

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(April 13-26, 2015)

- **Tehran and Kabul agreed to share intelligence; New ministers to submit 100-day plan within three weeks; Afghanistan sees Xi Jinping's trip with hop; Afghans detained in Pakistan; \$6 Million spent to track hostages; Ghani urges Iran's private sector to invest in Afghanistan; President underlines greater national unity; Balancing economic aid and security; Ahmad Zia Masoud survived terrorist attack; Afghanistan and India to sign treaty on intelligence; new governor of Kandahar; Top Taliban commander killed with his 27 men in Kunduz; Foreign troops failed in bringing peace to Afghanistan; ISIS promotes training camp in Logar; want to make Afghanistan a "graveyard of terror".**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani during his visit to Iran pledged he would not allow Afghanistan's soil to be used against other countries for insurgent or any other violent activities. Earlier, President Ghani along with high-level delegation left for Iran on April 19 morning on a two-day visit to discuss range of issues of bilateral interests with officials in Tehran, a statement from the Presidential Palace said. The president, the statement said is scheduled to meet his Iranian counterpart Dr. Hassan Rouhani and other high officials during his visit. Both countries' foreign ministers are expected to sign a bilateral cooperation deal. Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Salahuddin Rabani, Foreign Minister, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, National Security Adviser, Eklil Hakimi, Finance Minister, Dawood Shah Sabah, minister of Mines and Petroleum, Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, minister for Refugees and Repatriation and other high officials accompanied the president.¹

President Ashraf Ghani on April 21 attended the swearing-in ceremony of 16 new ministers who recently won votes of confidence from Wolesi Jirga — the Lower House of parliament. High ranking officials including first Vice-President General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the second Vice-President Mohammad SarwarDanesh, the Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and his first deputy Mohammad Khan were present at the event which was held at the Presidential Palace. The ministers during the oath-taking ceremony pledged to respect the Constitution and other laws of Afghanistan, safeguard the rights of citizens and independence, territorial integrity and the national unity of the people of Afghanistan, and, in all deeds consider the Almighty's presence, and perform their entrusted duties honestly. President Ghani congratulated the cabinet ministers and wished

¹ "Tehran and Kabul Agreed to Share Intelligence on Terrorism", *Outlook Afghanistan*, April 20, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12011

them success in serving the Afghan people." You should prepare our cabinet's first 100-day plan in upcoming three weeks,"²

Welcoming Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Islamabad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on April 21 said the meetings between Chinese and Pakistani leaders would help the Afghan peace process. Spokesman of the foreign ministry Ahmad Shekib Mustaghni in his weekly press conference said that Kabul is expecting that Islamabad would take practical steps now to help the Afghan-led peace process. He said the Pakistani officials should honour their promises regarding the Afghan peace process. Mustaghni said the entire region and international community had already supported the Afghan-owned peace process as stable and peaceful Afghanistan is in the larger interest of the regional and world countries. He said that China as a close friend of Afghanistan has wholeheartedly supported peace efforts of Afghans and was eager to contribute more in this regard. "Therefore, we hope that Pakistan will take practical steps to help the reconciliation process after talks with the Chinese leadership," he said. According to Pakistani media, Beijing has asked Islamabad to increase trade activities with Kabul. China also urged Pakistan to play vibrant role in the Afghan peace process as insurgency was threatening major projects and its investment in the region.³

It said that Afghan nationals were apprehended during search operation for not having legal documents. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is situated close to the Afghan border where Afghan mostly travels for treatment or meeting their relatives on daily basis. Pervaiz Khattak, the chief minister of the province, visited Kabul last week where he met President Ashraf Ghani and had discussed several issues including Afghan refugees' problem. The chief minister, who was accompanied by a delegation, told reporters, during his stay in Kabul, Pakistani police had been ordered not to harass Afghan refugees who possessed a special refugee card. Authorities in Pakistan started arresting and sending back to Afghanistan thousands of Afghan refugees, who fled the 1980s and early 1990s unrest to the neighbouring country, after a bloody attack by Taliban insurgents on a Peshawar school in December last year, killing and wounding hundreds of students. Khattak said specific cell phone numbers had been published in the media so that Afghan refugees could use them in case they faced harassment at the hands of security officials.⁴ While on a two-day state visit to Iran, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani told students that the release of 31 hostages is one of his priorities and so far \$6 million has been spent on tracking them. "So far, the government has spent \$6 million on the operations and 69 terrorists have been killed in the operation," President Ghani said. Ghani was rejecting claims that his government has done nothing to secure the release of the hostages. He said that Special Forces efforts to free them have been one of the most intense operations conducted in the past 14 years. "I personally have lead the case, the claims that the government is not doing anything about the kidnappers is not true," Ghani added. However, two months later their fate is still unclear. Some Zabul MPs have

² "Ghani Asks 16 New Ministers To Submit 100-Day Plan Within Three Weeks", *Afghanistan Times*, April 21, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/ghani-asks-16-new-ministers-to-submit-100-day-plan-within-three-weeks/>

³ "MoFA Hopes Xi Jinping's Trip Would Help Afghan Peace Process", *Afghanistan Times*, April 21, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/mofa-hopes-xi-jinpings-trip-would-help-afghan-peace-process/>

⁴ "57 Afghans Detained In Pakistan", *Afghanistan Times*, April 22, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/57-afghans-detained-in-pakistan/>

maintained that the hostages have been separated, some transferred to Urozgan and others to Ghazni province.⁵

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani – who is on a two-day official visit to Iran – on April 20 urged Iran's private sector to invest in Afghanistan. Speaking at an Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) meeting, Ghani spoke of the high unemployment in the country and said Afghanistan needs Iranian investor's help. He said that Afghanistan welcomes presence of Iranian investors in all fields including agriculture, mining, banking and transit. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, stressed on April 19 the need for determination to boost cooperation and rapport between Iran and Afghanistan at a meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. He also referred to the vast cultural and historic ties and commonalities the two countries share. Ghani and his high-level delegation arrived in Tehran on an official two-day state visit on April 19. The president met with Ayatollah Khamenei later in the day.⁶

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on April 24 underlined greater national unity keeping in view the current security situation in the country. In a statement from Presidential Palace; he said this in his meeting with tribal elders and religious leaders. Referring to current scenario, the president said the year ahead was posing great challenges in which tactics of fighting were changed. He said that international terrorism was the base for this fighting while fighters from other region were staging terror attacks inside our country. It was high time to differentiate between foreign terrorists and "our own people," he said, adding those who considered themselves sons of the soil should sit with the government to share their grievances. "If they want to stand with terrorists then I call upon all Afghans to get united against all anti-state elements," he concluded. The president said the future could be protected only if the nation demonstrated unity. The religious leader should focus to forge unity of the nation during their sermons.⁷

President Ghani in his inaugural speech outlined "five-circle foreign policy" relations with neighbours, Asian countries, the Islamic world, donor countries and international institutions. He knew that balancing the relations with the foremost component of his foreign policy would be the most challenging part for him. As the five circles include, the two arch rivals India and Pakistan, and Afghanistan has to strike the right-cords to ensure that it could benefit from peace with the assistance of Pakistan and also foster economic relations with India. Since, President Ghani's assumed his office; he has visited Saudi Arabia, China, Pakistan and Iran. This indicates that these countries could play a vital role in bringing about peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as these countries have been supporting the political stakeholders over the years in the Afghan Government and the insurgent groups in one way or the other. Though many of us knew that the main player in the Afghanistan conflict remains to be Pakistan;

⁵ "\$6 Million Spent So Far to Track 31 Hostages: Ghani", *Outlook Afghanistan*, April 22, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12021

⁶ "Ghani Urges Iran's Private Sector to Invest in Afghanistan", *Outlook Afghanistan*, April 21, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12016

⁷ "President Underlines Greater National Unity", *Outlook Afghanistan*, April 25, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12032

and Islamabad insists it wants to see a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, however it remains wary of its traditional rival, India, expanding its influence along the border in Afghanistan.⁸

Ahmad Zia Masoud the special envoy for President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani for reform and good governance survived a rocket attack in north-eastern Badakhshan province. The rocket attack did not bear casualties in Barak District. After a deadly terrorist attack which left dozens of soldiers martyred, wounded or missing, Ahmad Zia Masoud made a visit to Badakhshan province to review the security situation of the province. No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.⁹

The Afghan government is expected to sign a treaty with the Indian government on intelligence share and cooperation in dealing crimes during President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's visit to New Delhi. According to local media reports in India, Kabul and New Delhi will share intelligence and cooperate in dealing with crimes based on the treaty which will be concluded by the leaders of the two countries. The reports further added that the latest development will likely upset Pakistan, which has been opposing such a bilateral agreement for the past 15 years. President Ghani is expected to leave for India on a two-day state visit. The draft of the treaty known as Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) has reportedly been prepared by the Home Ministry of India. "This will not only help the agencies achieve a more effective coordination but also instil fear among fugitives and terrorists taking shelter in Afghanistan," a senior official quoted by *Economic Times* newspaper said. The official further added that discussions are also underway to ink an extradition treaty between two nations but Afghanistan does not seem to be too keen about it.¹⁰

The new provincial governor for the southern Kandahar province of Afghanistan was appointed by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. According to IDLG officials, Dr. Azizi has served as provincial council chief for western Herat province and governmental minister in parliamentary affairs. Dr. Azizi's appointment as the new provincial governor of Kandahar province comes as there have been growing criticisms towards the government of national unity for delaying the appointment of the new governors, specifically for the key provinces.¹¹

A prominent Taliban commander was killed following a military operation by the Afghan security forces in northern Kunduz province of Afghanistan. The operation was conducted late on April 27 night in Imam Sahib district, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, Sediq Sediqi said. He said at least 27 militants were also injured during the operation along with the prominent Taliban commander who was identified as Mullah Mustafa. The death of Mullah Mustafa is considered a

⁸ "Balancing Economic Aid And Security: President Ghani's Visit to India", *Khaama Press*, April 26, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/balancing-economic-aid-and-security-president-ghanis-visit-to-india-1037>

⁹ "Ahmad Zia Masoud Survived Terrorist Attack", *Khaama Press*, April 27, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/breaking-news-ahmad-zia-masoud-survived-terrorist-attack-3231>

¹⁰ "Afghanistan and India To Sign Treaty On Intelligence Share", *Khaama Press*, April 27, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-and-india-to-sign-treaty-on-intelligence-share-9398>

¹¹ "Humayun Azizi Appointed As New Governor of Kandahar", *Khaama Press*, April 27, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/humayun-azizi-appointed-as-new-governor-of-kandahar-1040>

major blow to the anti-government armed militants who are currently engaged in a fierce gun battle with the Afghan security forces in a number of districts of Kunduz province.¹²

In an interview with *Trend News Agency* in Azerbaijan, Hamid Karzai said that through NATO during its mission in Afghanistan wanted to help Afghan, failed to bring stability to Afghanistan. "The foreign forces are yet to bring lasting peace and stability to Afghanistan, as people of the country are still suffering at the hands mounting militancy," he added. Talking about recent situation in Afghanistan, Karzai said that the country is on the right track towards development. "A new government has been established in Afghanistan and Afghan masses opted for electing country's leader through a democratic process," he added. Karzai hoped that situation in Afghanistan will further improve. The former Afghan president also urged Azerbaijan to open its embassy in Afghanistan. "The move will further improve ties between the two countries," Karzai said. He added that the two countries share common history and cultural similarities. Karzai said that the two countries should work together to enhance bilateral cooperation. "Afghanistan opened its embassy in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, and we hope that Azerbaijan will also open its embassy in Kabul," he added. Karzai said that Kabul was interested in expansion of economic relations with Baku. Talking about importance of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, Hamid Karzai said that the rail route is the easier way to connect Afghanistan to Europe.¹³

