

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(April 6-19, 2015)

- **Khaleda Zia returns to her residence; Bangladesh cabinet approves revised Bangladesh-India bilateral trade agreement; Export increases in March; Life time imprisonment to ULFA leader; Bangladesh loses 1 per cent of the GDP in 2015 due to political turmoil; Bangladesh decides to join the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise; Land Minister of Bangladesh meets Mamata Banerjee.**

Khaleda Zia finally returned to her residence on April 5, after staying at her Gulshan office for three months. Zia surrendered before a Dhaka court and obtained bails in two corruption cases in which the court had ordered her arrest 39 days ago. Upon her appearance, the court withdrew the arrest warrants in Zia Orphanage Trust and Zia Charitable Trust graft cases. The warrants had been issued after the BNP chief dodged court proceedings for four consecutive dates.¹

Bangladesh cabinet has approved the revised Bangladesh-India bilateral trade agreement under which the two neighbours would use each other's territories for transiting goods to a third country. The modified deal would enable Bangladesh to use Indian territories for transporting goods to Nepal and Bhutan. Similarly, India would be able to send goods to Myanmar through Bangladesh.²

Exports rose 7.43 percent year-on-year to \$2.93 billion in March. The figure takes the total export earnings so far in fiscal 2014-15 to \$23.24 billion, up 2.98 percent year-on-year, according to data from the central bank.³

A local court sentenced United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) leader Ranjan Chowdhury and his Bangladeshi aide Pradip Marak to life term imprisonment in two cases for arms and terrorism on April 8. The court also fined the lifers Tk 20,000 each. Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-9) had arrested Ranjan Chowdhury alias Major Ranjan, 46, former general secretary of Dhobra district unit of ULFA, and his Bangladeshi aide Pradip Marak, 57, of Bakura village in Jhinaigati upazila of Sherpur district, from Bhraib upazila in Kishoreganj district on July 17, 2010. The elite

¹ "Relief, after Three Months' Tension", *The Daily Star*, April 6, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/relief-after-three-months-tension-75789>.

² Tusher, Hasan Jahid, "Revised Trade Deal with India Okayed", *The Daily Star*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/trade-deal-india-revised-75954>.

³ "Export Growth Brings Sunshine", *The Daily Star*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/export/export-growth-brings-sunshine-75925>.

force also recovered two pistols, four bullets, four handmade bombs and some bomb making materials from Ranjan's hideout at Laxmipur village in Bhairab upazila.⁴

Political unrest this year has caused greater damage to Bangladesh's economy than that in 2013 when the nation's two main political parties Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party fought over general elections. This time the country lost \$2.2 billion or 1 percentage point of gross domestic product (GDP) due to prolonged political turmoil, said the World Bank in its "Bangladesh Development Update Report 2015" launched at its Dhaka office on April 12.⁵

Bangladesh has decided to join the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, a new international cooperation platform to be launched to promote protection for the internet ecosystem in the developing countries. Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali announced this while speaking at the Plenary Session of the Global Conference on CyberSpace 2015 at the Hague in the Netherlands on April 16, according to the ministry press release.⁶

Land Minister of Bangladesh Shamsur Rahman Sharif has expressed hope that the long-pending issue of exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh would be resolved soon. He came up with the view after meeting West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on April 13. Following the meeting that lasted for nearly an hour, the minister said although there was no particular agenda for discussion, the enclave exchange issue came up.⁷

Sri Lanka

(April 6-19, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka-Pakistan sign six MoUs; Prime minister of Bhutan visits Sri Lanka; UN Development Chief for Asia and UN Assistant Secretary-General Haoliang Xu visits Sri Lanka; India provides visa on arrival facility to Sri Lanka; UN urges Sri Lanka to investigate allegations of conflict-related sexual violence; Report suggest Naxals getting arms through sea route from Sri Lanka; Deputy Foreign Minister visits the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; Sri Lanka-China discusses boosting ties between the two army.**

Sri Lanka and Pakistan signed six agreements during President Sirisena's three day visit to Pakistan. The six MoUs signed are: 1) Cooperation between Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and Atomic Energy Authority of Sri Lanka; 2) Agreement on cooperation against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; 3) Academic cooperation agreement on exchange and collaboration between National Defence University of Pakistan and Lakshman Kadirgamar

⁴ "Ulfa Leader, Local Aide Get Life Term", *The Daily Star*, April 9, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/ulfa-leader-local-aide-get-life-term-76353>.

⁵ "3-Month Turmoil Costs Nation \$2.2b", *The Daily Star*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/3-month-turmoil-costs-nation-22b-77049>.

⁶ "Bangladesh To Join Global Cyber Forum Expertise", *The Daily Star*, April 17, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-join-global-cyber-forum-expertise-77727>.

⁷ "Land Minister Meets Mamata", *The Daily Star*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/land-minister-meets-mamata-77331>.

Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies of Sri Lanka; 4) Collaboration in the field of Sports; 5) Mutual cooperation in shipping business between Pakistan National Shipping Corporation(PNSC) and the Ceylon Shipping Corporation Ltd (CSCL); 6) Cooperation on disaster management.⁸

The Prime Minister of Bhutan Tshering Tobgay made an official visit to Sri Lanka on April 9, 2015 on an invitation extended by President Maithripala Sirisena.⁹ During the bilateral discussion on April 10, President Maithripala Sirisena praised Bhutan for adopting a democratic constitution and added that Sri Lanka too could learn from the new Bhutanese Constitution. Both the leaders pledged to enhance bilateral cooperation and establish air links between Paro and Colombo by Druk Air, the Bhutanese national Carrier. The two leaders agreed that Sri Lanka and Bhutan have a special relationship as the two countries are bound by common spiritual link of Buddhism. Prime Minister Tobgay said that his country is extremely grateful to Sri Lanka for the gift of a sapling of Sri Maha Bodhi to Bhutan and it will be highly venerated and respected in his country. During the bilateral discussions, Tobgay thanked Sri Lanka for providing placements to Bhutanese students in Sri Lankan medical colleges. President Sirisena said he would provide more seats to Bhutanese students at the Medical faculty of the Kotalawala Defence Academy and examine the possibility of increasing the number of scholarships given to Bhutan. President Sirisena said steps would be taken to increase cooperation in areas such as health, agriculture and tourism between the two countries.¹⁰

Engaging in a six-day visit to Sri Lanka, the UN Development Chief for Asia and UN Assistant Secretary-General Haoliang Xu met with the Minister of Finance Ravi Karunanayake on April 6 and discussed opportunities to strengthen cooperation with the UN system. Xu also met and exchanged views with Minister of Resettlement, Reconstruction and Hindu Religious Affairs, D.M. Swaminathan. During this meeting Xu discussed UN/UNDP's support to complete the process of resettlement for the internally displaced persons (IDPs), alongside the broader development agenda for the displaced and other challenges relating to the resettlement process. Xu also met with other key government leaders and partners of the UNDP supported SELAJSI Programme (Strengthening the Enforcement of Law, Access to Justice and Social Integration), a programme that was launched during his 2014 visit to the island.¹¹ Xu also conducted a field visit to the North.¹²

⁸ "Pakistan, Lanka Sign Nuclear Deal", *Colombo Gazette*, April 6, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/06/pakistan-lanka-sign-nuclear-deal/>.

⁹ "Prime Minister of Bhutan Arrives", *Colombo Gazette*, April 9, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/09/prime-minister-of-bhutan-arrives/>.

¹⁰ "President Hails Reforms in Bhutan", *Colombo Gazette*, April 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/10/president-hails-reforms-in-bhutan/>.

¹¹ "UN, Lanka Discuss Cost Sharing", *Colombo Gazette*, April 6, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/06/un-lanka-discuss-cost-sharing/>.

¹² "UN Official On Northern Field Visit", *Colombo Gazette*, April 8, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/08/un-official-on-northern-field-visit/>.

Sri Lanka has been added to the list of countries who will enjoy the visa on arrival facility when visiting India from April 14. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his recent visit to Sri Lanka, had announced that Sri Lanka will be added to the list of countries offered visa on arrival by India.¹³

The United Nations has called on the Government of Sri Lanka to investigate allegations of conflict-related sexual violence, including incidents said to have taken place during the post war period. UN Secretary General Ban ki-moon, in a report to the UN Security Council, on conflict related sexual violence, said that in Sri Lanka, in the five years since the end of the armed conflict, the Government has committed to supporting the resettlement and reintegration of civilians displaced by the violence and has made considerable progress in this regard. However, he said one of the major unaddressed issues is impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. He noted that the Government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence and committed to take stringent action in response to such crimes, including discharging and prosecuting offenders from the security forces. However, the report by the UN Secretary General notes that there are indications that abduction, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence have increased in the post-war period.¹⁴

India's Central intelligence agencies have launched a major investigation into a "specific tip-off" that Naxals were now getting sophisticated weapons through the sea route from Sri Lanka. *The Asian Age* quoted top intelligence sources as saying that they had received information some time back that Naxals were routing arms and ammunition through the sea route through an arms cartel which was suspected to be earlier providing weapons to the LTTE as well. It is suspected that the weapons are coming through Sri Lanka using the sea route, sources added. Intelligence officials are worried about this new "supply route" being used by the Maoists to procure sophisticated weapons, including the AK-series rifles, landmines, grenade launchers, communication equipment and even Night Vision Devices (NVDs).¹⁵

Sri Lankan Government has assured its serious commitment and meaningful contributions to achieve the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Foreign Ministry said on April 16. A Foreign Ministry statement said that Deputy Foreign Minister Ajith P. Perera, visited the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and met with the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü. Ambassador Üzümcü acknowledged Sri Lanka's role in implementation of the CWC, including its contributions to OPCW training and assistance activities aimed at enhancing international cooperation and capacity-building efforts. The Director-General and the Deputy Foreign Minister discussed ways of further enhancing cooperation between the Organisation and Sri Lanka.¹⁶

¹³ "Visa on Arrival to India From Today", *Colombo Gazette*, April 14, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/14/visa-on-arrival-to-india-from-today/>.

¹⁴ "UN for Probe on Sexual Violence", *Colombo Gazette*, April 16, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/16/un-for-probe-on-sexual-violence/>.

¹⁵ "Naxals Getting Arms via Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, April 16, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/16/naxals-getting-arms-via-sri-lanka/>.

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka Assures CWC Support", *Colombo Gazette*, April 16, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/16/sri-lanka-assures-cwc-support/>.

