally and nationally. The partnership is multifaceted which include defence, counter-terrorism and internal security, education, sustainable power and resources, economic trade, science and technology, health and more. He also spoke of India taking part in more manufacturing. In tandem was the implementation of freight and passenger corridors, infrastructure, clean water,

87 "India Skips Iran Oil Imports in March Under US Pressure", *Reuters*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-skips-iran-oil-imports-in-march-under-us-pressure/2701078.html>

88 Kumar, R. Krishna, "Indo-US Relationship In A Strategic Plus Phase", *The Hindu*, April 1, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/indous-relationship-in-a-strategic-plus-phase/article7056214.ece>

89 "Deepening Indo-US Ties Will Shape Global Balance Of Power: US Official", *PTI*, April 3, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-03/news/60787164_1_south-china-sea-south-asia-political-military-affairs-puneet-talwar

sewage facilities, renewable energy sources, sanitation, and better public transportation. The United States, he said, is showing interest their Smart City Project. India plans to start with five of these cities scattered in northern India, south central India and west India. The cities would be poised where the employment is and offer affordable and attractive housing. “We are trying to increase these five cities slowly in stages to a hundred cities so that we have a mesh of these Smart Cities all across the land,” he said, noting how renewable energy would be utilized.⁹⁰

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **Indian Air Force deploys C-17 Globemaster III aircraft in support of evacuation operations from Yemen; Government says reports on Indian war planes go missing during upgrade in Ukraine are baseless.**

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has deployed two heavy transport aircraft in support of evacuation operations following an advisory issued by the government of India for Indian nationals to leave Yemen. In a well-coordinated operation involving multi agencies, IAF deployed two C-17 Globemaster III aircraft on April 1. These two aircraft brought back people evacuated from Yemen to India. The first IAF C-17 aircraft landed at Kochi carrying 168 passengers and the second C-17 landed at Mumbai carrying 190 passengers.⁹¹

The government of India has made clarification that reports in a section of media on Indian War Planes go missing during upgrade in Ukraine is baseless. The government has said that Indian Air Force (IAF) has also confirmed the reports as baseless. The government clarifies that the last five AN-32s which were sent for upgrade to Ukraine are available in a factory in Ukraine. There have been delays in upgrade due to non-availability of components as a result of the ongoing geo-political stand-off between Ukraine and Russia.⁹²

International

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **China protests after two American jet fighters landed at an air base in Taiwan; Pakistan to procure eight Submarines from China to modernize its submarine fleet.**

90 Macone-Greene, Christina, “Ambassador talks vision in US, India relations”, *The Coast News*, March 31, 2015 at <https://thecoastnews.com/blog/2015/03/ambassador-talks-vision-in-us-india-relations/>

91 “Evacuation of Indian Nationals from Djibouti by the Indian Air Force (IAF),” *PIB*, April 02, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117919>

92 “Clarification on Wrong Reporting by a Certain Section of Media,” *PIB*, March 30, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117836>

Reports say that China has protested after two American jet fighters landed at an air base in Taiwan. China regards Taiwan as its own territory. The incident took place reportedly for the first time in 30 years. Two US F-18 fighter jets made an emergency landing at an air force base in the southern city of Tainan on April 1, with US authorities saying one of the planes had developed a mechanical failure. China has said that it want the US to abide by the 'One-China Policy' and the three joint communiques between China and the US. Taiwanese media has described the landing as the first of its kind since the mid-1980s and speculated that it could have been a US reaction to an unprecedented People's Liberation Army Air Force exercise over the western Pacific Ocean east of Taiwan.⁹³

Meanwhile, according to reports, Pakistan is renewing its efforts to modernize its submarine arm with eight submarines from China as well as a search for surplus European submarines. Pakistan's Economic Affairs Secretary Muhammad Saleem Sethi is leaving for China to pursue the deal. Pakistan currently operates five French submarines. However, the Pakistani Navy requires 12 submarines laid out in the Armed Forces Development Plan (AFDP) 2015 and a later revised plan. Pakistan had tried for surplus submarines from France, Germany, and the UK. However, France had refused Pakistan's approaches with concerns over transfer of technology.⁹⁴

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(March 30-April 5, 2015)

- **86.6 per cent more civilian casualties in J&K in 2014: MHA; Kashmiri separatist leader Asiya booked for unlawful activities; DAA not in force, says Mufti govt.; Militants escape after killing 2 security men in Baramulla.**

Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed 86.66 per cent more casualties of civilians and 30.58 per cent increase in terror incidents in 2014 in comparison to the previous year. According to the 2014-15 annual report of the Home Ministry, there were 224 incidents of violence in Jammu and Kashmir in 2014 in comparison to 170 incidents in 2013. 28 civilians were killed in 2014 in comparison to 15 civilian deaths in 2013. A total of 110 terrorists were killed last year in comparison to 67 in 2013.⁹⁵

The firebrand chief of an all-women Kashmiri separatist group, Asiya Andrabi, faced arrest after being named for unlawful activities in a police complaint on March 25 as she and her supporters

93 "China Objects After 2 US F-18s Land in Taiwan," *Defence News*, April 2, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/asia-pacific/2015/04/02/china-objects-after-2-us-f18s-land-in-taiwan/70835666/>

94 "Pakistan To Buy 8 Submarines From China," *Defence News*, April 3, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/submarines/2015/04/03/pakistan-to-buy-8-submarines-from-china/25233481/>

95 "86.6 Per Cent More Civilian Casualties in J&K in 2014: Home Ministry", *The Economic Times*, March 24, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-24/news/60439243_1_jammu-and-kashmir-incidents-maoist-violence

celebrated Pakistan Day in the Kashmir Valley this week. Andrabi and burqa-clad activists of her radical group, Dukhtaran-e-Millat, meaning Daughters of Faith, were accused of organising functions across Srinagar and districts in the Valley, singing the Pakistani national anthem and hoisting the Islamic republic's flag.⁹⁶

The Jammu and Kashmir government has admitted that the Disturbed Areas Act, 1997, has expired, which means that the J&K police does not have the kind of powers that Central forces enjoy under the Armed Forces (Jammu & Kashmir) Special Powers Act. Chief Minister Mufti Mohd. Sayeed had told the Council on March 23 that the government would de-notify some areas from the Disturbed Areas Act. But experts said the fact that the DAA is no longer in force does not mean that the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act is no longer valid.⁹⁷

An army jawan and a special police officer were killed in an encounter in Hardshura Sultanpora village in Jammu and Kashmir's Tangmarg area. The militants, however, are believed to have escaped. Two Army men and a civilian were also injured in the encounter. A defence spokesperson said that based on specific information, a joint operation was launched by the Rashtriya Rifles and the Special Operation Group of the police.⁹⁸

Northeast India

(March 23-April 5, 2015)

- **NSCN-K cadres ambushed patrol party in Manipur, killed 2 jawans; 4 KPLT militants held with arms in Assam; Centre continues unilateral ceasefire with NSCN-K; 3 policemen killed, 5 injured in militant attack in Aizawl.**

Cadres of NSCN-K waylaid a foot patrol team of 8th Gorkha Rifles on March 21 under Khoupum police station, Tamenglong district in Manipur and killed two riflemen on the spot and injured over a dozen of them, claimed a press note of the NSCN-K. According to the press release, the encounter which started in the morning continued till late afternoon even as the Gorkhas retaliated with cover fire while the military choppers carried out several sorties to lift the injured and killed soldiers. "It may also be mentioned that Naga inhabited areas of Manipur do not come under the effective coverage of the ceasefire between NSCN/GPRN and Government of India," stated the NSCN-K press statement.⁹⁹

Four KPLT militants were held with arms during an operation launched on March 15 by Barpathar

96 Ashiq, Peerzada, "Separatist Leader Asiya Andrabi Booked For Allegedly Hoisting Pak Flag", *Hindustan Times*, March 25, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/andrabi-booked-under-uapa-for-allegedly-hoisting-pak-flag/article1-1330347.aspx>

97 Rafiq, Zahid, "J&K Not Under Disturbed Areas Act", *The Hindu*, March 26, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jk-not-under-disturbed-areas-act/article7033478.ece>

98 Ehsan, Mir, "Jawan, Cop Killed in J&K Encounter", *The Indian Express*, April 3, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/jawan-cop-killed-in-jk-encounter/>

99 "NSCN-K Cadres Kill 2 Jawans", *The Assam Tribune*, March 23, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2315/oth056>

police under Bokajan subdivision. The four KPLT ultras were apprehended from dense forest of Koilamati of Chakihola area. One SBML rifle, one 7.65 mm pistol, one .22 mm pistol, live seven rounds of ammunition and some objectionable documents were recovered from them, police sources said.¹⁰⁰

The Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) is heading for another split following the expulsion of two senior functionaries of the outfit. The chairman of the outfit, S.S. Khaplang, on March 28, expelled senior minister (kilonser) Wangtin Konyak and his personal secretary as well as the spokesperson for the outfit, T. Tikhak, for their alleged “anti-Naga nationalism”. In a statement issued on March 27, the NSCN (K) said Khaplang, after consultation with top functionaries, has also decided to abrogate the ceasefire with the Centre. The ceasefire will expire on April 28.¹⁰¹ Though the militant outfit has abrogated the truce, the Centre will continue the unilateral ceasefire with the Myanmar-based NSCN (Khaplang).¹⁰²

Three armed policemen were killed and five others injured on March 28 when suspected militants belonging to Hmar People’s Convention-Democracy attacked members of an Assembly panel in Zokhawthiang in Aizawl district bordering Manipur, police said. The three legislators and other officials were reported to be safe. The HPC (D) militants seized two AK-47 Assault Rifles and four pistols from the policemen before escaping across the Mizoram-Manipur-Assam border.¹⁰³

Left-wing Extremism

(March 23-April 5, 2015)

- **Two jawans killed and one injured in encounter with Maoists in Gadchiroli; State cabinet recommends hike in surrender money for Maoists in Jharkhand; LWE is a concern in 5 districts: Orissa CM; Security forces gunned down 2 Naxalites in Latehar; Maoist literature reveals bid to expand turf in TN, Kerala; Centre transfers Additional Central Assistance scheme to states; PLFI owns up to Patna Blast; Jharkhand police launch ‘Operation Nai Disha’; Maoist ‘zonal commander’ lynched in Jharkhand’s West Singhbhum district.**

Two police commandos were killed while another was injured in a gun battle with Maoists in the forests of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra on March 22. The incident occurred near Gatta-Jarabandi forest area, bordering Chhattisgarh, when jawans of C-60, an elite anti-Maoist squad were returning after a joint combat operation, along with Chhattisgarh police. Talking to *Hindustan*

¹⁰⁰ “4 KPLT Ultras Held”, *The Assam Tribune*, March 25, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2515/state053>

¹⁰¹ Chishi, H., “NSCN-K Abrogates Truce”, *The Telegraph*, March 29, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150329/jsp/frontpage/story_11443.jsp#.VSTP7NyUewg

¹⁰² Dholabhai, Nishit, “Centre Continues NSCN-K Truce”, *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150405/jsp/northeast/story_12732.jsp#.VSTPatyUewg

¹⁰³ “3 Mizo Cops Killed, 5 Hurt In Attack”, *The Assam Tribune*, March 29, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=mar2915/oth051>

Times, Ravindra Kadam, the inspector general of police, Nagpur range, informed that a massive search operation has been launched in the area after the incident.¹⁰⁴

The Jharkhand state cabinet on March 24 recommended a steep hike in compensation to Maoists who will surrender in the state. Members of CPI Maoist politburo, special area committee and regional bureau would now get a whopping Rs 25 lakh when they surrender, Rs 13 lakh more than the Rs 12 lakh that the cabinet had recommended earlier. The cabinet revised compensation for CPI Maoist regional committee members for surrender as well. Earlier, it had recommended Rs 7 lakh for regional committee member, now they will get Rs 15 lakh. Zonal committee members would now get Rs 10 lakh, Rs 5 lakh more than its earlier recommendation while members of sub-zonal committee will get Rs 5 lakh, Rs 2 lakh more than its earlier recommendation, cabinet secretary N N Pandey announced on March 24. The cabinet also recommended creation of 14 more administrative circles across Jharkhand.¹⁰⁵

Orissa's Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on March 27 claimed that the law and order situation was peaceful in the State but rising Left Wing Extremism (LWE) remained a sensitive issue in five districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nuapada, Kalahandi and Balangir districts. Stating that the proactive action taken by security forces resulted in arrest of 71 LWE Maoists including the most-wanted Sabyasachi Panda, leader of Odisha Maobadi Party and Tella Anil Kumar, State committee member of Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee, Naveen said police recovered a record number of 143 weapons including 34 quality weapons in 2014. Besides, 99 LWE cadres and armed militants surrendered in the State during 2014 including Nachika Linga, leader of Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha, he said.¹⁰⁶

Security forces gunned down at least two Naxalites and injured another in the forests of Latehar on March 28 morning during an encounter with a Maoist squad that allegedly killed three members of the Shahdeo family in Lohardaga a week ago. Around 100 security personnel and 60-odd Naxalites exchanged over 2,000 rounds of bullets during the hour-long gun battle that broke out around 2am deep inside Baraini forests of Latehar, barely 10km from the Shahdeos' native village of Murmu in bordering Lohardaga. Two rifles and several rounds of ammunition were recovered from the spot, besides tents, utensils and other items.¹⁰⁷