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – ISIS's Khorasan Province has promoted a training camp in central Logar province of Afghanistan, located 60 km south of capital Kabul. The training camp has been named after the Taliban commander – Ustad Yasir who was killed in 2012 in an internecine dispute. A set of photographs which purportedly shows the group conducting training has been published online by a Pakistani reporter Saleem Mehsud. According to the *Long War Journal* newspaper quoting Mehsud the images were email to him by the group and were published online on April 18th. The images shows a group of 14 militants along with pickup truck with a heavy machine gun mounted on the back moving through a creek.¹⁴

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said the Afghan government is determined to 'make Afghanistan graveyard of terror' while calling for regional cooperation to defeat militants. Speaking to a government think-tank following a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Ghani said Afghanistan has turned into a battlefield where Afghans are fighting on behalf of neighbouring and regional countries from India to Russia. "We are the battlefield. We are fighting on behalf of our friends from India to Russia," Ghani said in a speech to the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). President Ghani also insisted that peace was the main goal of his government as "the shadow of terror haunts our children, our women, our youth". "Terror must be confronted and must be overcome...Our will must not be underestimated and we will not be beaten to submission," he said. Ghani also added that terror must be "contained if the disease is to be cured". The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier said that India

¹² "Top Taliban Commander Killed With His 27 Men in Kunduz", *Khaama Press*, April 28, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/top-taliban-commander-killed-with-his-27-men-in-kunduz-9401>

¹³ "Foreign Troops Failed In Bringing Peace To Afghanistan, Says Karzai", *Afghanistan Times*, April 28, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/foreign-troops-failed-in-bringing-peace-to-afghanistan-says-karzai/>

¹⁴ "ISIS Promotes Training Camp In Logar Province of Afghanistan", *Khaama Press*, April 29, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/isis-promotes-training-camp-in-logar-province-of-afghanistan-9403>

would continue to help build the Afghan military and had delivered three Cheetal helicopters. Modi also pledged continued support for Afghanistan's fight against the Taliban and renewed his commitment to developing both land and sea trade routes with the country.¹⁵

Pakistan

(April 13-26, 2015)

- **Pakistan, Russia to hold joint military exercises; China, Pakistan ink 51 MoUs; No change in helicopter deal with Pakistan: US; China to deliver 50 JF-17 fighters to Pakistan in three years; ISI chief becomes active against militants in Karachi.**

Pakistan has agreed to conduct joint military exercises with Russia, this will be the first time that the cold war era adversaries have agreed to hold a joint defence drill. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif announced the agreement on April 15th, after the latter travelled to Moscow for a security conference. The two Ministers also discussed various bilateral issues and Shoigu praised Pakistan for taking steps towards battling terrorism and preventing drug smuggling. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif was quoted by Sputnik International as stating: "We [Pakistan and Russia] agreed to enhance cooperation in both defence industry and military training." A Pakistani Defence Ministry statement said: "Joint participation in military exercises will be promoted. There was consensus that a multipolar world would ensure peace and balance in international relations." Late last year, the two countries had signed a defence cooperation agreement by which Russia lifted embargoes on supplying weapons to Pakistan.¹⁶ Pakistan and China signed fifty-one agreements and MoUs for cooperation in various fields. The agreements were signed by the senior officials of both the countries in the presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping and PM Nawaz Sharif, after a series of talks in Islamabad on April 20. The two leaders announced eight projects to be initiated in Pakistan with the help of China. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Xi also performed ground-breaking of five projects through video link. The projects are related to energy, infrastructure, agriculture, research and technology, education and various other fields. President Xi termed PM Nawaz Sharif as a "senior and most veteran statesman." He also admired the reforms introduced in Pakistan by him saying that such reforms were crucial and had a far reaching impact on the progress of the country. President Xi also appreciated the efforts of PM Nawaz Sharif against eradication of militancy from Pakistan.¹⁷

The United States has ruled out any change in counter terrorism relationship with Pakistan. Talking to journalists in Washington, Acting Spokesperson of State Department Marie Harf said one billion dollars sale of helicopters and other military equipment, is very much on the card.¹⁸

China will turn over the last batch of 50 FC-1 fighters to Pakistan over the next three years, said Li

¹⁵ "Ghani Says He Wants To Make Afghanistan A 'Graveyard Of Terror'", *Khaama Press*, April 29, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/ghani-says-he-wants-to-make-afghanistan-a-graveyard-of-terror-1047>

¹⁶ "Pakistan, Russia To Hold Joint Military Exercises", *The Nation*, April 17, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/national/17-Apr-2015/pakistan-russia-to-hold-joint-military-exercises>

¹⁷ "China, Pakistan Ink 51 MoUs", *The Nation*, April 21, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/national/20-Apr-2015/china-pakistan-ink-51-mous>

¹⁸ "No Change In Helicopter Deal with Pakistan: US", *The Nation*, April, 23, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/national/21-Apr-2015/no-change-in-helicopter-deal-with-pakistan-us>

Pei, the former head of the aircraft project under the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, in a report by the party-run *People's Daily*. Known as the JF-17 Thunder in Pakistan, the Xiaolong is a multirole fighter designed jointly by the Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group and the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex. The aircraft is a symbol of the friendship between China and Pakistan, according to Li. Pakistan is currently the only other country that uses the fighter. Under the contract signed between Beijing and Islamabad, Pakistan will receive a total number of 110 Thunder fighters from China. Pakistan has already received 60 fighters from China since 2007. Ten of them were devoted to the test and evaluation unit, based at Minhas, the other 50 aircraft were assigned to the 16th and 26th squadrons of the Pakistan Air Force.¹⁹

The chief of Pakistan's main spy agency is spearheading a campaign to wrest control of the teeming port city of Karachi from a powerful political party, the military's latest, and some say boldest, foray into civilian life in recent years. According to military officials, police officers and members of the MQM party which has traditionally dominated Karachi, Rizwan Akhtar has decided the time for policing the city from the side-lines is over. "There is a quiet, creeping takeover of Karachi by the military," said a government official close to Akhtar, head of the ISI agency, which traditionally acts as an extension of army power in Pakistan. "Karachi is just too big ... too much land, too much business, resources. No one party will be allowed to rule Karachi from now on," added the official, who declined to be named.²⁰

Bangladesh

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Prime Minister Hasina addresses plenary session of the second Asian-African Summit; Bangladesh and India agree to install cross-border pipeline; ADB revises GDP growth forecast for Bangladesh; US-EU joint statement on engagement with Bangladesh.**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for a triangular South-South cooperation to fight terrorism, human trafficking and climate change. "I believe the South-South and triangular cooperation has immense potential to foster development, achieve peace and security, fight terrorism and violent extremism," she said. The PM made the remarks while addressing a plenary session of the second Asian-African Summit at the Balai Sidang Jakarta Convention Centre in Indonesia on April 22, 2015. On the sidelines of the conference, Hasina held talks with Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar Ahmad bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, President of Myanmar U Thein Sein, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the convention centre.²¹ Prime Minister Hasina met Indonesian President Joko Widodo on the sidelines of the Summit. A joint

¹⁹ "China To Deliver 50 Jf-17 Fighters To Pakistan In Three Years", *The News*, April 26, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37185-China-to-deliver-50-JF-17-fighters-to-Pakistan-in-three-years>

²⁰ "ISI Chief Becomes Active Against Militants In Karachi", *The Nation*, April 27, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/national/27-Apr-2015/isi-chief-becomes-active-against-militants-in-karachi>

²¹ "Bangladesh Premier Hasina Calls For Peace, Security", *The Daily Star*, April 23, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/hasina-calls-peace-security-78796>.

statement was issued after the meeting. Bangladesh ambassador to Indonesia and a DG of Indonesia's foreign ministry signed the statement.²²

Bangladesh and India have agreed to install a 130-kilometre long cross-border pipeline to help Dhaka import 10 lakh tonnes of diesel from India annually, officials said. Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) of India and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to this end on April 20, 2015. The 'Indo-Bangla Friendship Pipeline' will be set up between NRL's marketing terminal in Siliguri and BPC's depot in Parbatipur to ensure smooth supply of diesel to the northern districts of Bangladesh. This pipeline will help reduce the carrying costs of the petroleum products, an official of the BPC said, adding that the cost of diesel to be imported from India would be less than what current suppliers charge in Bangladesh. The pipeline will have a capacity to carry one million tonnes of diesel per year. Only seven kilometres of the pipeline will be on the Indian side and the rest will be on the Bangladesh side. It will take two years to complete the installation work. A joint venture of the state-run BPC and NRL, a subsidiary of the state-run Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, will complete the tasks.²³

The Asian Development Bank has revised down its GDP growth forecast for Bangladesh to 6.1 percent for the current fiscal year due to the past three months' political unrest. In December last year the ADB in its update for the first quarter had forecasted that the GDP (gross domestic product) growth in the current fiscal year would be 6.4 percent.²⁴

The European Union and the United States said they, in close cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, will remain closely engaged with Bangladesh to ensure that economic growth and sustainable development go hand-in-hand with workers' safety and rights. The commitment was reiterated in a joint statement by the US and the EU on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse on April 24, the worst industrial accident in the history of Bangladesh that killed at least 1,134 workers.²⁵

Sri Lanka

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka Navy and the UNODC discuss possible future cooperation in the prevention of maritime crime; Sri Lanka navy delegation visits a US aircraft carrier at sea; Sri Lanka sends its rescue and relief contingent to Nepal; CIL decides to exit from its oil exploration operations in Sri Lanka; Debate on the 19th amendment postponed.**

Sri Lanka Navy and the United Nations agency combating the illicit drugs and international crime

²² "Hasina Seeks Duty, Quota-Free Access", *The Daily Star*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/hasina-seeks-duty-quota-free-access-79054>.

²³ Rahman, Md Fazlur, "Bangladesh and India Agree To Install 130-Kilometre Pipeline To Import Diesel To Dhaka", *The Daily Star*, April 23, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/indo-bangla-pipeline-diesel-import-78797>.

²⁴ "ADB Cuts Economic Growth Forecast for Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/adb-cuts-economic-growth-forecast-bangladesh-78611>.