Sri Lanka and China have had talks on boosting ties between the People's Liberation Army of China and the Sri Lanka Army. Both sides had largely discussed on ongoing cooperation for training programmes, the army media unit said in a statement with regards to talks held between the Ambassador of China in Sri Lanka, Yi Xianliang and the Commander of the Army, Lieutenant General Crishanth De Silva at the Army Headquarters.¹⁷

Maldives

(April 6-19, 2015)

- **Japan to provide non-project grant aid to the Maldives; President returns the Amendment Bill to the Prison and Parole Act; India evacuates Maldivian student from Yemen; An international team of lawyers have been established in defence of Nasheed; Bangladesh High Commissioner meets Dunya Maumoon; Export increases by 90 per cent in March.**

Maldives and Japan have signed the Exchange of Notes for the Non-Project Grant Aid for Provision of Japanese Disaster Reduction Equipment (2014), under which Japan will provide equipment valued at MVR 64 million. The Exchange of Notes was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon and Ambassador of Japan to the Maldives Nobuhito Hobo, at a ceremony at Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 7.¹⁸

President Abdulla Yameen has returned the Amendment Bill to the Prison and Parole Act, which states that criminal convicts cannot be members of political parties, to the parliament without ratification. Former President Mohamed Nasheed would no longer be a member of Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) if the law is enforced, which would follow ratification by the President. This would leave the post of President of MDP vacant.¹⁹

India has helped to evacuate a Maldivian student from Yemen, where fighting is ongoing between Houthi rebels and government forces. The High Commission of Maldives in India, on its official *Twitter* account thanked India for its help.²⁰

An international team of lawyers have been established in defence of the former president Mohamed Nasheed who is currently serving a 13 year prison sentence. The team consists of Jared Genser, Ben Emmerson (QC) and Amal Clooney. The former president's office said that the first task of the international team would be to work with the Maldivian team of lawyers and present Nasheed's case to UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.²¹

¹⁷ "China, Sri Lanka Talk on Army Ties", *Colombo Gazette*, April 18, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/04/18/china-sri-lanka-talk-on-army-ties/>.

¹⁸ "Japan Provides Disaster Reduction Equipment Worth MVR 64 Million", *SunOnline*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/28977>.

¹⁹ "Bill Disqualifying Nasheed as MDP Member Not Ratified, Returned to Parliament", *SunOnline*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/28974>.

²⁰ "India Helps Evacuate Maldivian Student from Yemen", *SunOnline*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/28967>.

²¹ "International Team of Lawyers to Defend Nasheed", *SunOnline*, April 7, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/28983>.

The new High Commissioner of Bangladesh Rear Admiral Kazi Sarwar Hossain has paid a courtesy call on Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon. During the meeting, Dunya reassured the Maldivian government's commitment to addressing the issues faced by Bangladeshi expatriates. At the meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning, the Foreign Minister and the High Commissioner also discussed ways of further strengthening and diversifying existing ties between the two countries, including enhancing trade relations.²²

Exports have increased by 90 percent in March 2015, compared to March 2014. According to "Monthly Statistics – March 2015" published by Maldives Customs Service, goods worth MVR 212.5 million were exported in March 2015, while the value of goods exported in the corresponding period of 2014 was MVR 111.7 million. The increase in exports is attributed to a significant hike in the export of yellow-fin tuna. Imports, meanwhile, went down by 2 percent. Goods worth MVR 2,560.8 million were imported in March 2015, while the value of goods imported in the corresponding period of 2014 was MVR 2,599.9 million.²³

B. East Asia

China

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **AIIB to cooperate with the existing multilateral institutions and focus primarily on infrastructure; Xi Jinping to visit Pakistan and Indonesia; China's Belt and Road Initiative is ready to welcome all to join; PLA ready to buy advanced missiles from Russia; China upset over remarks made by the Philippines; China releases white paper on Tibet Development; China and Turkey to cooperate and fight terrorism.**

Talking about the Asian Infrastructure Bank (AIIB), the Chinese vice foreign Minister, Zhu Guangyao said that, "The AIIB will focus on infrastructure and cooperate with existing multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank (ADB)". He also added that the AIIB which has an initial capital of 50 billion and planned capital of 100 billion is alone incapable of funding alone.²⁴

The Chinese President Xi Jinping is all set to visit Pakistan on a two day trip starting on April 20. This is the first visit by a Chinese head of state to Pakistan in nine years. According to the assistant foreign minister, Liu Jianchao, "both countries will seal agreements covering areas including energy, transportation, infrastructure, trade, finance and technology".²⁵

²² "Dunya Reassures Commitment To Addressing Issues Faced By Bangladeshi Expats", *SunOnline*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29175>.

²³ "Exports Increase By 90 Percent in March", *SunOnline*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29157>.

²⁴ "AIIB to Focus on Infrastructure, Cooperate with Existing Multilateral Institutions", *China Daily*, April 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/18/content_20469084.htm, accessed on April 20, 2015

²⁵ "Xi Set to Visit Pakistan and Indonesia", By Zhao Shengnan/Zhao Yanrong, *China Daily*, April 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/18/content_20464452.htm, accessed on April 20, 2015

Ou Xiaoli, an inspector in the Department of Western Development of the China National Development and Reform Commission, said on April 16, that, "any country interested in the Belt and Road Initiative is welcome to participate". It is reported that more than 60 countries have shown interests in participating in this initiative.²⁶

China announced that it had deployed Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system. According to Wang Ya'nan, the deputy editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, "The S-400 is definitely one of the top anti-aircraft weapons in the world. It will greatly supplement the People's Liberation Army's air defence system, which now has some loopholes in long-range, high-altitude defence of airplanes or ballistic missiles".²⁷

As a response to the Philippine President Benigno Aquino's recent accusations regarding China undertaking constructions on islands in the South China Sea the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said that these accusations were "unreasonable". He further added that, "We urge the Philippines to respect China's sovereignty and its own commitment in bilateral documents and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)."²⁸

On April 15, 2015 the Chinese government issued a white paper on the development path of Tibet. The white paper is titled, "Tibet's Path of Development Is Drive by an Irresistible Historical Tide".²⁹

According to Turkish media reports, two Islamic State members from China were arrested by the Turkish military on the Turkey-Syria border on April 7. As a response to this the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said on April 14 that China is ready to cooperate with Turkey in its fight against terrorism.³⁰

Japan

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Tourism ministers of Japan, South Korea and China held talks after a hiatus of four years; LDP proposes new provisions for SDF dispatch overseas; New defence guidelines between Japan-US to incorporate minesweeping and ballistic missile defence; Japan's Ground and**

²⁶ Xiang, Zhang, "Belt and Road Initiative Open to All", *China Daily*, April 16, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/16/content_20452313.htm, accessed on April 17, 2015

²⁷ Lei, Zhao, "PLA to Buy Advanced Missiles from Russia", *China Daily*, April 16, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/16/content_20446202.htm, accessed on April 17, 2015

²⁸ "China Refutes Philippine President's South China Sea Accusation", *China Daily*, April 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/15/content_20442989.htm, accessed on April 17, 2015

²⁹ "China Denounces Dalai Lama's 'Middle Way'", *China Daily*, April 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/15/content_20438991.htm, accessed on April 17, 2015

³⁰ "China Willing to Cooperate with Turkey to Fight Terror", *China Daily*, April 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-04/15/content_20441215.htm, accessed on April 17, 2015

Maritime SDF conduct joint landing exercise to improve capability in defending outlying islands.

On April 12, the tourism ministers of Japan, South Korea and China held their first meeting after a hiatus of four years in Tokyo. During the meeting they agreed to increase the number of tourists among the three countries by 50 per cent to 30 million by 2020. A joint statement was also adopted that pledged to enhance the number of travellers among the three countries by 1.5 times from about 20.5 million in 2014. The meeting marked the resumption of the trilateral ministerial talk amid the ongoing tenuous political situation between Japan and its two neighbours.³¹

On April 16, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) proposed to incorporate a new provision in the country's planned international peace assistance law. The provision is to allow the Japanese government to dispatch the Self Defence Forces (SDF) troops if it obtains Diet approval within one week of the start of the missions. While Diet approval is mostly mandatory, the government proposes to allow exceptions to the rule in certain cases. It remains to be seen how the LDP's junior coalition partner-Komeito-would react to this new provision as it has been insisting that it would not accept any exceptions to the rule.³²

In the upcoming Japan-US bilateral defence cooperation guidelines, the two governments are planning to incorporate minesweeping operations and ballistic missile defence. This is another big step taken by Japan towards exercising the right to collective self-defence that was approved by the Abe Administration in July last year. The legislation on collective self-defence is currently being negotiated between the ruling LDP and its junior coalition partner-Komeito-in Japan. Nevertheless, the new defence guidelines are to be put together by the end of this month. It is expected to expand the scope of defence cooperation between Japan and the US. While under the existing guidelines, Japan could offer defence cooperation to the US troops in two circumstances: in times of emergency when Japan is threatened by direct armed attack, and when situations in areas surrounding Japan threaten to affect Japan's own national security. However the new guidelines propose to incorporate that Japan could offer cooperation to the US troops in situations threatening the survival of Japan in sea-lanes and elsewhere.³³

Japanese Defence Ministry is reportedly planning to set up an amphibious mobile landing unit with improved capabilities by the end of fiscal 2018 in order to defend and protect Japan's outlying islands. The decision was taken while keeping in mind China's growing assertive behaviour over Senkaku islands and the South China Sea region. In order to prepare for the establishment of the said unit, Japan's Ground and Maritime Self Defence Force held joint landing exercise from April 11 onwards. It was to continue for six days. It needs to be noted that this was the third time that the two defence troops of Japan carried out joint exercises involving amphibious landing. In

³¹ "Japan, China, South Korea Pledge To Increase Visitors To 30 Million by 2020", *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 13, 2015, at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504130023

³² "New Proposal Made over SDF Missions Overseas", *The Yomiuri Daily*, April 17, 2015, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002088928>

³³ "Minesweeping Eyed in Defence Guidelines", *The Yomiuri Daily*, April 17, 2015, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002088625>

May and October last year too, they conducted similar exercises in the Amami chain of islands off Kagoshima Prefecture.³⁴

South Korea

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Vice Foreign Ministers of South Korea, Japan and US hold their first-ever talks; South Korea to prove more humanitarian aid to North Korea.**

On April 16, the vice Foreign ministers of South Korea, Japan and US hold their first-ever talks in Washington. Given the ongoing political tension between South Korea and Japan on historical and territorial issues, the former's efforts towards mending its ties with Tokyo seem significant. In the meeting South Korean vice Foreign Minister Cho-Tae yong, Japanese vice-Foreign Minister Akitaka Saeki and US Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken took part. The three basically discussed about the security threat posed by North Korea and the prospect of peace and stability in the East Asian region.³⁵ In the meeting, both Cho Tae yong and Saeki vow to cooperate in areas of mutual interest and improve the currently strained relationship between South Korea and Japan.³⁶

With a view to easing the ongoing political tension in the Korean peninsula, South Korea intends to increase its humanitarian aid to North Korea. South Korean government's assistance to the North Korea has been suspended since the Cheonan incident in March 2010. However South Korea's Unification Minister Hong Yong-pyo is to encourage more private organizations to contribute towards enhancing inter-Korean exchanges. He also hopes to boost the channel of communication between the two Koreas at the non-governmental level.³⁷

North Korea

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **North Korea's head of Parliament is to visit Indonesia to join the upcoming Asian-African conference.**

North Korea's head of Parliament-Kim Yong-nam- is to visit Indonesia next week to attend the upcoming Asian-African Conference. Kim, who is also the ceremonial head of North Korea, reached Beijing on April 18 on his way to Indonesia. In the said conference, several regional

³⁴ "SDF Holding Third Joint Amphibious Landing Exercises On Outlying Island", *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 15, 2015, at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201504150045

³⁵ "Vice Ministers of Korea, US, Japan Hold Talks," *The Korea Herald*, April 16, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150416000912>

³⁶ "Korea, Japan Vow Joint Efforts For Cooperation", *The Korea Herald*, April 17, 2015, at http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20150417000921&dt=2