Maoist's underground literature seized by security forces had revealed expansion plan by ultras in Sahyadri mountain range at the tri-Junction of Kerala-Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The seized document claimed that Western Ghats Special Zonal Committee (WGSZC) also carried out politico-military campaign from November 2014 to January 2015 to open a new war front in the southern

¹⁰⁴ Maitra, Pradip Kumar, "Two Jawans Killed, One Injured In Encounter with Maoists in Gadchiroli", *Hindustan Times*, March 23, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/two-police-commandos-killed-in-encounter-with-maoists-in-gadchiroli/article1-1329403.aspx>

¹⁰⁵ Mishra, Alok K N, "Govt. Raises Surrender Money for Maoists", *The Times of India*, March 25, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/Govt-raises-surrender-money-for-Maoists/articleshow/46680482.cms>

¹⁰⁶ "LWE A Concern in 5 Dists: CM", *The New Indian Express*, March 28, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/LWE-A-Concern-in-5-Dists-CM/2015/03/28/article2734586.ece>

¹⁰⁷ Kumar, Raj, "Forest fight Leads Cops To Shahdeo Killers", *The Telegraph*, March 28, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150329/jsp/jharkhand/story_11405.jsp#.VRgCJfyUewg

states and to carry out propaganda for future recruitment.¹⁰⁸

The Narendra Modi government has transferred the Additional Central Assistance (ACA) scheme (earlier known as the Integrated Action Plan) for the Naxal-affected districts to the states. There's no allocation for the scheme in the current budget, for which states were given Rs 1,760 crore in 2014-15, and now it is up to the states to implement it. Niti Aayog CEO Sindhushree Khullar confirmed the development to *The Economic Times* in response to an e-mail, but added that Niti Aayog will be monitoring the ACA scheme even after it is transferred to the states in the upcoming fiscal.¹⁰⁹

A Maoist group, People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) claimed responsibility for a bomb blast in the Bihar capital on March 30 night, police said. A suspect was detained, and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar asked the state police chief to look into the extremism and terrorism aspects in the incident. No casualties were reported on March 30th blast in a residential colony, and police later recovered two more live high-intensity bombs from the site.¹¹⁰

Jharkhand police have decided to provide free medical treatment to Maoists injured in encounters with security forces and are calling the new initiative 'Operation Nai Disha'. DGP D K Pandey said on March 29 that police and paramilitary forces involved in anti-Maoist operations have been instructed to take care of injured extremists. A dedicated team should be there who will make medical arrangements.¹¹¹

A Maoist 'zonal commander' was lynched by villagers in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, police said on April 3. West Singhbhum Superintendent of police Michael Raj S said the lynched Maoist has been identified as Johnson Ganju, was a resident of Hazaribagh but had been operating in Saranda forest of the district for long. Ganju was the mastermind of Chaibasa jail break in December last year in which 15 of its inmates fled and three were killed in police firing, police said. A country-made pistol, two live cartridges, one empty cartridge and three mobile phones were recovered from his possession, he said. Police said at least 49 cases were pending in different police stations of West Singhbhum against Ganju.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Yadav, Yatish, "Maoist Papers Reveal Bid to Expand Turf in TN, Kerala", *The New Indian Express*, March 29, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/Maoist-Papers-Reveal-Bid-to-Expand-Turf-in-TN-Kerala/2015/03/29/article2735326.ece>

¹⁰⁹ Sharma, Nidhi and Sharma, Aman, "Modi Government Transfers Additional Central Assistance For Naxal Problem To States", *The Economic Times*, March 30, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Modi-government-transfers-Additional-Central-Assistance-for-Naxal-problem-to-states/articleshow/46742267.cms>

¹¹⁰ "Maoist Group Owns up to Patna Blast, Nitish Orders Probe", *The New Indian Express*, March 31, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Maoist-Group-Owns-up-to-Patna-Blast-Nitish-Orders-Probe/2015/03/31/article2740127.ece>

¹¹¹ Mishra, Alok K N, "'Nai Disha': Treating Injured Reds Tops Police Priority List", *The Times of India*, March 30, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/Nai-Disha-Treating-injured-Reds-tops-police-priority-list/articleshow/46737884.cms>

¹¹² "Maoist 'Zonal Commander' Lynched", *Business Standard*, April 3, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/maoist-zonal-commander-lynched-115040300481_1.html