²⁵ "EU, US To Work Closely with Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, April 25, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/eu-us-work-closely-bangladesh-79225>.

have held discussions on issues related to maritime crime in Indian Ocean. The Head of the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMPC) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Alan Cole had met the Commander of Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Jayantha Perera at the Naval Headquarters on April 23, 2015. The UN official and the Navy Commander discussed a range of issues related to the prevention of maritime crime in the Indian Ocean, focusing on the development of strategies and providing assistance to the ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of the maritime domain and the freedom of the high seas, the Navy said. Mr. Cole was accompanied by the Senior Security Officer of UNODC Seychelles, Mr. Shanaka Jayasekera. The UN official also met with the State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardena at the Ministry on April 22, 2015 and held discussions on the possible future areas of cooperation in the prevention of maritime crime and UNODC assistance to Sri Lanka.²⁶

A Sri Lankan Navy delegation, which included the Commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, Vice Admiral Jayantha Perera, have visited a US Aircraft carrier at sea. USS Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group and embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17 hosted distinguished visitors from Sri Lanka on April 19. In addition to the Navy Commander included among the Sri Lankan delegation were Minister of Foreign Affairs Mangala Samaraweera, and State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene. The delegation flew from the Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo in a C 2 transport/ rescue aircraft and landed on the USS Carl Vinson approximately 225 nm off the coast of Sri Lanka. She was moving to Hawaii with the Carrier Battle Group 1.²⁷

The first segment of the rescue and relief contingent of 48 Army personnel including four civil medical consultants, a team of Commandos, Engineer troops, four sniffer dogs, Sri Lanka Army Medical Corps personnel and other vocationally qualified Army members, left for Nepal on April 26 on a SLAF Hercules C-130 transport aircraft to assist relief efforts following the massive earthquake.²⁸

Cairn India Limited (CIL), reportedly, one of the leading independent exploration and production companies globally, has decided to exit from its oil exploration operations in Sri Lanka due to slump in revenues. A nearly 50 percent drop in crude oil prices has forced Cairn India to exit its operations in Sri Lanka, a report in *Business Standards* said. According to the annual financial results announced for the period ending March 31, 2015, Cairn India's revenue of US\$ 2.4 billion is 22 per cent lower year-on-year primarily due to reduced crude prices. "Exceptional item in Q4 FY15 pertained to impairment loss of Sri Lanka amounting to INR 505 crores (Gross of tax) leading to a negative profit after tax for the quarter of INR (241) crores," Cairn India said in its financial statement.²⁹

²⁶ "Sri Lanka Navy, UNODC Discuss Preventing Maritime Crime In the Indian Ocean", *ColomboPage*, April 24, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/Apr24_1429898663CH.php.

²⁷ "Sri Lanka Navy Delegation Visits US Aircraft Carrier USS Carl Vinson", *ColomboPage*, April 25, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/Apr25_1429941050CH.php.

²⁸ "Second Sri Lanka Army Contingent with Relief Supplies Ready to Leave for Nepal", *Colombopage*, April 26, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/Apr26_1430067612CH.php.

²⁹ "Cairn India Exits Sri Lanka Oil Exploration - Report", *ColomboPage*, April 25, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/Apr25_1429936614CH.php.

Following the chaotic situation arose in the Sri Lankan Parliament due to the protests staged by the opposition MPs over the Bribery Commission summoning former President Mahinda Rajapaksa to record a statement, parliamentary proceedings on April 21, was adjourned until April 27 and accordingly, the debate on the 19th Amendment to the Constitution that was to begin on April 21, too has been postponed. The decision to postpone the debate has been arrived following an emergency Party Leaders meeting held with the President.³⁰

Maldives

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **China gives \$4.2 to the Maldives; Nasheed to lose the Presidency of the MDP.**

The Chinese government has provided \$4.2 million to the Maldives, to strengthen military ties between the two countries. The agreement was signed at a ceremony at Coast Guard Building of the Maldives on April 20, by Minister of Defence Major General (Retired) Moosa Ali Jaleel, and Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives Wang Fukang.³¹

National Security Committee of the Parliament has amended the penitentiary and parole laws so that the former President Mohamed Nasheed would stay a member of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) but lose him the presidency of the party. The law was passed in committee meeting with the unanimous vote of all members present on April 22.³²

B. East Asia

China

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **China offers 20 million yuan in aid to earthquake hit Nepal; China wants to further work on its FTZs; China to build hydropower project with Pakistan; China to focus on Soft Power with respect to Belt and Road initiative.**

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce announced on April 26, that China will be providing 3.3 million dollars in aid to Nepal in the wake of the recent earthquakes. The aid will include blankets, tents, generators etc.³³

³⁰ "Sri Lanka Parliament Postpones Debate On 19th Amendment to Constitution", *ColomboPage*, April 21, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/Apr21_1429602422CH.php.

³¹ "China Provides \$4.2 Million as Military Assistance", *SunOnline*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29244>.

³² "Committee Passes Bill That Would Keep Nasheed As A Member But Lose The Party's Presidency", *SunOnline*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29297>.

³³ "China Offers 20 Mln Yuan In Humanitarian Aid To Quake-Hit Nepal", *China Daily*, April 26, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/26/content_20546160.htm, accessed on April 27, 2015

While delivering a report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), on behalf of the State Council, the Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang said on April 22, that China is keen to further develop its free trade zones (FTZ). Wang further added that, "the State Council will supervise the implementation of the work plan for pilot FTZs".³⁴

During the Chinese President Xi Jinping visit to Islamabad, the China Three Gorges Corp and the Pakistan Private Power and Infrastructure Board announced to provide capital to build the Karot Hydropower Project on the Jhelum River. This hydropower project will be run by China for 30 years before it is handed over to Pakistan.³⁵

In a recent announcement China has stated that Soft power will play a crucial role in its Belt and Road initiative. According to Zhang Guozuo, director of the Centre of Soft Power Studies, "For a long time, China has emphasized the role of economic development over other things. But culture is the other leg for development to really sustain. Culture should be the focus now".³⁶

C. Southeast Asia

ASEAN

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **26th ASEAN summit began in Malaysia; Malaysian Minister hopeful about ASEAN's performance as an economic grouping.**

The 26th ASEAN Summit began on April 27 at Malaysia, the fourth-time host of ASEAN Summit. The preparatory sessions started on April 24 with the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The meeting was organised at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre with 10 representatives from ASEAN members.³⁷ Other preparatory meetings ahead of the Summit included a high level Task Force meeting on ASEAN Economic Integration Working Group on the regional body's post-2015 agenda. In fact, the ASEAN Community building exercise is the priority agenda of this ASEAN Summit. The ASEAN Political and Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community are three pillars of ASEAN integration and the core agenda include a single market and integrated production base. However, most experts are of the opinion that formation of the ASEAN single market and ASEAN community building may not happen within the set deadline of December 31, 2015 as many works are still

³⁴ "Vice Premier Vows To Further Develop FTZs in China", *China Daily*, April 22, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/22/content_20510969.htm, accessed on April 27, 2015

³⁵ Jia, Chen, "Pakistan Project is Silk Road's Debut", *China Daily*, April 21, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/21/content_20495474.htm, accessed on April 27, 2015

³⁶ Ye, Sun, "'Soft Power' To Be Focus of Belt and Road Initiatives", *China Daily*, April 20, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/20/content_20482212.htm, accessed on April 27, 2015

³⁷ Sivanandam, Hemananthani, "Asean Summit: Preparatory Sessions Kick Off", *The Star Online*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/04/24/Asean-summit-preparatory-sessions/>.

pending. However, one must remember that ASEAN is on track to become the world's fifth largest economy as well as third largest market. It is a dynamic region with 600 million population and a vibrant youth force under the age of 30. Henceforth what ASEAN needs is to work towards a single identity which will facilitate building of ASEAN community.³⁸ Another important issue has been the South China Sea and China's land reclamation process in the islands. The Filipino Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario commented in a meeting on April 26 that China is "poised to consolidate *de facto* control of the South China Sea". But Malaysia, the chair of ASEAN, mentioned that Philippines may issue any statement; however, ASEAN wants to engage with China and that again shows the difference amongst the ASEAN members on South China Sea issue. ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh said that ASEAN may not issue any joint statement condemning China's assertive behaviour; however, China's nine-dash line is not acceptable. He also advocated for more conversations with China to resolve the issues.³⁹

In the World Economic Forum, held at Jakarta, the Malaysian trade and industry minister, Mustapa Mohamed, said that in the coming years, ASEAN would grow at 5 per cent per annum and the same would be less than 2 per cent per year for the European Union (EU). Henceforth, Mr. Mustapa mentioned that in the coming decade an integrated ASEAN would surpass EU in economic growth. He also mentioned that ASEAN will never have a central bank or single monetary unit unlike EU.⁴⁰

Southeast Asia

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Resettlement of refugees in Cambodia under question; The Plight of the Kokang continues in Myanmar; Maritime piracy on rise in Southeast Asia.**

The question of asylum-seekers who are currently at Nauru Island still remains uncertain. In 2014, Australia and Cambodia signed a deal under which Cambodia agreed to resettle an unidentified number of refugees in return of a \$31 million aid package from Australia. Those refugees wanted to settle in Australia which was not acceptable to the later. Many of the asylum-seekers are from countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Iran. So far, only one Iranian agreed to resettle in Cambodia. Cambodia has been consistently advocating that it would resettle only those who are willing to stay in Cambodia. In such a situation, the fate of those asylum-seekers remains under question.⁴¹

³⁸ "Expectations High Ahead of ASEAN Summit", *Channel News Asia*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/expectations-high-ahead/1804262.html>.

³⁹ "Southeast Asia Divided on Response to Chinese Reclamation in South China Sea", *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2015, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/asean-chief-says-cant-accept-beijings-south-china-sea-claims-1430022922>.

⁴⁰ Naidu-Ghelani, Rajeshni, "Asean Economic Growth 'To Outdo EU'", *BBC News*, April 20, 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-32387376>.

⁴¹ Peter, Zsombor, "Asylum Seekers on Fast Track to Cambodia, Group Says", *The Cambodia Daily*, April 21, 2015, at <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/asylum-seekers-on-fast-track-to-cambodia-group-says-82208/>.

The Myanmar army continues to fight the Kokang rebels (the Kokang Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army – MNDAA) at China-Myanmar border regions and the bombing from their side has injured many local residents. The Chinese soldiers who are guarding the border are not confronting the Myanmar army as they are afraid of getting injured by the shelling. The local residents complained that the Myanmar army has sent aircraft and they have control over the region. Before the intensification of shelling in and around April 20, the local residents also saw few Chinese aircrafts on the sky and they believed that China would rescue them. That did not happen though. Most of the residents of Laukkai (the regional capital of Kokang area) have fled to China to avoid persecution by the Myanmar army. A volunteer from a refugee camp, located in Yunnan, reported that near-about 60,000 Kokang refugees have sought shelter in the camp. The Myanmar government appointed Kokang Region Rehabilitation Support Committee is trying to help few Kokang residents who have fled their homes since the fight intensified between the Myanmar army and the MNDAA.⁴²

International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has reported that in the first quarter of 2015, the incidence of maritime piracy has seen 10 per cent rise in comparison to the first quarter of 2014. The Southeast Asian waters are the most dangerous for safe navigation and maritime traffic, says IMB. The waters in Southeast Asian region account more than half of all maritime attacks conducted in the first few months of 2015. Indonesia has faced almost 40 per cent of the total attacks this year so far. The IMB report said, majority of the attackers are thieves who carry knives, machetes or guns and they tend to attack small vessels which are slow in pace and henceforth, vulnerable at the seas. Besides, Indonesia, vessels from Vietnam also saw an increase in number of attacks. On the other hand, piracy in the waters near Somalia has seen a fall over the past few years.⁴³

Oceania

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **ANZAC Day celebration in Australia and New Zealand; China accuses US and New Zealand of hacking into its offices in Auckland.**

Australia and New Zealand marked the centenary of sacrifices made by their deceased soldiers at the Gallipoli Peninsula. The ANZAC Day as the commemoration is celebrated by Australia and New Zealand every year on April 25 when they pay tribute to their soldiers who died during World War I in Turkey. Australian Chief of Army David Morrison said at the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, “They loved and were loved in return, were prepared to fight for their beliefs, were, like us, prey to fears and human despair”. In New Zealand also, another event was organised at the National War Memorial at Wellington. A week before the celebration, the Australian police cracked a terror plan by the Islamic State during ANZAC parade at Melbourne

⁴² “Kokang Border Conflict Intensifies, Myanmar Shells Fall in China: Residents”, *Radio Free Asia*, April 20, 2015, at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/kokang-border-conflict-intensifies-04202015165745.html>.