³⁷ "S. Korea To Increase Humanitarian Aid to N. Korea", *The Korea Herald*, April 17, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150417000802>

leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are to participate. Kim is expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Xi Jinping on the side-lines of the conference.³⁸

C. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **China spies on India, Southeast Asia: Reports; India to officially begin diplomatic mission to ASEAN; Australia says Nauru refugees will soon be sent to Cambodia; Cambodia pardons jailed rights activists; Indonesia protests beheading of migrant worker in Saudi Arabia; Indonesian army chief makes introductory visit to Singapore; Indonesia eyes navy exercises with US in disputed waters; Indonesian F-16 explodes on take-off; About 70 Malaysian army personnel linked to Islamic State: Defence Ministry; The Philippines, Vietnam hold defence policy dialogue; US to deploy equipment to Philippines; Singapore's Chief of Defence Force reaffirms defence ties with China; Interpol's R&D facility in Singapore opens; Arms deals with Russia in pipeline as West shuns junta; Vietnam, France vow to remove trade barriers; Vietnamese defence official greets Russian defence attaché; Indian Defence Attaché meets Fiji Police; First New Zealand troops set to deploy to Iraq; PNG army investigates Indonesian troop movements.**

Hackers, most likely from China, have been spying on governments and businesses in Southeast Asia and India uninterrupted for a decade, researchers at internet security company FireEye Inc said. In a report released on April 13, FireEye said the cyber espionage operations dated back to at least 2005 and "focused on targets - government and commercial - who hold key political, economic and military information about the region." "Such a sustained, planned development effort coupled with the (hacking) group's regional targets and mission, lead us to believe that this activity is state-sponsored - most likely the Chinese government," the report's authors said. Bryce Boland, Chief Technology Officer for Asia Pacific at FireEye and co-author of the report, said the attack was still ongoing, noting that the servers the attackers used were still operational, and that FireEye continued to see attacks against its customers, who number among the targets.³⁹

India is set to officially begin a diplomatic mission in the ASEAN region on April 22 in a bid to boost ties with member states of what it calls a unique grouping of countries with high economic potential. Indian Ambassador to ASEAN Suresh K. Reddy said India's relations with ASEAN were very important because of the current economic potential existing between his country and ASEAN. He said India had a robust flow of investments into Southeast Asian nations and vice versa. "Our trade is healthy," he said on the side-lines of a soft opening of the Indian Mission to

³⁸ "N. Korea's Ceremonial Head Of State Travels to Indonesia", *The Korea Herald*, April 18, 2015, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150418000084>

³⁹ "Chinese Hackers Target Southeast Asia, India, Researchers Say", *Reuters*, available at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/04/13/cybersecurity-fireeye-report-idINKBN0N40AJ20150413>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

ASEAN held in Central Jakarta on April 13. Suresh said the value of trade between India and ASEAN was currently US\$90 billion but hopefully could be increased to \$200 billion.⁴⁰

Refugees rejected by Australia will soon fly from the Pacific atoll of Nauru to be resettled in Cambodia, the Australian government said on April 16. A charter flight could fly the first refugees to be resettled in Phnom Penh, according to a copy of a fact sheet that the Refugee Action Collective advocacy group said has been circulated at Nauru. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's office did not specify when the first group will fly under a bilateral agreement signed by Cambodia and Australia last September. "The first group of volunteers is anticipated to depart for Cambodia in the near future," his office said in a statement. The intergovernmental International Organization for Migration was sending an official to Nauru "with an expectation of possible movements in the coming days," IOM's Bangkok-based spokesman Joe Lowry said. The deal with Cambodia will cost the Australian government more than 10 million Australian dollars (\$7.6 million) a year and has been condemned by human rights groups.⁴¹

Cambodia has pardoned and released ten female land activists jailed over protests last year, following an outcry over their arrests. King Norodom Sihamoni granted a royal pardon to the activists – including a 75-year-old woman known locally as 'Mommy' – who were released on April 11, said Am Sam Ath of rights group Licadho, which provided legal assistance to the women. 'We regret that they made no mistake but were convicted and jailed,' he said. In November, 10 women and a defrocked Buddhist monk were each sentenced to a year in prison for blocking traffic or obstructing the work of officials during protests in Phnom Penh.⁴²

Saudi Arabia executed an Indonesian domestic worker on April 16 just days after beheading another woman from the country, prompting the Indonesian foreign ministry to summon the kingdom's ambassador, Jakarta said. Karni binti Medi Tarsim, 37, was convicted of murdering a four-year-old girl in 2012, according to a statement from the Indonesian foreign ministry. Her execution in Yanbu, western Saudi Arabia, came two days after another Indonesian helper, Siti Zainab, was beheaded for murder. In both cases, Jakarta expressed anger that it was not given advance notice of the execution.⁴³

The Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Army (TNI-AD), General Gatot Nurmantyo, was in Singapore for his introductory visit during April 14 to 16, the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) announced in a

⁴⁰ "India To Officially Begin Diplomatic Mission to ASEAN", *The Jakarta Post*, available at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/04/15/india-officially-begin-diplomatic-mission-asean.html#sthash.AT5fJajJ.dpuf>, accessed on April 20, 2015

⁴¹ "Australia Says Nauru Refugees Will Soon Be Sent to Cambodia", *ABC News*, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-nauru-refugees-cambodia-30353043>, accessed on April 20, 2015

⁴² "Cambodia Pardons Jailed Rights Activists", *Echo NetDaily*, available at <http://www.echo.net.au/2015/04/cambodia-pardons-jailed-rights-activists/>, accessed on April 20, 2015

⁴³ "Saudi Arabia Executes Second Indonesia Woman: Jakarta", *Strait Times*, available at <http://www.straittimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/saudi-arabia-executes-second-indonesia-woman-jakarta-20150416#sthash.ZIT3XH0Q.dpuf> Indonesian army chief makes introductory visit to Singapore, accessed on: April 20, 2015

press release on Apr 15. The visit by Gen Gatot underscores the strong and long-standing defence relationships between Singapore and Indonesia, said Mindef. The ministry added: "The Singapore Army and the TNI-AD interact regularly through a range of activities, including bilateral exercises, cross-attendance of courses, and professional exchanges. These extensive interactions have strengthened interoperability as well as deepened mutual understanding between the two armies."⁴⁴

Indonesia wants to hold regular military exercises with the United States near the sparsely populated Natuna archipelago, an area of the South China Sea near China's claims, a navy spokesman said on April 13. Although Indonesia is not a claimant in the South China Sea, the military has accused China of including parts of Natuna within its so called "Nine-Dash Line," the vague boundary used on Chinese maps to lay claim to about 90 percent of the sea. The United States, which raised concerns on April about China's rapid reclamation of reefs in the area, held a joint military exercise over the weekend with Indonesia in Batam, about 300 miles (480 km) from Natuna. "It was the second joint exercise we have conducted with the United States in that area and we are planning another one next year. We want to make it routine in that area," said Indonesia Navy spokesman Manahan Simorangkir.⁴⁵

An Indonesian air force F-16 plane which was about to do a flyover at a military ceremony for President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo exploded during take-off on April 16, an air force spokesman said. The pilot suffered from some burn injuries on his neck and arm, he said. The pilot was initially scheduled to do a fly-pass above the Indonesian Defence Force headquarters during a ceremony to inaugurate Jokowi as an honorary member of the military special force.⁴⁶

Malaysia Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Bakri revealed that about 70 army personnel were found to be involved with the Islamic State (IS) militant group. The figure was confirmed by the police, he said, during a question session at the Upper House of Parliament. He added that the army is monitoring the situation via its investigation and intelligence division. Mr Abdul Rahim said any army personnel found to be involved with IS will be counselled by the police and army in bid to restore their faith, in accordance with the proper teachings of Islam.⁴⁷

Deputy Defence Minister Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh and his Philippine counterpart Honorio S Azcueta on April 13 co-hosted the first Vietnam- Philippines defence policy dialogue in Hanoi. At the dialogue, the two sides assessed the global and regional situation and issues of shared concern, and reviewed the results of defence cooperation over recent years. They

⁴⁴ "Indonesian Army Chief Makes Introductory Visit to Singapore", *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/indonesian-army-chief/1785294.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁴⁵ "Indonesia Eyes Navy Exercises With US in Disputed Waters", *ABS CBN News*, at <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/world/04/13/15/indonesia-eyes-navy-exercises-us-disputed-waters>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁴⁶ "Indonesian F-16 explodes on take-off", *Bangkok Post*, available at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/530387/indonesian-f-16-explodes-on-takeoff>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁴⁷ "About 70 Malaysian Army Personnel Linked to Islamic State: Defence Ministry", *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/about-70-malaysian-army/1781556.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

agreed that the Vietnam – Philippines defence cooperation continued to grow steadily across a variety of realms in a practical and effective manner. Regarding orientations for future cooperation, they consented to realize areas of cooperation under the framework of the bilateral defence cooperation agreement signed in October 2010. Accordingly, both sides pledged to continue intensifying all-level delegation exchanges, maintain and improve the efficiency of deputy-ministerial dialogue mechanisms aiming to build confidence and perception on international and regional matters and bilateral relations.⁴⁸

The United States is planning to deploy “various advanced air and naval equipment” to the Philippines in view of China’s massive reclamation works in the South China Sea, Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario has said. In an interview to a news channel on April 15, Mr Del Rosario said US Defence Secretary Ash Carter has “outlined” this plan, “and we welcome this”. Mr Del Rosario said he would fly to Washington in two weeks to meet Mr Carter and US State Secretary John Kerry to discuss the planned deployment. Commenting on the US plan to deploy air and naval assets to the Philippines, defence consultant Jose Custodio said “these are practically useless”. He said he expects the US to deploy destroyers, littoral ships, submarines and surveillance aircraft “only for knowing what the Chinese are doing”. Meanwhile, Beijing dismissed as “groundless” President Benigno Aquino’s warning on April 14 that China’s actions in the South China Sea “should engender fear for the rest of the world”.⁴⁹

China and Singapore have agreed on concrete initiatives to deepen their defence relationship after Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant-General (LG) Ng Chee Meng, met People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Chief of General Staff, General (GEN) Fang Fenghui. LG Ng was on a six-day introductory visit to China, till April 18 at the invitation of GEN Fang. Both exchanged views on the regional security situation and the state of bilateral defence cooperation, Singapore’s Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) said in a news release on April 14. MINDEF added that both armed forces chiefs committed to expanding interactions with each other under the Four-Point Consensus which was agreed on between Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and China’s Minister of National Defence Chang Wanquan during Dr Ng’s visit to China last November.⁵⁰

The Interpol Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI) officially opened on April 13, as part of Singapore’s bid to help the international organisation strengthen its global presence. Singapore’s Minister for Home Affairs Teo Chee Hean said the research and development (R&D) facility, which is located at the former Tanglin Police Division Headquarters, would complement the General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Mr Teo underlined the need to deal with growing safety and security challenges. Mr Teo cited attacks at a university in Kenya and the police headquarters in Istanbul as examples of recent threats. “The heightened terrorism threat, including self-radicalised individuals, poses serious risks to the

⁴⁸ “The Philippines, Vietnam Hold Defence Policy Dialogue”, *Vietnam Net*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/128092/the-philippines—vietnam-hold-defence-policy-dialogue.html>, accessed on April 20, 2015

⁴⁹ “US to Deploy Equipment to Philippines”, *Strait Times*, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/asia-report/south-china-sea/story/us-deploy-equipment-philippines-20150416>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵⁰ “Singapore’s Chief of Defence Force Reaffirms Defence Ties With China”, *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-s-chief-of/1784114.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

safety and security of every country. We also see a stronger nexus between organised crime and terrorism as criminal networks exploit connectivity and technology to globalise their operations," Mr Teo said.⁵¹

Despite Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha's insistence that the government's renewed relationship with Russia is not meant to counterbalance deteriorating relations with the United States, a top Russian minister said Moscow had high hopes for future arms deals with the junta now that Thailand's relations with the West had cooled.