⁴³ Herman, Steve, “Maritime Piracy on Increase Again in Southeast Asia”, *Voice of America*, April 21, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/maritime-piracy-on-increase-again-in-southeast-asia/2728381.html>.

and that encouraged Australia to raise the level of security on April 25.⁴⁴ The World War II had a greater impact on the Pacific Island countries; however, little is known about Pacific Island countries' involvement in World War I. Soldiers from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Niue and Cook Islands fought for the British under the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and other commands.⁴⁵

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei has requested the New Zealand and US authorities to stop spying on Chinese consulate and passport office in Auckland. Chinese statements were based on the leakage of secret NSA files by Edward Snowden which showed that New Zealand and US spy agencies are hacking lines of the Chinese consulate and passport office in Auckland. However, Mr. John Key, the New Zealand Prime Minister, denied these allegations. Snowden's leaks happened in June 2013 and followed by that whether the US and New Zealand authorities are continuing with their hacking efforts into Chinese consulate and passport office in Auckland is remains vague. PM Key mentioned that Snowden is a thief and therefore, should not be trusted. Previously, US had alleged that China hacked the New Zealand Super Computer, a claim vociferously denied by China.⁴⁶

India and Southeast Asia

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **EAM inaugurates Indian mission to ASEAN; Sushma Swaraj attended Asia-Africa Conference in Jakarta.**

The official inauguration of India's mission to ASEAN was conducted on April 23 in Jakarta in the presence of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and ASEAN Secretary General Mr. Le Luong Minh. Mrs. Swaraj mentioned, "ASEAN lies in the core of India's foreign policy. We aim to play a more proactive role in the region, strengthening collaboration in trade, investment, security and connectivity". Mr. Minh said that setting up this mission would further cement the relationship between India and ASEAN which has seen improvements since 1992. Mrs. Swaraj came to Jakarta to attend the Asia-Africa Conference, held in Indonesia, on April 22-23. Previously, on April 13, the Indian mission in ASEAN was opened with a much-smaller gathering when Mr. Suresh Kumar Reddy took over the responsibility as the head of mission.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Parry, Martin, "Record Crowds as Australia and New Zealand Mark Anzac Day", *Business Insider*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-record-crowds-as-australia-and-new-zealand-mark-anzac-day-2015-4?IR=T>.

⁴⁵ "Anzac Day 2015: Commemorations Highlight Pacific's 'Overlooked' Role in World War One", *ABC.net*, April 25, 2015, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-25/anzac-commemorations-highlight-pacific-overlooked-role-in-wwi/6421016>.

⁴⁶ "Beijing 'Extremely Concerned' Over Leaked New Zealand Spying Reports", *RT.com*, April 20, 2015, at <http://rt.com/news/251417-china-new-zealand-spying/>.

⁴⁷ Amirio, Dylan, "India Inaugurates ASEAN Mission", *Jakarta Post*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/04/24/india-inaugurates-asean-mission.html>.

EAM, Sushma Swaraj attended the Asia-Africa Conference 2015 at Jakarta on April 22-23. She attended the conference on behalf of PM Narendra Modi who could not participate due to other engagements back at home. Mrs. Swaraj delivered her speech and addressed issues like piracy at Gulf of Aden and Malacca Straits, emergence of Islamic State in 2014 and its implications on Asia and Africa, the importance of Indian Ocean in global trade, reform of the United Nations and expansion of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) among many other issues. Mrs. Swaraj reiterated that India considers Asia and African regions as its extended neighbourhood and with south and Southeast Asia, India's engagements have been a thrust area since the inception of Look East Policy in 1992 which is expected to garner more achievements as India has embarked on Act East Policy. On Africa, she said, India has been assisting African continent in many ways including line of credit systems, scholarships, infrastructure development and capacity building. She spoke about India-Africa Forum Summit. The third India Africa Forum Summit will be hosted by India in October 2015.⁴⁸

D. Russia

National

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Duma ratifies agreement on natural gas supplies to China via the western route; Russia drops plans to create nuclear space engine; Over 100,000 hectares of forests on fire in Siberia; Russia to expand its fleet of nuclear icebreakers; Financing of Russia's Defence Procurement totalled US\$ 35.34 billion in 2014.**

Deputies of Russia's State Duma have, on April 24, ratified the agreement on natural gas supplies to China via western route. The plan envisions annually supplying 5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas from the Chayandinskoye and Kovyktinskoye gas fields in 2019 with supply expected to be scaled up-to to 38 bcm by 2024.⁴⁹

Russia's space agency Roscosmos is planning to shut down works on developing a megawatt-class nuclear propulsion system for long-range manned spacecraft. Roscosmos and the Keldysh Research Centre, which has been working on developing the systems. The works on creating a transport energy module based on a megawatt-class nuclear propulsion system were approved by the Russian presidential commission for modernization and technological development of the country's economy in 2009 and began a year later. In 2012, a technical plan was fulfilled and in 2015 the power propulsion system was due to be created. By 2018, the module was expected to

⁴⁸ "Resolute Action Needed to Counter Islamic State Terror: Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj", *NDTV News*, April 22, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/resolute-action-needed-to-counter-islamic-state-terror-foreign-minister-sushma-swaraj-757289>.

⁴⁹ "Russian State Duma Ratifies Agreement On Natural Gas Supplies To China Via Western Route", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/791628>

be ready for flight tests. Some 20 billion roubles (US\$ 392.3 million) were to be allocated for the project implementation, including 17 billion roubles in budget funds.⁵⁰

The press service of the forestry department in the Siberian federal district has said, on April 20, that the total area of wildfires in Russia's Siberia is down by 17,000 hectares to 102,000 hectares, with almost all the fires registered in the Trans-Baikal Territory. The forests have been on fire in Siberia since March. The fires have destroyed over 1,500 buildings in 56 settlements, and killed 30 people.⁵¹

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, on April 21, that Russia will get its first nuclear icebreaker of a new series in 2017 and it will have three such vessels by 2020. He added that the renewal of fleet of icebreakers is required due to development of the Northern Sea Route.⁵²

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said, on April 21, that the financing of Russia's system of Defence Procurement and Acquisition totalled 1.9 trillion roubles (US\$ 35.34 billion) in 2014- up from 1 trillion roubles (US\$ 27.9 billion) in 2013. He added that there has been an increase in production of defence equipment since 2013. In particular, production grew by 24 per cent in radio electronic industry, 17 per cent in aircraft building, 15 per cent in ship building, 13 per cent in ammunition, 8.5 per cent in space industry and 5.4 per cent in conventional weapons. The share of hi-tech products in total production of the defence sector rose to 63 per cent in 2014.⁵³

International Affairs

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Russia and Pakistan to explore ways to counter Afghan drug threat; Russia sends 90 rescuers to Nepal; Russia and China to set up joint venture capital fund of US\$ 200 million; Russia and Argentina sign an 'all-encompassing strategic partnership'; Chinese company to build US\$ 2 billion oil refinery in Russia's Far East; Russia to supply 'modern weapons' to Cuba; Russian and French Presidents discuss bilateral and regional issues; Moscow to insist on lifting arms embargo on Iran; SCO holds military drills in Kyrgyzstan; Russia conducts military exercises in Kuril Islands; Foreign Ministry declares Latin America to be a 'priority region'; Russia to explore gas deliveries to North Korea; Gazprom assures Greece of 47 billion cubic meters of gas transit if it participates in Turkish Stream project.**

The head of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service Viktor Ivanov has said, on April 20, that 'joint efforts of Russia and Pakistan in fighting drug-related crimes in Afghanistan will contribute to

⁵⁰ "Russia Drops Plans To Create Nuclear Space Engine — Source", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/791447>

⁵¹ "Over 100,000 Hectares of Forests on fire in Siberia", *Itar-Tass*, April 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/790405>

⁵² "Russia to Have First New Nuclear Icebreaker In 2017 — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, April 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790788>

⁵³ "Financing of Russia's Defence Procurement Totalled \$35.34 bln in 2014 — PM", *Itar-Tass*, April 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/790787>

stabilizing the situation in this country'. He was quoted as saying 'Pakistan as a rather big power is a fairly serious political and economic player in the Central Asian region, where Afghanistan localized giant and large-scale production of the most aggressive narcotic - heroin. Pakistan interacting with Russia and, possibly, with Iran is capable of taking the necessary steps for stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan'.⁵⁴

Russia's emergencies ministry has sent two planes with 90 rescuers to Nepal in order to assist the country in the ongoing earthquake rescue efforts.⁵⁵

Russia and China will set up a joint capital venture fund in the amount of US\$ 200 million. An agreement on setting up a new financial entity was signed by the Skolkovo fund of Russia and China's Cyberspace Investment Group on April 21. Apart from the venture capital fund, the two countries will create a joint business incubator and a centre of robotic technologies on the territory of Skolkovo centre for innovations. The project will take off in the third quarter of this year.⁵⁶

Argentinean President Cristina de Kirchner has paid an official visit to Moscow on April 23 wherein she held discussions with President Putin. They signed over 20 documents and established an "all-encompassing strategic partnership" across sectors such as agriculture, trade, and military cooperation, as well as memorandums to boost environmental protection and fight drug trafficking. The key agreements signed include an MOU on the construction of the sixth power unit of Atucha nuclear power plant and construction of the Chihuido-1 hydroelectric power plant on the Neuquen River in a project worth US\$ 2 billion. Meanwhile, Gazprom signed a memorandum of cooperation with Argentinean energy company YPF to explore the Vaca Muerta oil and gas fields in southern Argentina in a project worth US\$ 1 billion. The hydrocarbon fields are estimated to be one of the largest shale reserves in the Western hemisphere and have the potential to double Argentina's energy output within 10 years. President Putin assured Argentina of Russia's support in its territorial dispute with Great Britain over the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands. The Russian President urged for the work on a GLONASS station in Argentina to be sped up. Russia will also supply 40 trolleybuses to Argentina in June.⁵⁷

Russia's Tuymaada-Oil and China's company Qin Hua An Tszyu plan to build an oil refinery with a capacity of 2 million tonnes per year. The refinery will be located in Aldan region of Yakutia and is projected to cost US\$ 2 billion.⁵⁸

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has said, in Moscow on April 24, that 'Cuba remains a reliable friend of Moscow' and Russia is keen to develop cooperation in military and technical

⁵⁴ "Russia, Pakistan To Take Joint Efforts To Counter Afghan Drug Threat — Ivanov", *Itar-Tass*, April 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/790606>

⁵⁵ "Russia Sends 90 Rescuers To Quake-Hit Nepal", *Itar-Tass*, April 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/791878>

⁵⁶ "Russia, China To Set Up Joint Venture Capital Fund Of \$ 200 Million", *Itar-Tass*, April 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790652>

⁵⁷ "Russia and Argentina Seal Energy Package, \$3bn In Deals", *RT*, April 23, 2015 at <http://rt.com/business/252477-russia-argentina-energy-deals/>

⁵⁸ "Chinese Company To Build \$2 Bln Oil Refinery in Russia's Far East", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/791507>

spheres. He added that Russia will continue to supply 'modern weapons and military hardware' to Havana.⁵⁹