Russian Commerce Minister Denis Manturov, a key member of the Russian delegation that accompanied Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to Thailand last week, said deals were also in the pipeline on rail services, military aircraft, and the sale of three Sukhoi Superjet transport planes to Thailand, with the shipment expected late next year.⁵²

Vietnam and France have agreed on the necessity of removing trade barriers and obstacles in market approaches through bilateral dialogues, including Vietnam lifting its ban on French beef. The agreement was reached during the third annual high-level economic dialogue chaired by Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment (MPI) Nguyen Chi Dung and Matthias Fekl, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Promotion of Tourism and French Nationals Abroad, in Hanoi on April 15. The French side also proposed Vietnam to consider removing barriers to the import of French apples. The two sides reaffirmed the significance of the annual economic dialogue in implementing the bilateral strategic partnership reached in September 2013.⁵³

Deputy Defence Minister Senior Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh hosted a reception on April 14 in Hanoi for the newly-appointed Russian Defence Attaché to Vietnam, Colonel Andrey Petrovich Likhachev. The Vietnamese official suggested the two sides further promote their existing close links through enhancing cooperation in defence, personnel training and all-level delegation exchanges. He affirmed that the defence cooperation between the two countries contributes to maintaining peace and stability in the region. For his part, Andrey committed to doing his utmost to step up the bilateral defence ties between the two nations.⁵⁴

India's Defence Advisor Captain Chetan Chandegave paid his first official visit on April 15. Chandegave met the Acting Commissioner of Police Isikeli Vuniwaqa and discussed ways the two countries would be able to assist each other in strengthening the implementation of the law

⁵¹ "Interpol's R&D Facility In Singapore Opens", *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/interpol-officially-opens/1780740.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵² "Arms Deals With Russia In Pipeline As West Shuns Junta", *The Nation*, available at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Arms-deals-with-Russia-in-pipeline-as-West-shuns-j-30258142.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵³ "Vietnam, France Vow To Remove Trade Barriers", *Vietnam Net*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/128340/vietnam-france-vow-to-remove-trade-barriers.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵⁴ "Vietnamese Defence Official Greets Russian Defence Attaché", *Vietnam Net*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/128297/vietnamese-defence-official-greets-russian-defence-attache.html>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

effectively. Possible areas of assistance that the Fiji Police Force would benefit from, are, training in information technology, forensics, cybercrime and peace keeping as well as the attachment of officers to India. Chandegave is based in Canberra, Australia.⁵⁵

The Government is copping criticism over a lack of transparency around deployment of New Zealand troops to Iraq, amid reports the first group left Australia on April 14 afternoon. New Zealand is sending up to 143 troops to train the Iraqi military as part of an international coalition to defeat Islamic State (Isil) - but the Government has refused to confirm whether they are deploying immediately alongside their Australian counterparts. Twenty-six New Zealand troops and 59 Australians left Brisbane airport bound for the Middle East on April 14, Channel 7 reported.⁵⁶

The Commander of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force is looking into an unauthorised excursion of Indonesian soldiers into the country last week. The newspaper, *The National*, reports that Brigadier-General Gilbert Toropo has directed his officers at the Vanimu Forward Base to submit a report on the matter. Earlier Wutung villagers reported seeing eight armed Indonesian soldiers crossing the border. PNG soldiers at the time were busy checking passengers and cargo from Indonesia at a checkpoint about 100 metres away. Wutung councillor Raphael Tungla says the Indonesian soldiers passed the border monument on the beach and walked to the edge of his village. He says they immediately turned back when villagers confronted them. But Mr Tungla says he is concerned about the laxity of the PNG soldiers in manning the border. He says soldiers should be patrolling the border and not checking passengers returning from the Batas market who had already been cleared by Customs, Immigration and the police.⁵⁷

D. Russia

National

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Russia to spend US\$ 40 billion on state armament programme in 2015; Russia to focus on building defence electronics and tools base as part of its import substitution; Putin approves five new general designers of most complex weapons; Russian navy to get universal patrol ice breaker for the Arctic; Defence Ministry creates special force to deal with emergencies; United Shipbuilding to upgrade Sevastopol Shipyard; S&P affirms Russia's "BB+" sovereign**

⁵⁵ "Indian Defence Attache Meets Fiji Police", *Fiji Broadcasting Cooperation*, available at <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/28573/indian-defence-attache-meets-fiji-police->, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵⁶ "First New Zealand troops Set To Deploy to Iraq", *Stuff*, available at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/67756596/first-new-zealand-troops-set-to-deploy-to-iraq>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

⁵⁷ "PNG Army Investigates Indonesian Troop Movements", *Radio New Zealand International*, available at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/271250/png-army-investigates-indonesian-troop-movements>, accessed on: April 20, 2015

credit rating while outlook remains negative; Russia to spend US\$ 2.2 billion on Crimea's modernization in 2015; Russia launches North Pole-2015 drifting Arctic station.

Deputy Defence Minister Tatiana Shevtsova has said, on April 15, that Russia will allocate 2 trillion roubles (US\$ 40 billion) in 2015 to finance the state armaments programme.⁵⁸

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, on April 17, that import substitution in Russia's defence industry sector will focus on establishment of a national production of electronic components for the space and machine-tool industries.⁵⁹

President Putin has approved five new general designers of the most complex types of weapons. Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said that the designers will need to become system integrators and organize diversified research teams working on different spheres in different groups.⁶⁰

Navy Commander Admiral Viktor Chirkov has said, on April 17, that navy will receive a universal ship capable of being an ice-breaker, an ocean tug and a patrol ship for the Arctic.⁶¹

Russian Defence Ministry has created a special force to deal with the effects of man-made and natural calamities. The force will comprise of 12,000 troops, 1,700 pieces of special equipment and 100 planes and helicopters that will be on permanent duty. It will incorporate engineering and logistics units, teams of railway specialists and military and military transport aircraft.⁶²

Russia's United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC) will invest 7 billion roubles (US\$ 136 million) to modernise the Sevastopol Shipyard.⁶³

Standard & Poor's rating agency affirmed, on April 17, it's "BB+/B" long-and short-term foreign currency sovereign credit ratings and its "BBB-/A-3" long- and short-term local currency sovereign credit ratings on Russia. The report added that the outlook remains negative with the possibility of a downgrade not ruled out.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ "Russia's Spending On State Armament Program To Reach \$40 Bln In 2015 — Defense Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/789540>

⁵⁹ "Import Substitution In Russian Defense Industry To Focus On Electronics, Tools — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790245>

⁶⁰ "Putin Approves Five New General Designers Of Most Complex Weapons — Russian Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790192>

⁶¹ "Russia's Navy Group In Arctic To Get Universal Patrol Ice-Breaker", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790165>

⁶² "Russian Defence Ministry Creates Special Force To Deal With Emergencies", *Itar-Tass*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790289>

⁶³ "United Shipbuilding Corp. To Invest \$136 Million In Sevastopol Shipyard Upgrade", *Itar-Tass*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790311>

⁶⁴ "S&P Affirms Russia's "Bb+" Sovereign Credit Rating, Outlook Remains Negative", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790243>

Russian Deputy Crimean Affairs Minister Andrey Sokolov has said, on April 18, that a total of 113 billion roubles (US\$ 2.2 billion) will be spent in 2015 to upgrade Crimea's infrastructure. He added that 700 billion roubles (US\$ 13.6 billion) will be invested in Crimean economy by 2020 with priority being given to develop the 'resort industry and production sphere'.⁶⁵

Russia has officially launched its North Pole-2015 drifting Arctic station on April 19. It is expected to function for several months and marks the revival of Russia's programme of drifting stations that was suspended in the summer of 2013 after the North Pole-40 drifting station had been evacuated.⁶⁶

International Affairs

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Russia and China sign contract for S-400 missile systems; Russia lifts the ban on sale of S-300 air defence missile systems to Iran; Lukoil reopens its office in Iran; President Putin briefs Netanyahu on sale of S-300 systems to Iran; Russia and Pakistan to hold joint military exercises; Russia to invest US\$ 2 billion to build 1,100-km pipeline in Pakistan; President Putin meets the SCO members and observer states national security council secretaries; Russia looks at American troops in Ukraine as the first step towards US weapons supplies to Kiev; Russia to set up a helicopter repair centre in Peru; Rosneft likely to buy out Gazprom Neft's stake in National Oil Consortium; Russia and Mexico explore cooperation in the space sector; Norway upset at Russian vice-premier's visit to Spitsbergen; Russia refutes the signing of an economic cooperation agreement with Greece; Russia to develop the potential of its military bases abroad; Normandy four foreign ministers call for full ceasefire in Ukraine; Russia will not renew gas transit contract with Ukraine post 2019; Gazprom says Altai pipeline to offer direct competition to Russian gas supplies to Europe.**

The CEO of Russia's arms export agency Anatoly Isaikin has said, on April 13, that China has purchased Russian-made S-400 air defence systems. Purchases of the S-400 have previously been restricted to Russia's Defence Ministry and China has become the first country to receive them. The S-400, manufactured by Almaz-Antey, is an upgrade of the S-300 air defence system. It is capable of targeting up to 36 airplanes at a range of 150 kilometres and can also shoot down ballistic missiles.⁶⁷

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed executive order, on April 13, for amending Presidential executive order No. 1154 of September 22, 2010, on measures for implementing UN Security Council resolution no. 1929 of June 9, 2010. The order 'lifts the ban on transit of the S-300 air defence missile systems via Russian Federation territory (including by air), export from the

⁶⁵ "Russia's Federal Budget To Spend \$2.2 Billion On Crimea's Modernization in 2015", *Itar-Tass*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790315>

⁶⁶ "Russia Launches North Pole-2015 Drifting Arctic Station", *Itar-Tass*, April 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790336>

⁶⁷ "China and Russia Sign Contract for S-400 Missile Systems", *The Moscow Times*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/519010.html>

Russian Federation to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and transfer of the S-300 to the Islamic Republic of Iran outside the Russian Federation's territory, using ships or aircraft flying the Russian Federation flag'.⁶⁸

Lukoil's first vice president Ravil Maganov has said, on April 15, that the company has reopened its office in Iran and looks forward to participate in Iranian projects once the sanctions are fully removed. Lukoil is interested in the Anaran oilfield project located on the Iranian-Iraqi border. The company started working on the Anaran block in 2003 but was forced to pull out after economic sanctions had been imposed on Iran.⁶⁹

President Putin has held a telephone conversation with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on April 14, in order to brief him on Russia's decision to sell S-300 air defence systems to Iran. He argued that systems are defensive in nature and by no means endanger Israel's security or other countries in the Middle East.⁷⁰

Russia and Pakistan have agreed to hold their first-ever joint military exercises as part of their enhanced defence cooperation. The agreement was reached during a meeting, held in Moscow on April 16, between Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu. The Pakistan Defence Minister was quoted as saying that cooperation will be stepped up in both defence industry and military training sectors. The two Ministers also reached a consensus that a multi-polar world would ensure peace and balance in international relations. They stressed on a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Yemen conflict.⁷¹

Russia will invest \$2 billion in Pakistan to build a 1,100-kilometre pipeline from southern port city of Karachi to Lahore to transport liquefied natural gas. The deal is expected to be signed next month. This was stated by Pakistani Petroleum Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on April 18. He added that in return for the investment, Russian companies will be awarded the contract to build the pipeline. Russia has also offered to sell gas to Pakistan.⁷²

President Putin has met the national security council secretaries of SCO member countries and observer states in Moscow on April 13. The meeting was held on the eve of the 10th meeting of SCO national security council secretaries. Putin hoped that the secretaries will discuss proposals to strengthen security cooperation within the SCO.⁷³

⁶⁸ "Amendment to Executive Order On Measures For Implementing UN Security Council Resolution No. 1929", *President of Russia*, April 13, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49248>

⁶⁹ "Russia's Lukoil Reopens Its Office in Iran", *Itar-Tass*, April 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/789393>

⁷⁰ "Putin Briefs Netanyahu On Logic Behind Sale of S-300 to Iran", *President of Russia*, April 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/789324>

⁷¹ "Pak, Russia To Hold First-Ever Joint Military Exercises", *The Indian Express*, April 17, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/asia/pakistan-russia-to-hold-first-ever-joint-military-exercises/?SocialMedia>

⁷² "Russia To Invest \$2 Bn To Build 1,100-Km Pipeline in Pakistan", *The Express Tribune*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/871822/energy-deal-moscow-to-lend-2b-for-lng-pipeline/>

⁷³ "Meeting with SCO National Security Council Secretaries", *President of Russia*, April 13, 2015 at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49249>

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Alexander Lukashevich has said, on April 17, that the presence of American troops in Ukraine can be seen as the first step towards supplies of state-of-the-art US weapons to Kiev. Around American 300 airborne troops are participating in joint military exercises with the Ukrainian forces. Mr. Lukashevich expressed serious concerns about their presence and argued that it violates the Minsk agreements.⁷⁴

Peruvian Defence Ministry has said, on April 19, that a Russian helicopter maintenance centre, that will be set up in Peru, will help cut the expenses of Latin American countries on maintaining these rotorcraft and develop the local industry. The Centre is expected to come into operation in 2016. About a hundred Soviet and Russian helicopters have been delivered to the Latin American country since the late 1970s.⁷⁵

Rosneft is likely to buy out Gazprom Neft's 20-percent stake in the National Oil Consortium producing oil in Venezuela. At present, it holds an 80 per cent stake in the consortium and plans to increase it to 100 per cent by buying Gazprom Neft's stake. Rosneft also plans to increase its share in a joint venture with Venezuela's state company PDVSA - Petromonagas - to 40 per cent from the current 16.67 per cent.⁷⁶

Mexican ambassador to Moscow Ruben Beltran has said, on April 17, that the two countries 'are developing relations in joint space exploration'. He added that a Mexican satellite will be launched from Baikonur later this month and the country is interested to participate in the GLONASS navigation system.⁷⁷

Norway's Foreign Ministry has requested the Russian embassy in Oslo to provide explanations after Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin visited the Spitsbergen archipelago on April 19. Rogozin has been on the European Union's blacklist of Russian politicians and businessmen barred from entering the EU since March 2014. The Ministry was quoted as saying 'we requested explanations from the Russian authorities. This fact is not a breach of the Norwegian legislation but we nonetheless clearly informed the Russian embassy in Oslo before than we would not want to see the persons from the list on the Svalbard [Spitsbergen] archipelago. Therefore, the fact that Rogozin visited Svalbard causes regret'. Spitsbergen, which Norwegians call Svalbard, is located between the 76th and 80th parallels in the Arctic Ocean. The archipelago was placed under Norway's sovereignty after World War One on condition that it kept a special international status. The Spitsbergen Treaty signed in 1920 secured Norway's sovereignty over the archipelago. At the same time, the Treaty's signatory states comprising over 50 countries have equal rights to the development of the archipelago's natural resources. However, only

⁷⁴ "Moscow Sees US Troops In Ukraine As Step One To Supplies Of US Weapons", *Itar-Tass*, April 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/790254>

⁷⁵ "Russian Helicopter Repair Center In Peru To Stimulate Local Industry - Defense Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, April 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/790348>

⁷⁶ "Sourcâ: Rosneft May Buy Out Gazprom Neft's Stake In National Oil Consortium", *Itar-Tass*, April 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790391>

⁷⁷ "Mexico, Russia Deepening Cooperation in Space", *Space Daily*, April 17, 2015 at http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Mexico_Russia_Deepening_Cooperation_in_Space_999.html

Norway and Russia maintain their economic presence on the archipelago. Russians can visit Spitsbergen without any visas, if they go to the archipelago directly from Russia. However, if their route crosses continental Norway, they need to be issued transit Schengen visas.⁷⁸

Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov has refuted, on April 18, the allegation of an economic agreement with Greece that calls for transferring three to five billion euros as pre-payment for Greece's participation in the Turkish Stream gas pipeline project. Earlier, German newspaper Spiegel had stated that Russia will allocate the money to Athens as part of a deferred credit and Greece will pay it off when transportation of gas via their territory to Europe along with operation of the Turkish Stream pipeline yields revenues.⁷⁹

Russia's Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov has said, on April 16, that Moscow will boost the potential of its military bases abroad as guarantors of security in the regions housing them. He was quoted as saying 'as part of the long-term agreements with Abkhazia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and South Ossetia, the potential of Russia's military bases located on their territories is being boosted. It guarantees security and strategic stability in these regions'.⁸⁰

The foreign ministers of the Normandy Four group (Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France) have called on all sides in the Ukrainian conflict to observe the ceasefire regime in full. The joint statement, released after the meeting held in Berlin on April 14, expressed concern about the latest round of armed clashes that saw the use of heavy weaponry in the area of Shirokino and Donetsk airport. The ministers have called to pull out heavy weaponry with the calibre of less than 100 mm and tanks of all types. They have also stressed on the need to create working sub groups to discuss political process, humanitarian and economic issues and amnesty.⁸¹

Energy Minister Alexander Novak has said, on April 13, that Russia will not renew the contract for natural gas transit via Ukraine post 2019. Instead, Moscow will focus on the Turkish Stream project for transporting gas to Europe.⁸²

Gazprom's CEO Alexey Miller has said, on April 14, that the Altai gas pipeline to China will offer direct competition to Russian natural gas supplies to Europe. The pipeline has the same resource base as the gas supplies to Europe which is the Western Siberian region. He added that Russia plans to sign the contract on western route gas supplies to China in the second quarter of 2015.⁸³

⁷⁸ "Norway Wants Moscow's Explanations After Russian Vice-Premier's Visit to Spitsbergen", *Itar-Tass*, April 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/790355>

⁷⁹ "No Agreement With Greece On 3-5bln Euro Pre-Payment - Putin's Spokesman", *Itar-Tass*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/790318>

⁸⁰ "Russia To Develop Potential Of Its Military Bases Abroad — Chief of Defense", *Itar-Tass*, April 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/789657>

⁸¹ "Normandy Four Foreign Ministers Call For Full Ceasefire In Ukraine — joint statement", *Itar-Tass*, April 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/789080>

⁸² "Russia has No Plans To Renew Contract For Gas Transit Via Ukraine after 2019 — minister", *Itar-Tass*, April 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/788912>

⁸³ "Altai Gas Pipeline To Offer Direct Competition To Russian Gas Supplies to Europe — Gazprom", *Itar-Tass*, April 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/789233>

E. Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

Iran

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Putin lifts ban on delivering S-300 to Iran; Iran's military doctrine is based on 'active deterrence' says Rowhani; Tehran submits 4-point peace plan for Yemen to UN.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a presidential decree paving the way for the long-overdue delivery of S-300 missile system to Iran. The decree lifts the ban on transit through the Russian territory, including by air, the delivery from the Russian territory to Iran and the transfer outside of Russia with the use of vessels and aircraft flying the Russian state flag of S-300 missile air defence systems. The decision to lift the ban comes after Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - reached a mutual understanding on Tehran's nuclear programme in the Swiss city of Lausanne on April 2.⁸⁴

President Hassan Rouhani said that the Iranian military doctrine is based on "active deterrence and establishment of peace, not attacking people and assaulting children." Rouhani made the remarks in an apparent reference to the Saudi-led airstrikes against the Yemeni people while addressing a ceremony to commemorate National Army Day. "This deterrence is meant to be utilized to establish peace and security in the country and in the region. The armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran are the mightiest and greatest armed forces of the region thanks to their self-reliance, self-dependence, and innovation".⁸⁵

In a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called on the international community to take necessary measures to stop the Saudi airstrikes against the Yemeni people, which have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians so far. In the letter he discussed the formation of an inclusive national unity government as the last step of the plan to halt Yemen's deadly clashes. He also warned that the Saudi aggression would only benefit al-Qaeda-linked groups, which pose a great danger to the security and stability of the region.⁸⁶

Iraq and Syria

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Saddam Hussein's officer drew up ISIS master plan, a report says; Ex-Saddam Hussein vice president Izzat al-Douri killed; ISIL withdraws from Yarmouk camp, Nusra remains.**

An ex-intelligence officer under the late Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was "the strategic head" behind the Islamic State group and drew up the blueprints for the jihadists' capture of northern

⁸⁴ "Putin Lifts Ban On Delivering S-300 to Iran", *IRNA*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81570258/>

⁸⁵ "Iran's Military Doctrine Is Based On 'Active Deterrence': Rouhani", *Tehran Times*, April 20, 2015 http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=246197

⁸⁶ "Tehran Submits 4-Point Peace Plan For Yemen to UN", *Presstv*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/04/18/406790/Iran-presents-4point-Yemen-peace-plan>

Syria, German weekly Der Spiegel reported. Former colonel Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi, who was better known as Haji Bakr and was killed by Syrian rebels in January 2014, "had been secretly pulling the strings at ISIS for years", according to the magazine. The weekly said it had been given exclusive access to 31 documents by Bakr, including handwritten lists and charts, after lengthy negotiations with a rebel group in Aleppo, northern Syria, which came in possession of the pages after ISIS fled the area.⁸⁷

Popular Mobilization Units have killed fugitive militant leader Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri in Salahuddin province. The news has been confirmed by Salahuddin governor Raed al-Jabouri. Al-Douri was killed in Hamreen Mountains, east of Tikrit and his body was identified by some of his forces. Izzat Ibrahim who served as Vice President to former dictator Saddam Hussein for 16 years was on Baghdad's wanted list for atrocities against the people of Iraq. Al-Douri disappeared following the collapse of Saddam Hussein, but resurfaced leading his Naqshbandi Army also known as JRTN. The group's made up of former Ba'athist regime remnants. The JRTN is believed to be one of the groups that facilitated the ISIL's capture of Mosul and some other cities.⁸⁸

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters have largely withdrawn from a Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus after expelling their main rival, several residents and a Palestinian official said. The pull-out from Yarmouk leaves al Qaeda-linked Nusra as the main group inside the camp. The sources said hundreds of fighters of the hard-line ISIL had returned to their stronghold in neighbouring Hajar al Aswad, from where they had launched their attack earlier this month.⁸⁹

The Gulf

(April 13-19, 2015)

● Saudi-led Yemen air war's high civilian toll unsettles U.S. officials.