Russian President Vladimir Putin has called on his French counterpart Francois Hollande to take steps to improve relations between the two countries. He added that 'relations between Russia and France are not at their best, with trade going down, which is regrettable. Steps must be taken to improve bilateral relations'. He called upon Hollande to discuss the implementation of the Minsk agreements on Ukrainian settlement. Putin also stressed on the potential of Russia-France cooperation to 'resolve the problems of Syria, Iran and Libya'.⁶⁰

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has said, on April 23, that Russia will call for lifting arms embargo against Iran at the upcoming talks in Vienna. He was quoted as saying 'if any partners at talks pose a question on the possibility of returning to sanctions against Iran in a hypothetic situation of its failure to fulfil its commitments, then there should be no automatism in this process. The decision on this should be taken in accordance with the procedures of the UN Security Council, through the voting in the Security Council and by adopting a respective resolution'.⁶¹

Special forces from Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan) have held a 4 day joint military exercises, starting April 22, in Kyrgyzstan's Shamsi Gorge area. The drills were aimed to 'practice fighting illegal armed groups and terrorists in open spaces and inside buildings, and securing the release of hostages'.⁶²

Russia has conducted military anti-landing drills in the disputed Kuril Islands on April 23. Moscow and Tokyo have been involved in a decades-old dispute over islands north of Hokkaido, known as the Kuril Islands in Russia and referred to as the Northern Territories in Japan. President Vladimir Putin had earlier said that he was ready to discuss the issue but blamed Japan for a lack of dialogue.⁶³

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said, on April 24, that developing relations with Latin America was not a new trend but rather the result of old and traditionally broad ties with that geographic region. The new emphasis is on establishing cooperation structures between Eurasian Economic Union and trade organisations of Latin America.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "Russia To Carry On With Modern Weapons Supplies to Cuba — Defence Minister Shoigu", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/791558>

⁶⁰ "Putin Calls On Hollande To Look For Ways To Improve Bilateral Relations", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/791596>

⁶¹ "Moscow will Insist On Lifting Arms Embargo Against Iran — Russian Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, April 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/791293>

⁶² "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Holds Military Drills In Kyrgyzstan", *Radio Free Europe*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/shanghai-cooperation-organization-drills-ijn-tokmok-kyrgyzstan/26971878.html>

⁶³ "Russia Conducts Military Drills on Disputed Kuril Islands", *The Moscow Times*, April 23, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/519628.html>

⁶⁴ "Latin America among Russia's Foreign Policy 'Priority Regions' — Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, April 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/791577>

South Korean newspaper *Joongang Ilbo* has reported, on April 20, that Russia may start natural gas deliveries from Sakhalin to North Korea, using the Khasan-Najin railway, in the immediate future. The deal is likely to be signed during North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's visit to Moscow on May 9. The gas pipeline project got off the ground after President Putin signed a law in May 2014 on ratifying an agreement to write off about US\$ 10 billion or 90 per cent of North Korea's Soviet-era debt.⁶⁵

Gazprom's Chief Executive Officer Alexei Miller has said, on April 21, that Greece is assured of 47 billion cubic meters of natural gas transit through its territory if it participates in the Turkish Stream project. He added that the transit volume will help Athens to raise commercial loans for implementation of other projects. Russia plans to build the Turkish Stream as an alternative to the now abandoned South Stream project. In December 2014, Gazprom and Turkey's Botas had signed a memorandum of understanding for constructing an offshore gas pipeline across the Black Sea towards Turkey. The pipeline capacity will be 63 billion cubic meters. Of this volume about 50 billion cubic meters will be delivered to the new gas hub on the Greek-Turkish border. Gazprom's subsidiary Gazprom Russkaya is in charge for the pipeline's construction.⁶⁶

India-Russia Relations

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **India and Russia to discuss investment fund for high-technology and defence products.**

Russia and India are discussing the setting up a joint investment fund for high-tech products, defence equipment and other areas of mutual interest. The corpus of the proposed fund is likely to be around US\$ 2 billion, but a final decision is yet to be taken. It will be a 50:50 joint venture between the two countries. Interestingly, India's investment in Russia, at US\$ 7 billion is more than double Russia's investments of about US\$ 3 billion in India.⁶⁷

E. The United States of America

National

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Freddie Gray in Baltimore: another city, another death in the public eye; Baltimore officers suspended over death of Freddie Gray are identified; Special ops forces weakening terrorist**

⁶⁵ "Russia May Start Sakhalin Gas Deliveries To North Korea — Media", *Itar-Tass*, April 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790428>

⁶⁶ "Gazprom: Participation In Turkish Stream Will Guarantee Greece 47 Bcm Of Gas Transit", *Itar-Tass*, April 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/790837>

⁶⁷ "India, Russia To Discuss Investment Fund For High-Tech Items, Defence", *The Hindu Business Line*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-russia-to-discuss-investment-fund-for-hightech-items-defence/article7123045.ece>

groups, DoD official says; Service acquisitions chiefs testify on reform; Ash Carter seeks tech-sector partnerships for innovation; DoD officials discuss science, technology budget; Carter visits Silicon Valley companies to enhance DoD technology innovation.

In life, friends say, Freddie Gray was an easygoing, slender young man who liked girls and partying in Baltimore, Sandtown, a section of west Baltimore pocked by boarded-up rowhouses and known to the police for drug dealing and crime. In death, Mr. Gray, a 25 year-old black man, has become the latest symbol in the running national debate over police treatment of black men – all the more searing, people here say, in a city where the mayor and police commissioner are black. Questions are swirling around just what happened to Mr. Gray, who died a week after he was chased and restrained by police officers, and suffered a spine injury, which later killed him, in their custody. The police say they have no evidence that their officers used force. A lawyer for Mr. Gray's family accuses the department of a cover-up, and on April 21 the Justice Department opened a civil rights inquiry into his death.⁶⁸

The Baltimore Police Department on April 21 identified the six officers who have been suspended in the death of Freddie Gray. Lt. Brian Rice was the senior officer involved, and officials have said it was a lieutenant on the scene, part of a team of officers patrolling on bicycles, who made eye contact with two men – one of them Mr. Gray – before they fled on foot, prompting the officers to pursue them. Lieutenant Rice, 41, is an 18-year veteran of the department. Officer Garrett Miller filled out the "statement of charges" for arresting Mr. Gray, accusing him of carrying a switchblade knife, clipped to the inside of his pants pocket. Officer Miller, 26, a member of the department since 2012, wrote, "The defendant was arrested without force or incident." The others suspended are Sgt. Alicia White, 30, who joined the department in 2010; Officer William Porter, 25, who joined in 2012; Officer Edward Nero, 29, who joined in 2012; and Officer Caesar Goodson, 45, who joined in 1999.⁶⁹

U.S. special operations forces are successfully taking direct action against multiple global terrorist organizations while building U.S. partner capacity, Michael D. Lumpkin, assistant secretary of defence for special operations and low-intensity conflict, told a Senate panel on April 21. Lumpkin addressed DoD's policy and programmes to counter threats to the nation from terrorism and irregular warfare during a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on emerging threats and capabilities. Special operations forces provide "a small but vital component of our comprehensive approach to counterterrorism," Lumpkin said, taking steps to understand and address multiple global threats including terrorist networks, a flow of foreign fighters, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and activities undertaken or sponsored by other states. Deployed around the world, special operations forces work closely with U.S. allies and

⁶⁸ Stolberg, Sheryl Gay and Nixon, Ron, "Freddie Gray in Baltimore: Another City, Another Death in the Public Eye", *The New York Times*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/us/another-mans-death-another-round-of-questions-for-the-police-in-baltimore.html>

⁶⁹ Pérez-Peña, Richard, "Baltimore Officers Suspended Over Death of Freddie Gray Are Identified", *The New York Times*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/22/us/baltimore-police-officers-suspended-in-freddie-gray-inquiry-are-identified.html>

partners to leverage the nation's respective strengths and capabilities against common threats, he added.⁷⁰

Top acquisition officials from the Army, Navy and Air Force testified before Congress on April 22 on their collective efforts to make the defence acquisition process more effective and responsive to national security needs. Heidi Shyu, assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology; Sean J. Stackley, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition; and William A. LaPlante, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition all appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on readiness and management support. Shyu contrasted her experiences in industry and government and urged Congress to empower programme managers with the authorities necessary to be more agile in guiding programmes to successful completion.⁷¹

On April 23, Defence Secretary Ash Carter announced new partnership initiatives on the first day of a two-day visit to California's Silicon Valley to learn from experts who run some of the highest-tech companies in one of the nation's innovation hotspots. At Stanford University, where he recently served as a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a lecturer at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Carter delivered the annual Drell Lecture, titled "Rewiring the Pentagon: Charting a New Path on Innovation and Cybersecurity." When Carter became defence secretary, he told the audience, one of his top commitments was to the future — to stay ahead of a changing world, to remain competitive, to attract new generations to the mission of serving the country, and to stay abreast of technology. To begin leveraging commercially driven technology, he said, the Defence Department wants "to partner with businesses on everything from autonomy to robotics to biomedical engineering and 3-D printing; power, energy, propulsion to distributed systems, data science [and] the Internet of things."⁷²

Meanwhile, the Defence Department has maintained a steady \$12 billion investment in science and technology and is using new initiatives to boost innovation and military superiority. On April 22, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, told before the Senate Appropriations defence subcommittee on the DoD budget request for fiscal year 2016. Joining him were Alan Shaffer, acting assistant secretary of defence for development, research and engineering, and Steven Walker, deputy director of the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, or the department's science and technology budget request for fiscal year 2016 is \$12.2 billion, Kendall said. "Over the last several years we have maintained, despite all the budget fluctuations, a fairly steady investment in terms of technology," he said.⁷³

Defence Secretary Ash Carter on April 24 wrapped up a two-day trip to California's Silicon Valley, where he focused on renewing the longstanding relationship between the Defence Department

⁷⁰ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Special Ops Forces Weakening Terrorist Groups, DoD Official Says", *DoD News*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128635>

⁷¹ Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Service Acquisitions Chiefs Testify on Reform", *DoD News*, April 23, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128647>

⁷² Pellerin, Cheryl, "Carter Seeks Tech-sector Partnerships for Innovation", *DoD News*, April 23, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128655>

⁷³ Pellerin, Cheryl, "DoD Officials Discuss Science, Technology Budget", *DoD News*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128665>

and the wellspring of technology innovation found in that part of the nation. “Across the board ... there’s a lot going on out there,” he said, “in energy, in social media and talent management and lots of fields that matter across our technology base.” Carter met with senior executives at *Facebook* to discuss the potential for social media to connect commanders, troops and family members not only during deployments, but to also create “communities of interest.”⁷⁴

International: Asia

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **DoD sends aircraft to support disaster-assistance operations in Nepal; Pakistan: two deaths show US drone risks; Inside the coalition to defeat ISIL; ISIL takes defensive posture in Iraq, Centcom says; Military exercises begin in Ukraine, Philippines; US Envoy: Iran nuclear talks prove US willing to engage N. Korea; U.S. warships help ensure maritime security in Arabian Sea; US sees tensions lessen over Iranian ships near Yemen; Carter, UAE Crown Prince discuss bilateral defence relationship; Abe’s US visit to focus on controversial statements; Japan, US voice optimism over TPP trade talks; Work praises U.S., Australia, New Zealand partnership.**