Concerned about reports of hundreds of civilian casualties, Obama administration officials are increasingly uneasy about the U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led air war against rebel militias in Yemen, opening a potential rift between Washington and its ally in Riyadh. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, widely regarded as the terrorist network's most lethal franchise, has capitalized on the chaos by sharply expanding its reach. Fighters loyal to the group claimed control on April 16 of a military base and other key facilities near Mukalla, an Arabian Sea port in southern Yemen.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ "Report: Saddam Hussein's Officer Drew Up ISIS Master Plan", *Alarabia*, April 20, 2015 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/20/Saddam-Hussein-s-officer-drew-up-ISIS-master-plan.html>

⁸⁸ "Ex-Saddam Hussein Vice President Izzat Al-Douri Killed by Mobilization Units", *Presstv*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/04/18/406854/ExSaddam-Hussein-vice-president-Izzat-alDouri-killed-by-Mobilization-Units>

⁸⁹ "ISIL Withdraws From Yarmouk Camp, Nusra Remains: Residents", *Hurriet Daily News*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/isil-withdraws-from-yarmouk-camp-nusra-remains-residents.aspx?pageID=238&nID=81086&NewsCatID=352>

⁹⁰ "Saudi-led Yemen Air War's High Civilian Toll Unsettles U.S. Officials", *Latimes.com*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-us-saudis-20150417-story.html#page=1>

F. The United State of America

National

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **DOD initiative provides incremental acquisition improvement; Better buying power 3.0 stresses innovation, affordability; Cybercom Chief Rogers discusses importance of cyber operations; New DoD cyber strategy nears release, official says; F-35 programme 'on right track,' director says; Carter discusses top national security priorities.**

The basic idea behind the Defence Department's Better Buying Power initiative, now entering its third iteration, has been to improve acquisition through continuous improvement in many areas simultaneously, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, said in Washington on April 13. Kendall discussed acquisition reform and the tenets of Better Buying Power 3.0 in a speech at the Brookings Institution. "Underlying all of the Better Buying Power initiatives has been the idea that the way you ... improve acquisition is through a process of continuous improvement," he said. "The way to make progress is to make incremental progress in lots of different areas all at the same time." Kendall said he's seen many "fads" regarding acquisition reform that have attempted to do a few big things in trying to make a huge difference. Kendall said that's been the idea with Better Buying Power since the initiative debuted about five years ago, when Defence Secretary Ash Carter was the department's top acquisition official.⁹¹

Meanwhile, the latest update of the Defence Department's acquisition efficiency initiative stresses innovation and cost-consciousness, the Pentagon's top acquisition official Frank Kendall said on April 14. Kendall described Better Buying Power 3.0 during the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space Exposition. Noting the April 9 release of the initiative's implementation directive, Kendall said the department will continue its emphasis on affordable programmes, but will enhance that focus by predetermining production costs and the feasibility of seeing new weapons and systems to completion. The other main mandate in Better Buying Power 3.0 is to achieve dominant capabilities while controlling life-cycle costs, Kendall noted. Kendall also cited the need for greater agility and responsiveness as threats change, which he said translates into creating a tighter relationship with the intelligence community and a focus on cybersecurity, calling the latter a "pervasive problem."⁹²

Cyber is an operational domain, and military leaders are going to have to understand its importance and the opportunities and challenges of operating in the domain, Navy Adm. Michael S. Rogers said on April 14. Rogers, the commander of U.S. Cyber Command, director of the National Security Agency, and chief of the Central Security Service, spoke at the Navy League's 50th annual Sea-Air-Space Exposition. The admiral participated in a panel entitled, "Cyber, Electromagnetic War

⁹¹ Marshall, Tyrone C., "Initiative Provides Incremental Acquisition Improvement", *DoD News*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128577>

⁹² Lyle, Amaani, "Better Buying Power 3.0 Stresses Innovation, Affordability", *DoD News*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128592>

and Information Dominance.” Rogers commented on the speed and growth of the cyber domain. “The world around us is changing,” he said. “The spectrum and the network are converging. That represents vulnerability and opportunity.” Getting traditional war fighters to understand the importance of cyber operations — both defence and offense — requires an understanding of culture and ethos that is more important than just technology, Rogers said.⁹³

The Defence Department will release a new cyber strategy next week to guide the way ahead for cyber in the foreseeable future, senior Pentagon official Eric Rosenbach told Congress on April 14. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee’s emerging threats and capabilities subcommittee, Rosenbach explained how DoD plans to continue improvement to America’s cybersecurity posture. Rosenbach is the assistant secretary of defence for homeland defence and global security. “To show that we’re thinking very clearly about this,” he said, “next week we’ll release a new strategy for the department that will guide the way forward for the next several years in cyber.” Rosenbach said defending DoD’s networks is the department’s most important cyber mission. “We’re very network-reliant and network-centric.” DoD has the largest enterprise network in the world, he added, and all military operations depend on that network.⁹⁴

Despite its numerous setbacks, the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter programme is on the right track to meet aircraft delivery deadlines, the programme’s executive officer Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan told a House Armed Services Committee panel on April 14. Bogdan updated members of the committee’s tactical air and land forces subcommittee on the F-35 programme as part of the president’s fiscal year 2016 budget request. “Our overall assessment is we’re making slow but steady progress on all fronts, and each day, the programme is improving,” Bogdan said. “This is not to say that we don’t have some risks, challenges and difficulties, but I’m confident we’ll be able to overcome these problems and deliver on our commitments.” That progress covers development, flight training, production, maintenance and the stand-up of the global sustainment enterprise, he said.⁹⁵

On April 16, Defence Secretary Ash Carter discussed his top priorities and other defence issues at a Pentagon news conference. The secretary said his first priority is to help President Barack Obama to make the best possible national security decisions and then to implement those decisions. Second, he said, is to ensure the strength and health of Defence Department personnel around the world, and the third priority is the future of the department’s course, its people and its technology. To achieve these priorities, Carter said, he’s travelled to Afghanistan and Kuwait to meet with American personnel working there, and he has worked with Congress to secure the resources needed to protect the country and continue to build the force of the future while gaining stability in the defence budget.⁹⁶

⁹³ Garamone, Jim, “Cybercom Chief Discusses Importance of Cyber Operations”, *DoD News*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128583>

⁹⁴ Marshall, Tyrone C., “New DoD Cyber Strategy Nears Release, Official Says”, *DoD News*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128587>

⁹⁵ Cronk, Terri Moon, “F-35 Programme ‘On Right Track,’ Director Says”, *DoD News*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128595>

⁹⁶ Marshall, Tyrone C., “Carter Discusses Top National Security Priorities”, *DoD News*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128605>

International: Asia

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Asia-Pacific shift creates opportunities, security needs; Sequestration would harm Asia-Pacific Progress, commanders say; ISIL loses control of once-dominated Iraq territory; Carter, Iraqi defence minister reaffirm commitment; Airstrikes continue against ISIL in Syria and Iraq; Trends in Iraq moving in right direction, Dempsey says; U.S., Japan, South Korea hold trilateral security talks; US dismisses disagreement with Seoul on N Korea nuclear threat; US Commander: China reef work could lead to new air exclusion zone.**

The Defence Department's ongoing rebalance to the thriving Asia-Pacific region comes with many opportunities and a few pressing requirements: to upgrade security relationships, maintain specific military capabilities and redouble efforts to boost U.S. technological superiority, Christine Wormuth, undersecretary of defence for policy, said on April 15. Wormuth testified before the House Armed Services Committee on implications for aspects of the department's Asia-Pacific rebalance of losing military technological superiority. Joining the undersecretary were Navy Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, and Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of U.S. Forces Korea. The past seven years have been a time of tremendous change and opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region, Wormuth told the panel. The department faces several challenges in the region, including those that come from China, she said. The United States and China are not allies, but they don't have to be adversaries, Wormuth added, noting that the department is speaking with China about its concerning actions and about activities to improve understanding, especially through military-to-military engagement with the People's Liberation Army. Elsewhere in the region, she said, DoD's greatest concern is North Korea's pursuit of ballistic missiles and its weapons of mass destruction programme. DoD is focused on the rebalance along several lines of effort, Wormuth said. These include strengthening security relationships with allies and partners.⁹⁷

Meanwhile, senior military commanders from the Asia-Pacific region told the Senate Armed Services Committee how the strategy to rebalance military forces would face security consequences if the budget-cutting sequestration law returns in fiscal year 2016. Navy Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of Pacific Command, and Army Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/U.S. Forces Korea, testified on the president's budget request for fiscal year 2016 and future years' defence programmes on April 15. Sequestration is a provision of current budget law that mandates major across-the-board spending cuts in fiscal 2016, which begins October 1. Challenges such as the security environment across the Indo-Asia Pacific, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, an unpredictable North Korea government, territorial disputes and China's continued military rise are concerns that "will not go away soon," Locklear said.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Pellerin, Cheryl, "Asia-Pacific Shift Creates Opportunities, Security Needs", *DoD News*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128597>

⁹⁸ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Sequestration Would Harm Asia-Pacific Progress, Commanders Say", *DoD News*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128603>

Some 25 percent to 30 percent of Iraqi territory has been taken back from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorist group control by coalition forces, Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters on April 13. Warren, a Pentagon spokesman, showed reporters a color-coded map of key populated sites in northern and central Iraq where ISIL was once the dominant force before Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve pushed the terrorists back.