The United States has sent an Air Force aircraft to Nepal to deliver personnel and cargo in support of disaster-relief operations, according to Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren. A magnitude-7.8 earthquake hit the country on April 25, reportedly leaving more than 4,200 dead and more than 7,000 injured. Thousands of people are currently reported to be without food, water or shelter. The initial estimated cost for the U.S. Defence Department’s support is approximately \$700,000, and there are currently no additional requests for DoD support, officials said on background. At the time of the earthquake, there were 26 DoD personnel and one U.S. C-130 in Nepal to conduct a previously scheduled training exercise. All DoD personnel in Nepal are accounted for, officials said.⁷⁵

Pakistan has expressed “shock and sorrow” after it emerged that a U.S. counterterrorism operation accidentally killed two male hostages — an American aid worker and an Italian — held by al-Qaida on the Afghan-Pakistan border. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its “heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families,” and said the death of the two hostages “in a drone strike demonstrates the risk and unintended consequences of the use of this technology that Pakistan has been highlighting for a long time.” A U.S. official told VOA on April 23 the hostages — American Warren Weinstein and Italian Giovanni Lo Porto — were killed during airstrikes by unmanned drone aircraft on January 14. President Barack Obama personally apologized for the incident. “As president and commander-in-chief I take full responsibility for all our counterterrorism operations, including the ones that inadvertently took the lives of Warren and Giovanni,” Obama said at the White House. “I profoundly regret what happened.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Roulo, Claudette, “Carter Visits Silicon Valley Companies to Enhance DoD Technology Innovation”, *DoD News*, April 25, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128671>

⁷⁵ “DoD Sends Aircraft to Support Disaster-Assistance Operations in Nepal”, *DoD News*, April 26, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128673>

⁷⁶ “Pakistan: Two Deaths Show US Drone Risks”, *VOA News*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pakistan-shock-and-sorrow-at-death-of-hostages/2732781.html>

Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) – Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) is the U.S.-led coalition's response to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group, often referred to as Daesh. Formed in October 2014 to counter ISIL's sweeping takeover of territory in Iraq and Syria last summer, the task force brings to bear more than 60 countries in the fight against ISIL. The most visible action taken has been in the form of airstrikes. CJTF-OIR has relied on its coalition air superiority, launching more than 3,200 airstrikes against ISIL targets in both Iraq and Syria since operations began in August 2014. The coalition's other main effort is training the Iraqi security forces through a programme called Building Partner Capacity. The coalition has nearly a thousand military trainers and advisers in Iraq at five separate sites, where they train Iraqi and Kurdish security forces through four- to six-week periods of instruction to prepare them for anti-ISIL operations.⁷⁷

U.S. Central Command officials believe the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group is on the defensive in Iraq, Centcom spokesman Air Force Col. Patrick Ryder told reporters in Washington on April 24. In the second operational teleconference update on Operation Inherent Resolve in a week, Ryder said ISIL is no longer seizing large swaths of Iraq territory. "While initial reports may sometimes give the impression [ISIL is on the offensive], we see no evidence that they're able to do so," he said. Ryder said ISIL likely will conduct "limited scope attacks" to disrupt Iraqi security forces and hold onto territory, where possible, for propaganda purposes.⁷⁸

On April 20, Military training exercises began in Ukraine for Fearless Guardian, and in the Philippines for the 31st iteration of Exercise Balikatan. During a briefing with Pentagon reporters, Army Col. Steve Warren said that about 300 Sky Soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Vicenza, Italy, will train members of the Ukraine National Guard at the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre in Yavoriv near the Polish border. The United States has trained at the same centre for years with other allies and partners, he added. "This latest training, which is as valuable in peacetime as it is in times of conflict, is to establish a professional force that protects and defends Ukraine's people [and] the country's sovereignty," Warren said. Also in the Philippines, U.S. and Philippine forces began the 31st iteration of Exercise Balikatan, Warren said. The annual bilateral training exercise and humanitarian assistance engagement seeks to improve the readiness of participating U.S. and Philippine forces. "It is a signature element of our alliance," Warren said. Balikatan takes place in the Philippines starting today to April 30, and about 6,000 U.S. personnel will participate this year, he said, noting that 4,100 of the forces will be U.S. Marines. The exercise trains Philippine and U.S. military forces to provide relief and assistance in the event of natural disasters and other crises that endanger public health and safety.⁷⁹

The U.S. envoy to the moribund six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear programme said progress in negotiations with Iran clearly demonstrates a U.S. willingness to negotiate a resolution of the

⁷⁷ Dominique, Bryan, "Inside the Coalition to Defeat ISIL", *DoD News*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128630>

⁷⁸ Cronk, Terri Moon, "ISIL Takes Defensive Posture in Iraq, Centcom Says", *DoD News*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128669>

⁷⁹ Pellerin, Cheryl, "Military Exercises Begin in Ukraine, Philippines", *DoD News*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128624>

nuclear standoff with Pyongyang (DPRK). Speaking on April 21 at the Washington D.C.-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), U.S. envoy Sydney Seiler said the North Korean leadership faces two choices: the path to denuclearization and prosperity or its current approach of ignoring its international obligations and deepening isolation. He said Washington has left the door of negotiation open to Pyongyang six years after the North Koreans walked out of the talks with the United States, Japan, South Korea, Russia and China in 2009.⁸⁰

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt and the guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy are now operating in the Arabian Sea in response to the deteriorating security situation in Yemen, Defence Department spokesman Steve Warren said on April 21. Briefing the Pentagon press corps, Army Col. Warren said the U.S. warships “are operating [in the Arabian Sea] with a very clear mission to ensure that shipping lanes remain open, to ensure there’s freedom of navigation through those critical waterways, and to help ensure maritime security.” On April 19, the Roosevelt, escorted by the Normandy, transited the Strait of Hormuz from its station in the Arabian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, according to a recent release from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs. The Roosevelt and the Normandy have joined other U.S. forces conducting maritime security operations in the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Southern Red Sea, the release said. The Defence Department also is watching a convoy of nine Iranian cargo ships now in international waters in the Gulf of Aden, Warren said. According to news reports, the ships may be trying to deliver arms to support the Houthi rebels in Yemen.⁸¹

An Iranian naval convoy suspected of possibly trying to deliver weapons to Yemen’s Houthi rebels appears to be on its way back to Iran, avoiding a potential face-off with the United States. Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steve Warren said on April 24 the nine-ship convoy had left the Gulf of Aden and was now sailing in international waters off the coast of Oman, possibly on course to head back to Iran. “It’s fair to say that this appears to be a de-escalation of some of the tensions that were being discussed earlier in the week,” Warren said. The U.S. has been closely watching the Iranian flotilla since it left the Persian Gulf last week. Officials raised concerns the convoy’s seven cargo ships could contain weapons or other supplies for Houthi rebels, citing Iran’s history of supplying them with armaments in the past, a charge Iran denies.⁸²

Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates discussed the U.S.-UAE bilateral defence relationship and other issues during a meeting in Washington on April 20, according to a Defence Department statement. Carter emphasized the importance of the U.S.-UAE strategic partnership and reiterated both countries’ shared commitment to ensuring a stable and secure Middle East, the statement said. The secretary also lauded bilateral security cooperation between the two countries and commended the UAE’s

⁸⁰ Beattie, Victor, “US Envoy: Iran Nuclear Talks Prove US Willing to Engage N. Korea”, *VOA News*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-envoy-iran-nuclear-talks-prove-us-willingness-to-engage-north-korea/2729801.html>

⁸¹ Pellerin, Cheryl, “U.S. Warships Help Ensure Maritime Security in Arabian Sea”, *DoD News*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128634>

⁸² Seldin, Jeff, “US Sees Tensions Lessen Over Iranian Ships Near Yemen”, *VOA News*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-sees-tensions-lessen-over-iranian-ships-near-yemen/2733414.html>

efforts to work with the United States to expand regional military collaboration, according to the statement.⁸³

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will make a high-profile visit to the United States this week amid renewed scrutiny of his position on the aggressive policies Japan pursued when it was a colonial power in Asia, in the years leading up to World War Two. Abe will meet with President Barack Obama at the White House, and he will address a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress, becoming the first Japanese government chief ever accorded such a privilege. The prime minister is expected to showcase Japan's strong alliance with the United States and to note the approaching 70th anniversary of the end of the war.⁸⁴

Japan's top trade negotiator sounded an optimistic note on April 21 that he could reach a deal with the United States that is essential to creating a free trade pact covering 12 countries. A senior U.S. State Department official also said on April 20 that a deal is within "grabbing distance" as the world's largest and third-largest economies race to conclude bilateral negotiations that cover trade in car parts and farm products. Japan and the United States have been locked in negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a U.S. proposal that would connect a dozen economies by cutting trade barriers and harmonizing standards covering two-fifths of the world economy and a third of global trade. A deal between Japan and the United States is considered vital to a long-delayed TPP trade pact, as their economies would account for 80 percent of the group.⁸⁵

Thousands of miles from home, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps fought for something larger than themselves: their national identity and ensuring the world was safer and better, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work said on April 22 during a ribbon-cutting ceremony of the enhanced exhibit in the Australia, New Zealand and United States Corridor at the Pentagon. The exhibit in the ANZUS Corridor marks the 100th-year anniversary, coming up April 25, of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Day -- also known as ANZAC Day -- when troops from both countries landed at Gallipoli in Turkey's Dardanelles strait and met with fierce Ottoman Turkish defenders. Quoting the words of Australian Ambassador Kim Beazley, who opened the ceremony, "Although [Gallipoli] was a failure in the operational sense, it is a story of just incredible bravery, courage and sacrifice," the deputy defence secretary said. Despite the difficult odds the Australians and New Zealanders faced on the beach and in that area, Work added, they fought bravely for many months and endured hardships almost impossible to imagine.⁸⁶

⁸³ "Carter, UAE Crown Prince Discuss Bilateral Defence Relationship", *DoD News*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128628>

⁸⁴ Lee, Jee Abbey, "Abe's US Visit to Focus on Controversial Statements", *VOA News*, April 26, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/abes-us-visit-to-focus-on-controversial-statements/2735012.html>

⁸⁵ "Japan, US Voice Optimism Over TPP Trade Talks", *Reuters*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/japan-us-voice-optimism-over-tpp-trade-talks/2728259.html>

⁸⁶ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Work Praises U.S., Australia, New Zealand Partnership", *DoD News*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128645>

India-US Relations

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **US envoy differs with PM's observation on climate change; India needs to address climate change: US environment expert; United States should boost Indian Navy's combat power: US think tank; India restricts Ford foundation's funding activities; Lakhvi's release is detrimental to regional security.**

Contrary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent observation that India was under "no pressure" for climate commitments, US envoy Richard Verma said on April 20 that India is being "closely watched" for its contribution to climate change. Ambassador Verma said the country was being "closely watched" for its intended contribution towards the global response to climate change. In January, at a bilateral engagement with US President Barack Obama during his state visit to India, Modi had said that India was under "no pressure" to announce a peak year for cutting its own emission like the US and China. India is the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Speaking at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) event in New Delhi Verma, however, noted that "India's size, economic growth projections and already significant greenhouse gas emissions means there is tremendous interest around the world" on its proposed contribution to mitigating climate change.⁸⁷