Overall, he said, the map shows how “the combination of coalition air power and Iraqi ground forces are having an effect on the enemy’s ability to hold territory and to have freedom of manoeuvre,” he said. Essentially, he added, the ISIL front line has been pushed either west or south, depending on location, he said, in integral areas such as Erbil, Babil, Baghdad and the Kirkuk governances.⁹⁹

Bilateral cooperation and progress in countering the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists highlighted a meeting at the Pentagon yesterday between Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Iraqi Defence Minister Khalid al-Obeidi. In a statement summarizing the meeting, Pentagon officials said the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL, focusing on the next steps in the effort. The two defence leaders also coordinated views on current U.S. equipping efforts, the statement said, and discussed how the United States can best support the Iraqi security forces, Kurdish peshmerga and Sunni tribal fighters.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on April 19.¹⁰¹

The Iraqi government has made gains, and trends there are moving in the right direction, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said at a Pentagon news conference on April 16. However, hard work remains to be done to integrate Iraq’s militias under state command and control as Iraq continues to prepare its forces to sustain momentum against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the general said. Iraq’s efforts during the Tikrit offensive are a good step, the chairman said, adding that the United States will continue consulting with Iraq’s leadership as it plans and conducts operations. Dempsey also noted that Iraq has helped in its fight against ISIL. “I’m encouraged by the commitment of the coalition,” Dempsey said. “There’s been an addition of 300 Australian troops and 100 New Zealand troops to the training mission, and that will certainly contribute to the outcomes we all seek.” Those forces join the international partnership capacity mission, which includes the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United States, he added.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Cronk, Terri Moon, “ISIL Loses Control of Once-dominated Iraq Territory”, *DoD News*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128576>

¹⁰⁰ “Carter, Iraqi Defence Minister Reaffirm Commitment”, *DoD News*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128591>

¹⁰¹ “Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL in Syria and Iraq”, By From a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News Release, *DoD News*, April 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128620>

¹⁰² Cronk, Terri Moon, “Trends in Iraq Moving in Right Direction, Dempsey Says”, *DoD News*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128606>

The United States, South Korea and Japan today concluded what a joint statement called a “productive and substantive” two-day security meeting in Washington on April 17. Officials said the meeting was held to enhance trilateral defence cooperation in light of the evolving security environment in the region. Yoo Jeh-seung, South Korea’s deputy minister for policy, led his country’s delegation. David B. Shear, assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific security affairs, led the U.S. delegation, and Japan’s delegation was led by Tokuchi Hideshi, vice defence minister for international affairs. The officials reaffirmed that their governments will not accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state, and agreed to closely coordinate to deter North Korean provocations, the joint statement said. The statement also said the delegations held a “constructive discussion” on the guidelines for U.S.-Japan defence¹⁰³ cooperation, which will be revised within the framework of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The U.S. has dismissed media reports that Washington and Seoul have different assessments of Pyongyang’s nuclear ability to miniaturize a nuclear weapon. Last week, U.S. Navy Admiral William Gortney, commander of North American Aerospace Defence Command and U.S. Northern Command, told reporters that Washington believes Pyongyang does have the ability to miniaturize a warhead. “Our assessment is that they have the ability to put a nuclear weapon on a KN-08 and shoot it at the homeland,” he said, in reference to North Korea’s intercontinental ballistic missile. Gortney’s comments sparked controversy in Seoul, prompting South Korean officials to dismiss the assessment.¹⁰⁴

China could eventually deploy radar and missile systems on outposts it is building in the South China Sea that could be used to enforce an exclusion zone over the disputed territory, the U.S. military commander for Asia said on April 15. Admiral Samuel Locklear, speaking at a congressional hearing in Washington, described as “aggressive” the land reclamation and construction projects China has been conducting at eight military outposts in the South China Sea. The work involved “fairly massive” reclamation in the Spratley archipelago and upgrades to facilities in the Paracel Islands, he said.¹⁰⁵

India-US Relations

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Indo-US nuke deal significantly boosted bilateral ties; US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter may visit India in May to sign \$2.5 bn deal; Prime Minister Modi says India must lead on climate change; US envoy hails India’s decision to taper use of greenhouse gas; India looks to become arms supplier instead of buyer.**

The historic Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation deal has significantly benefited bilateral ties, especially the defence relationship, even though power plants with American reactors are yet to

¹⁰³ “U.S., Japan, South Korea Hold Trilateral Security Talks”, *DoD News*, April 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128618>

¹⁰⁴ Sungwon,Baik, “US Dismisses Disagreement With Seoul on N Korea Nuclear Threat”, *VOA News*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-dismisses-disagreement-north-korea-nuclear-threat/2719548.html>

¹⁰⁵ “US Commander: China Reef Work Could Lead to New Air Exclusion Zone”, *Reuters*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-us-commander-china-reef-work-new-air-exclusion-zone/2720462.html>

come up in India, former foreign secretary Shyam Saran, who was a special envoy on the 2008 Indo-US nuclear deal, said on April 14 at a panel discussion moderated by C Raja Mohan. "This was really a turning point and a transformation movement in the India-US relationship," said former foreign secretary Saran. Saran said the deal resulted in immensely benefiting the two nations in strategic and economic areas. The defence trade today has jumped to USD 10 billion, Saran told a Washington audience. Opening the discussion, former US deputy secretary of state, William Burns said the Indo-US relationship has moved on the right track and at a fast pace in the last decade and particularly in the last one year. Ashley Tellis from the Carnegie Endowment of International Relations, a US-based think tank, said the nuclear deal came at the time of emergence of "convergence of strategic" interests of the two countries. He said that as a result of the deal one is beginning to see that the economic relationship is becoming critical to the balanced India-US ties.¹⁰⁶

US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter is likely to visit India next month when the two sides are expected to ink the nearly \$2.5 billion deal for 22 Apache and 15 Chinook heavy-lift helicopters. Though the final dates for Carter's visit have not been announced, defence sources said the visit will take place in May during which the two sides will discuss ways to enhance defence ties, especially in context of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make-in-India' initiative. The Apache and Chinook helicopters deal is likely to be among the pacts that will be inked during the visit, the sources said. The deal would be presented before the Cabinet Committee on Security for approval soon, they added. American defence major Boeing, along with the US government, has extended the validity of the price quoted by them for another three months hoping to wrap up the deal soon. Indian Defence Ministry had last month sought extension of the validity period on its expiry on March 31.¹⁰⁷

From New Delhi to Berlin, Narendra Modi has called for India to take a leading role in the "pressing global problem" of climate change, including through lifestyle changes such as bicycling and leaving streetlights off on full-moon nights. Modi was an early advocate of solar technology, and his government has pledged to increase its solar-generated capacity to 100 gigawatts and its wind capacity to 60 gigawatts by 2022. At the same time, the country is doubling its coal production to fuel its growing economy and electricity needs. Already, more than 30 countries have produced proposals for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which negotiators hope will lead to a landmark pact in Paris in December. This includes the United States, which pledged to lower its total carbon emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025, compared with 2005 levels. India is considering putting forward two proposals, Prakash Javadekar, the country's environment minister, said in an interview. The first would detail what the country can do to combat climate change on its own, while the second would be a more ambitious plan outlining moves that could be made with international financial support, technology exchanges and incentives, Javadekar said. The stakes are huge: A deal in December could prevent some of the warming expected to cause rising sea levels and extreme weather in coming decades. The United

¹⁰⁶ Jha, Lalit K., "Indo-US Nuke Deal Significantly Boosted Bilateral Ties: Saran", *The Outlook*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/indous-nuke-deal-significantly-boosted-bilateral-ties-saran/891579>

¹⁰⁷ "US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter may Visit India in May to Sign \$2.5 bn deal", *PTI*, April 17, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-17/news/61253843_1_defence-ties-defence-ministry-22-apache

States had hoped that it could negotiate a climate deal with India that would complement the landmark agreement it struck in November with China. But after weeks of harried negotiations in the days before Obama's visit to India in January, only modest measures materialized.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, India's surprise decision to agree to phase down the use of a potent greenhouse gas after years of opposition is a "significant step" toward global action to address climate change, the U.S. State Department's climate change envoy said on April 17. India on April 16 proposed an amendment to the United Nations' Montreal Protocol, which calls on countries to phase out their use of HFCs — gases used in refrigerators, air conditioners and insulating foams that are a highly potent form of greenhouse gas emissions. India's amendment calls for a 15-year transition period for developing countries to phase down their use of HFCs in appliances. For years, India has opposed a phase-out of HFCs under the protocol, which focuses on curbing the use of ozone-depleting substances. It has argued HFCs should be handled instead under the Kyoto Protocol, which places the responsibility only on developed countries to make greenhouse gas cuts.¹⁰⁹

India, long one of the world's biggest arms importers, wants to expand its own weapons industry and become a supplier to other nations. It's a move the United States supports for economic and strategic reasons. But industry analysts who spoke to *Voice of America* (VOA) believe that, despite some positive signs, India's reliance on arms imports is unlikely to change anytime soon. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently pointed out that India imports nearly 60 percent of its defence needs. Over the past five years, India was the world's biggest arms importer, accounting for 15 percent of the world's weapon imports, according to a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).¹¹⁰

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **India and South Korea see no obstacles in realizing the significant potential for military to military ties; India successfully test fires it's indigenously developed nuclear-capable Agni-III ballistic missile.**

The Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar who is in South Korea, on April 17 met his Korean counterpart Han Min-koo, Admiral Choi, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Minister Chang of

¹⁰⁸ Gowen, Annie, "Prime Minister Modi Says India Must Lead On Climate Change", *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2015 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/prime-minister-modi-says-india-must-lead-on-climate-change/2015/04/14/8585d5a8-e299-11e4-ae0f-f8c46aa8c3a4_story.html

¹⁰⁹ "US Envoy Hails India's Decision to Taper Use of Greenhouse Gas", *Reuters*, April 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/envoy-hails-india-decision-greenhouse-gas/2724762.html>

¹¹⁰ Ali, Idrees, "India Looks to Become Arms Supplier Instead of Buyer", *VOA News*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-looks-to-become-arms-supplier-instead-of-buyer/2724033.html>

the Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA); and National Security Advisor Kim Kwan-jin. The two sides discussed existing bilateral defence relations in these meetings. Both sides recognized that the relationship was one in which there are no obstacles to realizing the significant potential for military to military ties. The defence minister Parrikar emphasized that in recognition of the importance India attaches to Korea as a partner, he had chosen to make ROK the destination for his first visit under the “Make in India” campaign. Both sides agreed to enhance their efforts to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships in defence production.¹¹¹

India has successfully test fired its nuclear-capable Agni-III ballistic missile with a strike *range* of more than 3,000 km from Wheeler Island off Odisha coast. The indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile was test fired from a mobile launcher at launch complex-4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Wheeler Island by army. The trial, carried out by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC of the Indian Army), was fully successful. Logistic support for the test was provided by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The Agni-III missile is powered by a two-stage solid propellant system. With a length of 17 metres, the missile’s diameter is 2 metres and launch weight is around 50 tonnes. It can carry a warhead of 1.5 tonne which is protected by carbon all composite heat shield. Significantly, though the first developmental trial of Agni-III carried out on July 9, 2006 could not provide desired result, subsequent tests on April 12, 2007, May 7, 2008, February 7, 2010 as well as the first user trial on September 21, 2012 and next on December 23, 2013 from the same base were all successful.¹¹²

International

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **S-400 air defence system will allow China to strike any aerial target on the island of Taiwan; France says negotiations with Russia under way to find a solution to a dispute over the sale of two Mistral warships.**

Reports say that a deal between Russia and China for procurement of the new S-400 air defence system will serve as a force multiplier for the later in its quest to dominate the skies along its borders. The 400-kilometer-range system will, for the first time, allow China to strike any aerial target on the island of Taiwan, in addition to reaching air targets as far as New Delhi, Calcutta, Hanoi and Seoul. The Yellow Sea and China’s new air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea will also be protected. The system will permit China, if need be, to strike any air target within North Korea. The S-400 will also allow China to extend, but not dominate, the air defence space closer to the disputed Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. China’s current inventory of S-300s, at a range of 300 kilometres, only allows it to strike targets along Taiwan’s north-western coast and cannot reach capital cities in India and South Korea. The S-400 will challenge Taiwan’s ability to conduct air defence operations within its own ADIZ,

¹¹¹ “India and South Korea Hold High Level Defence Talks,” *PIB*, April 17, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118323>

¹¹² “India Successfully Test Fires Nuclear-Capable Agni III Ballistic Missile,” *The Indian Express*, April 20, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-successfully-test-fires-nuclear-capable-agni-iii-ballistic-missile/>

which covers the Taiwan Strait. The deal is likely to include four to six battalions at about US \$3 billion.¹¹³

Meanwhile, according to reports, French President Francois Hollande has said that negotiations with Russia were under way to find a solution to a dispute over the sale of two Mistral warships worth \$1.5 billion, frozen over the Ukraine crisis. The delivery of the first warship has been suspended for six months over Russia's role in the Ukraine conflict, straining ties between the two countries. The Mistrals have placed France in a sticky situation. If it breaches the contract with Russia, it faces hefty fines. But it would also risk the wrath of its allies around the world if it were to deliver the high end technology to Russia at a time when Moscow is in the diplomatic deep-freeze over the Ukraine conflict. Despite a ceasefire in Ukraine, fighting has not entirely stopped and Hollande has said repeatedly that conditions were still not right for the delivery of the warships.¹¹⁴

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Protests against 'civilian' killing rock Kashmir's Tral; Police registers FIR against Geelani, Masarat and others; Teenager killed in police firing in Narbal; 2 cops arrested.**

Massive protests erupted in south Kashmir's Tral district on April 14, a day after a civilian was killed in Army firing. Police identified the slain person as Muhammad Khalid Wani, son of Muhammad Muzaffar of Shariefabad Tral-e-Payeen. He was brother of a Hizbul Mujahideen militant Burhan Wani. Earlier, Army claimed that a militant was killed after he was chased by the forces in Kamla forests of Tral on April 13. However, locals took to streets in the district, especially Arigam area, alleging that Wani was killed in a staged gun battle by the forces.¹¹⁵

J&K Police on April 15 booked Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Masarat Alam Bhat, Bashir Ahmad Bhat and other separatist leaders for allegedly hoisting Pakistan flag during a rally in Srinagar. An FIR was registered under sections 13 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 120-B, 147, 341, 336, 427 RPC in Police Station Budgam against the separatist leaders for provocative activities and hoisting Pakistani flag in Hyderpora, a spokesman said.¹¹⁶ Two days after the April 15 rally, separatist

¹¹³ "S-400 Strengthens China's Hand in the Skies," *Defence News*, April 18, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/air-space/strike/2015/04/18/china-taiwan-russia-s400-air-defense-adiz-east-china-sea-yellow-sea/25810495/>

¹¹⁴ "France, Russia Negotiating Deal on Mistrals," April 19, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/ships/2015/04/19/france-russia-negotiating-deal-on-mistrals/26033177/>

¹¹⁵ Dar, Showkat, "Protests Rock Tral A Day After Civilian's Killing In Army Firing", *Greater Kashmir*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/ShowStoryLatest.asp?NewsID=7380>

¹¹⁶ "FIR Against Geelani, Masarat For Hoisting Pak Flag", *Greater Kashmir*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/ShowStoryLatest.asp?NewsID=7400>

leader Masarat Alam was arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir police for “seditious activities”. The police also placed Geelani under house arrest.¹¹⁷

A 17-year-old boy was killed and two others were wounded on April 18 when the CRPF opened fire on protestors in Narbal area of Budgam. There were sporadic protests at several places in the valley over the re-arrest of separatist leader Masarat Alam and killing of another youth in Tral in south Kashmir. Sources said that the CRPF opened fire on the protestors, who pelted stones on the security forces, killing Suhail Ahmad Sofi, a class X student and wounding two others. “Preliminary enquiry conducted into the matter indicates that the forces deployed have acted in violation of the laid down SOP,” J-K Police spokesperson said.¹¹⁸ Two policemen including an officer have been arrested in connection with Sofi’s killing while the SHO of the concerned police station has been taken off active duty.¹¹⁹

Northeast India

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **Manipur: 4 injured in Churachandpur blast; NSCN (R) seeks truce pact with Government; NDFB cadre involved in 2014 Assam massacre held; Mizoram to introduce ‘Disturbed Areas’ bill; Border fencing along the Indo-Bangla Border to be completed in Tripura by ‘17.**

Four persons were injured in Imphal on April 12 when a powerful bomb, apparently meant to target BSF personnel, exploded in Churachandpur district bordering Myanmar. The bomb planted on the roadside near a movie theatre was set off by suspected militants using remote-controlled device at around 9 am injuring four persons, police officials said. However, no BSF personnel was injured in the incident. The identity of the militants is not yet known as different extremist organisations operate in the district, police officials said.¹²⁰

The breakaway group of NSCN-K and now christened as NSCN (Reformation) led by Wangtin Naga and P Tikhak has forwarded a cease-fire proposal to Government of India’s Lt Gen NK Singh, Chairman, Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (CFMG) on April 13. The NSCN (R) proposal stated that after the unilateral abrogation of cease-fire by SS Khaplang and expulsion of Wangtin Naga and P Tikhak for attending the ceasefire meeting at Chumukedima on March 27, the NSCN (K) split into two on the issue of continuing the cease-fire, namely anti-cease fire and pro-cease-

¹¹⁷ Ehsan, Mir and Akhzer, Adil, “Masarat Alam Back In Jail For ‘Sedition’, BJP Says We Got It Done”, *The Indian Express*, April 18, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/jk-police-arrest-masarat-alam-ahead-of-rally-in-tral/>

¹¹⁸ Rafiq, Zahid, “Boy Killed in CRPF Firing in Kashmir”, *The Hindu*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/boy-killed-in-crpf-firing-in-srinagar/article7116434.ece>

¹¹⁹ “Kashmir Valley Remains Tense, Stray Incidents Of Violence”, *The Hindu*, April 19, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/kashmir-valley-remains-tense-stray-incidents-of-violence/article7119362.ece?ref=relatedNews>

¹²⁰ “4 Injured In Manipur Blast”, *The Assam Tribune*, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1315/oth052>

fire groups. It further stated that several Kiloners, CCMs, regional authorities, secretaries and army officers have supported Wangtin Naga and re-affirmed to continue the cease-fire with the Government of India.¹²¹

A joint team of Army and Assam Police on April 18 arrested a National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) militant who was allegedly involved in the 2014 massacre of Adivasis. The militant was identified as Samar Basumatary alias Sona, a self-styled platoon commander of NDFB in Chirang district, the Army said in a statement. He was arrested during an operation in Kokrajhar district. "One 7.65 mm pistol, three live rounds, one hand grenade were among others recovered during the operation," it said.¹²²

Mizoram will introduce the 'Mizoram Disturbed Areas Bill, 2015' in the next Assembly session to enable the government to declare any militant-hit area in the State as 'Disturbed'. Mizoram Home Minister R Lalzirliana, while addressing the ruling Congress workers at the 'Congress Bhavan' at Aizawl on April 17 said the Bill was being drafted and would be vetted by the State Law department. Meanwhile, all major opposition parties in the State have opposed the State Government's proposal to declare the northeastern part of the State adjoining Manipur, commonly known as 'Demand area' of the Hmar Peoples Convention (HPC), as 'disturbed area'.¹²³

The border fencing along the Indo-Bangla border in Tripura is likely to be completed by 2017, according to official sources. The 851-km border was supposed to be fenced by 2013 but it could not be achieved due to various reasons. Now, the new target for completion of border fencing is 2017. Of the total sanctioned Indo-Bangla borderline, an area covering 715 km has been fenced so far while work is in progress along 92 km and fencing work is yet to be taken up in the area covering 135 km.¹²⁴

Left-wing Extremism

(April 13-19, 2015)

- **BSF jawan killed as Maoists strike for the third time; Maoists release all kidnapped villagers in Malkingiri; Bihar sounds high alert as police seizes Maoist arms; Maoist chief admits to loss of leaders and lists protection of its "subjective leadership" as top priority.**

Striking for the third time since April 11, Naxals on April 12 attacked a BSF team and killed a jawan in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Kanker district. A group of ultras opened indiscriminate firing on security personnel who were carrying out patrolling in the proximity of Chhote Baithiya

¹²¹ "NSCN (R) Seeks Truce Pact With Delhi", *The Sangai Express*, April 16, 2015 at <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/page/items/50645/nscn-r-seeks-truce-pact-with-delhi>

¹²² "NDFB Cadre Involved In 2014 Massacre Held", *The Assam Tribune*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1815/at043>

¹²³ "Mizoram To Introduce 'Disturbed Areas' Bill", *The Assam Tribune*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1815/oth053>

¹²⁴ Sil, Prabir, "Fencing To Be Completed In Tripura By '17", *The Assam Tribune*, April 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1815/oth055>

BSF camp under Bande police station area, said Kanker SP Jitendra Singh Meena. A gunbattle erupted between security forces and ultras and the rebels soon fled to the core forests, he added. Also, Naxals allegedly set ablaze at least 17 vehicles engaged in mining work in Kanker district on April 12. However, no one was hurt in the incident.¹²⁵

The Maoists on April 16 released all the eleven villagers they had kidnapped from three remote villages in Odisha's Maoist-infested Malkangiri districts on April 13. While five of the kidnapped villagers were released in the morning, the rest six were let off in the evening after deliberations at a 'Praja (people's) Court' held deep inside the forests. Several left wing ultras from Trava division in neighbouring Chhattisgarh were reportedly present at the 'Praja Court' where the villagers were warned of heavy punishment if they opened their mouth before the police or help the security forces in any way. The kidnapping was suspected to be the handiwork of Maoists from Chhattisgarh, which borders Malkangiri.¹²⁶

Bihar has sounded a high alert following Naxal attacks in Chhattisgarh and seizure of sophisticated arms, ammunition by the special task force of Bihar Police from several districts in the state. The alert also follows seizure of an INSAS rifle, a carbine, two grenades, six magazines, 140 bullets, walkie-talkie and police uniform from what could be either a training camp or arms hideout of Maoists from Kauakol area in Nawada district. On April 14, the STF had unearthed 60 landmines connected together, spread across 600 metres long stretch in Munger to target security forces patrolling the area.¹²⁷

Acknowledging "loss of considerable number of party leaders", the CPI (Maoist) has listed protection of its "subjective leadership" as top priority and decided to intensify its campaign to strengthen cadres in view of the "weakened movement in rural plains and urban areas". Listing challenges before the party, CPI (Maoist) general secretary Muppala Lakshman Rao alias Ganapathi, in an internally circulated interview for the Maoist Information Bulletin, said: "We have lost considerable number of party leaders at all levels starting from the central committee to the village level party committees. Therefore, we have identified the preservation of existing subjective forces from enemy attacks as one of the foremost tasks before the party." Stressing the importance of preserving "subjective leadership", Ganapathi called for "preparing new leadership and raising consciousness for a strong party with the continuation of leadership as a condition for the success of the revolution".¹²⁸

¹²⁵ "BSF Head Constable Killed in Naxal Attack in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, April 13, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bsf-head-constable-killed-in-naxal-attack-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/46903492.cms>

¹²⁶ "Maoists Release All Kidnapped Villagers", *Deccan Herald*, April 15, 2015 at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/472112/maoists-release-all-kidnapped-villagers.html>

¹²⁷ "Bihar Sounds High Alert As Police Seizes Maoist Arms", *The Times of India*, April 15, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Bihar-sounds-high-alert-as-police-seizes-Maoist-arms/articleshow/46930911.cms>

¹²⁸ Deshpande, Vivek, "Maoist Chief Admits To Loss Of Leaders, Weakening Base, Asks Cadres To Open Fronts", *The Indian Express*, April 19, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/maoist-chief-admits-to-loss-of-leaders-weakening-base-asks-cadres-to-open-fronts/>