Pressure is mounting on India to address climate change. Every country, including India, needs to take some level of responsibility to address it and act accordingly at the UN-sponsored climate change meet in Paris this December, said David W Cash, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, during a recent India visit. Cash, who is an environment expert based in the US, has been meeting India's premier institutional heads and policy makers in the Centre as well as States. Subsequent to the visit of US President Barack Obama and his discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on clean energy, climate change deliberations between American and Indian policy makers have gathered momentum. "I think developed and developing countries can now collaborate to solve environmental problems and seize the big economic opportunity present in switching over to cleaner technology," he told *Business Line*.⁸⁸

With the US and India agreeing to explore the joint development of India's next-generation aircraft carrier, a leading think tank has suggested US offer India latest technology to help increase Indian Navy's combat power. "While the Indian Navy has already begun design work, wide-ranging cooperation with the United States has enormous potential," Ashley J. Tellis, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace suggested. "Such collaboration would increase

⁸⁷ "US Envoy Differs With PM's Observation, Says India Being 'Closely Watched' For Contribution To Climate Change", *The First Post*, Apr 20, 2015 at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/us-envoy-differs-pms-observation-says-india-closely-watched-contribution-climate-change-2204274.html>

⁸⁸ "India Needs To Address Climate Change: US Environment Expert", *The Hindu Business Lines*, April 22, 2015 at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-needs-to-address-climate-change-us-environment-expert/article7130886.ece>

the Indian Navy's combat power and would resonate throughout the Asian continent to India's strategic advantage," he wrote in his recently published report, "Making Waves: Aiding India's Next-Generation Aircraft Carrier". "The most valuable US contributions are likely to materialise in the fight, possibly in the move, and hopefully in the integrate functions," Tellis wrote. Specifically, he suggested that the US explore the possibility of equipping India's carrier with the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS).⁸⁹

India says the Ford Foundation, one of the largest U.S. philanthropies, cannot give money to Indian organizations without approval from the Indian government. The Home Ministry placed the charity on a "watch list" to verify funds are used for "bona fide welfare activities without compromising on concerns of national interest and security." The measure was taken following a complaint from India's western Gujarat state government that the foundation was funding Sabrang Trust, a local non-governmental organization run by Teesta Setalvad, a critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gujarat said the foundation's funding of the NGO was "interfering in the internal affairs" of India and was also "abetting communal disharmony." Setalvad has been critical of Modi's handling of religious riots in his home state of Gujarat.⁹⁰

Pakistan's release of the suspected mastermind behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks has the potential of throwing off the dynamic the US has with both New Delhi and Islamabad, according to a national security expert. The Lahore High Court's approval of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) leader Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi's release from prison "thoroughly tanked any near-term prospects for improved relations between the two countries," Whitney Kassel wrote in *Foreign Policy* magazine. "The court's decision has left Indian leaders fuming and has drawn criticism from the US government," noted Kassel, a director focused on strategic analysis and risk management at The Arkin Group, a private intelligence firm in New York City. "A deterioration in Pakistan's relations with either nation will be detrimental to regional and global security and, in the case of bilateral India-Pakistan ties, the ultimate stability of both countries," she wrote. Having recently approved a \$952 million sale of helicopters and missiles to Pakistan, the US clearly remains invested in its counterterrorism partnership with Pakistan, she wrote. But "with the release of Lakhvi, however, critics in both India and the United States are already calling for greater oversight and perhaps even a suspension of US military aid to Pakistan," she noted. However, "It is unlikely that Lakhvi's release will be enough to shut down the pipeline of US military assistance, given the importance of that bilateral relationship," Kassel wrote.⁹¹

⁸⁹ "United States Should Boost Indian Navy's Combat Power: US Think Tank", *IANs*, April 24, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-24/news/61493775_1_indian-navy-indian-ocean-combat-power

⁹⁰ "India Restricts Ford Foundation's Funding Activities", *VOA News*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-restricts-for-foundation-funding-activities/2732783.html>

⁹¹ "'Lakhvi's Release Is Detrimental To Regional Security'", *IANs*, Washington, April 25, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/lakhvi-s-release-is-detrimental-to-regional-security-115042500145_1.html; Jha, Lalit K., "Lakhvi's Release Justifies India's Stand On Pak Terror Role", *PTI*, April 25, 2015 at http://www.ptinews.com/news/5959440_Lakhvi-s-release-justifies-India-s-stand-on-Pak-terror-role

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **India delivers three Cheetal Helicopters to Afghanistan; Defence personnel from 65 friendly foreign countries have attended training in India during last 3 years.**

Minister of State for Defence Rao Inderjit Singh informed the Lok Sabha on April 24 that the government of India has delivered three Cheetal Helicopters with allied equipment and spares to the government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan based on the agreement with the Ministry of External Affairs. The helicopters were dispatched to Afghanistan on April 9, 2015. These helicopters have been test flown and accepted by Afghanistan pilots on 15th April, 2015.⁹²

Training exchanges are conducted between Indian Armed Forces personnel and various foreign countries. Defence Personnel from 65 friendly foreign countries have attended training in India during last 3 years. The details of training imparted to defence personnel of foreign countries during the last three years are as follows:

| Training Year (July 1 to June 30) | No. of Trainees |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2012-13 | 3711 |
| 2013-14 | 3897 |
| 2014-15* | 4871 |

*Projected figure till June 30, 2015.⁹³

International

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Militia alliance that controls Libya's capital carries out air strikes against Islamic State jihadist group; Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov orders his troops to shoot to kill any unauthorized Russian forces on the Chechen territory.**

Reports say that a militia alliance that controls Libya's capital has carried out air strikes against positions of the Islamic State jihadist group in the coastal city of Sirte. A Fajr Libya warplane launched several raids against sites where there were members of the Libyan branch of the Islamic State. Fajr Libya is a coalition of militias, including Islamists, which controls Tripoli, where it has

⁹² "Delivery of Helicopters by HAL," *PIB*, April 24, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118643>

⁹³ "Training of Defence Personnel," *PIB*, April 24, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118639>

installed a government and a parliament opposed to the internationally recognized legislature and cabinet. The internationally recognized government fled to the far east of the country after Fajr Libya seized the capital in August. The turmoil has allowed IS to gain a foothold in the oil-rich North African state.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, according to reports, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has ordered his troops to “shoot to kill” if they encountered any unauthorized Russian forces on the territory of republic in the volatile North Caucasus region. Russia’s interior ministry called the remarks unacceptable. Kadyrov, 38, has ruled Chechnya with an iron fist since being installed by Putin in 2007, and has helped the Kremlin battle an Islamist insurgency in the North Caucasus. But the former rebel in recent months has turned hostile to Putin’s authority, who has opposed Kadyrov’s radical exhortations.⁹⁵

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **JKLF’s hunger strike ends; Centre plans second rung of defence along IB in Jammu; Separatist leaders share dais after seven years; J&K government books Masarat Alam under PSA.**

30 hour long token hunger strike of the JKLF and a one day seminar on the proposed separate colonies for pandits ended on April 19 and a unanimous resolution was passed at the end of a one day seminar which was presided over by JKLF chairman, Mohammad Yasin Malik. It was also resolved by virtue of a resolution that the settlement of KPs in separate colonies and ghettos in Kashmir is unacceptable to all Kashmiri Muslims, pandits, Sikhs and Christians as it will create walls of hatred among the communities.⁹⁶

The Centre is planning to create a second ring of defence along 202-kilometres International Border (IB) in the Jammu region as many militants have managed to successfully infiltrate through Samba, officials said. The second tier of defence will have personnel drawn from para-military forces as well as from the state police and it will provide back up for the BSF which has not been able to plug gaps along the international border especially the Samba area, the sources said.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ “Libya Militia ‘Launches Air Raids’ Against IS,” *Defence News*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/04/24/libya-militia-launches-air-raids-against-is/26301331/>

⁹⁵ “Chechnya Leader Gives ‘Shoot to Kill’ Orders on Russian Forces,” *Defence News*, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/04/24/chechnya-leader-gives-shoot-to-kill-orders-on-russian-forces/26299661/>

⁹⁶ “30 Hour Long JKLF Token Hunger Strike Ends”, *Rising Kashmir*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.risingkashmir.com/30-hour-long-jklf-token-hunger-strike-ends/>

⁹⁷ “Centre Mulls ‘Improved Defence’ Along Int’l Border”, *Greater Kashmir*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2015/Apr/20/centre-mulls-improved-defence-along-int-l-border-37.asp>

For the first time since the separatist leadership fell out during the 2008 summer uprising, Kashmir's top separatist leaders on April 20 jointly addressed thousands of people in the Narbal area in Budgam district where a 15-year-old boy was killed in police firing on April 18. Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Hurriyat (M) chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and JKLF chairman Yasin Malik addressed the gathering and offered condolences to the family of slain Sohail Ahmad Sofi.⁹⁸

A day after the defence tore apart the prosecution and making the bail of separatist leader Masarat Alam imminent, the Jammu and Kashmir government has slapped a new Public Safety Act (PSA) case against him and shifted him to Jammu jail. Sources say Masarat was shifted to Jammu's Kotbalwal jail during the night. This is 26th case under the Public Safety Act against Masarat since 1990. Masarat was released in March after spending four and a half years in jail under six cases under the act.⁹⁹

Northeast India

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Mizoram govt rules out talks with HPC (D); NPF rebel factions resolve to end rift; Rs 5, 338 crore for railway projects in NE; NIA to probe ambush of 3 army men by NSCN militants.**

Mizoram Home Minister R Lalzirliana on April 19 said the State Government does not have any intention to hold talks with the Manipur-based Hmar People's Convention (Democrats) as the outfit could not be trusted. The personnel of the elite force of the State Armed Police are launching a major operation to arrest those involved in the March 28 ambush on a team of 'Assembly Committee on Government Assurances' in Zokhawthiang hamlet near Mizoram-Manipur-Assam border that left three policemen dead, said Lalzirliana. Three HPC (D) militants including Lalropuia Famhoite, self-styled army chief of the outfit, were arrested from Ramnagar of Silchar in Assam's Cachar district. One of the other two arrested persons was Norbar Sanate, Finance Secretary of the HPC (D).¹⁰⁰

After more than three months of open dissidence for change of leadership, Noke Wangnao and G Kaito Aye-led Naga People's Front (NPF) has expressed willingness for reconciliation with Shürhozelie-led NPF. The offer has been accepted and agreed upon by the latter. In a joint statement, Noke and Kaito said their party in its CEC meeting held on March 31 last; in a resolution

⁹⁸ Rafiq, Zahid, "J&K Separatist Leaders Share Dais After Seven Years", *The Hindu*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jk-separatist-leaders-share-dais-after-seven-years/article7123952.ece>

⁹⁹ Masood, Bashaarat, "J&K Books Masarat Alam Under PSA, Sends Him To Jammu Jail", *The Indian Express*, April 24, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/jk-books-masarat-alam-under-psa-sends-him-to-jammu-jail/>

¹⁰⁰ "Mizoram Govt Not To Hold Talks With HPC (D)", *The Assam Tribune*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr2015/oth055>

welcomed the appeal of the NGOs, mass-based organisations, Hohos and concerned citizens for the NPF to reconcile and work together in the greater interest of the State.¹⁰¹

Faced with criticism over a long list of pending projects in the North-east, the Centre on April 20 clarified that the Railway Ministry has provided the highest-ever outlay of Rs 5,338 crore for projects in the region. Asserting that the Indian Railways have laid special emphasis on improvement of railway infrastructure in the north-eastern region, Minister of State for Railways Manoj Sinha said in a Lok Sabha reply that an all-time high outlay of over Rs 5,200 crore was provided and spent for new lines, gauge conversion and doubling projects in the region in 2014-2015 as against an outlay of about Rs 15000 crore for all such projects in the country. As a result, more than 450 Km of Broad Gauge track has been commissioned in the NER, last fiscal.¹⁰²

The Union Home Ministry has decided to hand over the probe into the killings of three army personnel by suspected NSCN militants early this month to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). On April 2, the insurgents ambushed an army vehicle near Old Tupi village on the Khonsa-Longding road in Arunachal Pradesh and killed three Rajput Regiment jawans while four more were critically wounded.¹⁰³

Left-wing Extremism

(April 20-26, 2015)

- **Security forces arrest 8 Maoists in Bihar; 35 Maoists killed in Sukma attack in Chhattisgarh, claims surrendered Maoist; Naxal commander gunned down in police encounter; Maoists 'abduct and induct' to fill ranks.**

The security forces on April 20 arrested eight Maoists following an encounter with them in Bihar's naxal-infested Muzaffarpur district, a police officer said. Acting on a tip-off, the security forces comprising CRPF, STF and district police raided Suhasi village in search of scores of Maoists hiding there, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Brijesh Rana said. The Maoists, however, tried to escape by firing 40 rounds on the security forces who returned the fire in which an unidentified Maoist sustained injuries, he said. The security forces later arrested the injured Maoist and seven others, the ASP said, adding that two country-made rifles and two pressure cooker bombs were recovered from the spot.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ "Reconciliation Process Between NPF Factions", *The Assam Tribune*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr2015/oth057>

¹⁰² "Rs 5,338 cr for Railway Projects in NE", *The Assam Tribune*, April 21, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr2115/at050>

¹⁰³ Siddiqui, Imran Ahmed, "NIA To Probe Ambush", *The Telegraph*, April 25, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150425/jsp/northeast/story_16475.jsp#.VUMMP46qpHw

¹⁰⁴ "Security Forces Arrest 8 Maoists in Bihar, Crude Bombs Recovered", *The New Indian Express*, April 20, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Security-Forces-Arrest-8-Maoists-in-Bihar-Crude-Bombs-Recovered/2015/04/20/article2773981.ece>

A Maoist, who had surrendered soon after the April 11 gunbattle between Special Task Force and his group in Bastar, on April 21 claimed that 35 Maoists were killed and 15 injured in the retaliatory gun-battle. Janmilitia Commander of CPI (Maoist) Sori Rama alias Kanna Karigundam said in a statement to police that the dead Maoists included battalion deputy commander Situ and Konta area committee secretary Arjun. The duo was among the three seniors who planned the attack. Sori's job was to patrol between Pidmal and Dabbakonta camps along with seven other members. A day earlier, Maoists, through a press statement, condemned police's claim of killing more than 20 rebels. South Bastar divisional committee of the rebels had taken responsibility of the attack. "Police officers had to run for their lives for more than 10 km till Kankerlanka," the release stated.¹⁰⁵

A Naxalite commander was gunned down in an encounter between Maoists and police in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Kondagaon district. The gun-battle took place in the restive forests near Matwal village under Mardapal police station limits when a team of district police was carrying out a search operation in the wee hours on April 23, Kondagaon SP Abhishek Meena said. The deceased was identified as Dharmu Yadav (26), section commander of military company-6 of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). He was active in Narayanpur and Kondagaon districts.¹⁰⁶

In a desperate bid to arrest their shrinking cadre strength caused by a mass desertion of the ultras coupled with their failure to woo local adivasi youth, Maoists have adopted a new recruitment strategy by abducting the tribals engaged in collection of forest produces in Bastar jungles in Chhattisgarh and then inducting them into the outfit under coercion. This was disclosed by a local jan militia (people's army) commander Sori Rama, alias Kanna allegedly involved in the April 11 Naxal ambush on STF team, who has surrendered before the Bastar police a couple of weeks ago.¹⁰⁷

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

United Nations

(April 13-26, 2015)

- **UN appoints new envoy for Yemen as it proposes ceasefire; UN envoy hopes to revive Syria peace talks next month; Refugee crisis engulfs Anbar, Iraq; Casualties on the rise in Afghanistan; UN pushes for peace in Africa; UN suffers losses in Africa and Haiti; Climate**

¹⁰⁵ Drolia, Rashmi, "35 Maoists Killed, 15 Injured in April 11 Attack in Chhattisgarh: Surrendered Maoist Claims", *The Times of India*, April 21, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/35-Maoists-killed-15-injured-in-April-11-attack-in-Chhattisgarh-Surrendered-Maoist-claims/articleshow/47002084.cms>

¹⁰⁶ "Maoist Commander Gunned Down in Chhattisgarh", *The Times of India*, April 24, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Maoist-commander-gunned-down-in-Chhattisgarh/articleshow/47033165.cms>

¹⁰⁷ Choudhury, Rabindra Nath, "Maoists 'Abduct And Induct' To Fill Ranks", *The Asian Age*, April 24, 2015 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/maoists-abduct-and-induct-fill-ranks-981>

change initiatives gain momentum; UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice concludes in Doha; Christian groups rally for non-proliferation as Russia passes on missiles to Iran; ICAO's plan for aircraft safety in conflict zones; UNSG at the Annual Spring meetings of the WB and IMF; Events held, resolutions passed and reports released.

With civilian deaths mounting to 364, including 84 children and 25 women, the UNSC imposed an arms embargo against the rebels in Yemen. Russia abstained. Several important public buildings including hospitals have been damaged.¹⁰⁸ The UN peace envoy to Yemen since 2012, Jamal Benomar, resigned as the Gulf countries withdrew their concurrence for his continuation. He was criticised for being unable to see through the Houthi double-speak on use of violence even as they engaged in peace talks.¹⁰⁹ Iran submitted a four-point peace plan for Yemen to the UNSC on April 18.¹¹⁰ Despite calls for an immediate ceasefire by the Secretary General, the Al Qaeda continued to gain more ground in Yemen. Saudi Arabia said it would take on the \$274 billion required for relief and rehabilitation in Yemen, but will not halt the air raids.¹¹¹ While a Houthi leader refused to lay down arms, their supporter, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, said he would be happy to observe the ceasefire proposed by the UN.¹¹² Meanwhile, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed was appointed as the new Special Envoy for Yemen.¹¹³

The UN Security Council was apprised of a case of use of chlorine bombs in March in the Sarmin village in Syria. A video showed three children and their parents and grandparents who could not be resuscitated by the doctors. Russia said before any action is authorised, it needs to be verified who the perpetrators of the chemical attack were.¹¹⁴ Giving some indication of the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, it has been reported that an estimated 4,40,000 people are "besieged" in Syria's civil war. Of these, 167,500 have been trapped by government forces, 228,000 by Islamic State militants and the rest by other armed groups.¹¹⁵ The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, is hoping to revive talks between various parties to the Syrian

¹⁰⁸ "Security Council Imposes Arms Embargo On Yemen Rebels, Demands All Parties Resume UN-Backed Talks" April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50565#.VUC2E9Kqqko>

¹⁰⁹ "UN Peace Envoy To Yemen Resigns", *The Times of India*, April 16, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/UN-peace-envoy-to-Yemen-resigns/articleshow/46940077.cms>

¹¹⁰ "Iran Submits Four-Point Yemen Peace Plan to United Nations", *The Times of India*, April 18, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/middle-east/Iran-submits-four-point-Yemen-peace-plan-to-United-Nations/articleshow/46964550.cms>

¹¹¹ "Saudi Arabia Vows to Cover United Nation Aid Call for Yemen, Keeps Up Air Raids", April 18, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/saudi-vows-to-cover-united-nation-aid-call-for-yemen-keeps-up-air-raids-756115>

¹¹² "Yemen Shiite Rebel Leader Vows Not To Surrender Amid Strikes", April 19, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/un-says-saudis-commit-fund-aid-appeal-yemen-105207695.html>

¹¹³ "UN Chief Appoints New Yemen Special Envoy As Pressure Grows To Resume Peace Talks", April 25, 2015, at <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/04/25/un-chief-appoints-new-yemen-special-envoy-as-pressure-grows-to-resume-peace-talks.html>

¹¹⁴ "Syria Gas Attack Video Moves UN Security Council Envoys To Tears", *The India Today*, April 17, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/syria-chlorine-gas-attack-video-un-security-council/1/430640.html>

¹¹⁵ "UN Aid Chief Urges Syria Sanctions, Jolie Pleads For Refugee Help", April 25, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/un-aid-chief-urges-syria-sanctions-jolie-pleads-for-refugee-help_1584661.html

conflict.¹¹⁶ The UNICEF was able to deliver some humanitarian assistance in north-east Syria and UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is hoping to get access to the Yarmouk camp sheltering the Palestinians.¹¹⁷ It is currently being able to deliver assistance in Yalda to those displaced from the Yarmouk camp. The UNSC meanwhile called on the ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front who have occupied the Yarmouk camp to leave from there.¹¹⁸

With violence on the rise in the fight between the ISIL and Government forces in the Anbar province, approximately 90,000 people have been displaced and are moving towards Ramadi, Fallujah and Baghdad. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is attempting to coordinate relief efforts of various organisations like the WHO, UNHCR, WFP and the UNICEF, amidst shortage of funding for these efforts.¹¹⁹ Later estimates put the numbers displaced from Ramadi at 1,14,000 of whom 54,000 have moved to Baghdad, 15,000 to Sulaimaniyah in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, 2,100 to Babylon and around 900 to Diyala. 39,000 of those displaced remain in Anbar, as they are unable to move.¹²⁰

According to the latest figures released by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), civilian casualties in the first quarter of 2015 have been as high as in 2014, with 655 deaths and 1155 injuries and casualties due to suicide bombings.¹²¹ Nearly 35 people were killed in the attack, which is suspected to be handiwork of the IS, which thus far had no presence in Afghanistan.¹²² A UNAMA-UNHCR report based on interviews with women across 18 provinces of Afghanistan revealed that corruption in the judiciary prevents women from approaching courts to settle issues of violence against women. Most women prefer mediation.¹²³

UN has requested Kenya to reconsider its decision to close down the Dadaab refugee camp housing Somalians.¹²⁴ The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of

¹¹⁶ "U.N. Syria Envoy To Consult On New Political Talks: Diplomats", *Reuters*, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/13/us-mideast-crisis-syria-talks-idUSKBN0N41WK20150413>

¹¹⁷ "UN Delivers Much Needed Humanitarian Supplies To Vulnerable Groups in Syria", April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50577#.VUC-1NKqkko>

¹¹⁸ "Security Council 'Deeply Concerned' About Humanitarian Situation For Refugees In Yarmouk Camp", April 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50636#.VUDcXNKqkko>

¹¹⁹ "UN Humanitarian Agencies Mobilize Assistance Amid Renewed Fighting in Iraq", April 19, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50629#.VUDbwdKqkko>

¹²⁰ "Displaced Iraqis Face Mounting Difficulties As Fighting Continues Between Government Forces and ISIL", April 21, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50645#.VUDd5tKqkko>

¹²¹ "Afghanistan: UN Condemns 'Brutal' Suicide Attack In Jalalabad", April 18, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50623#.VUDFI9Kqkko>

¹²² "UN Officials, Analysts Question IS Action in Afghanistan", *VOA News*, April 18, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/un-officials-analysts-question-is-involvement-in-afghanistan/2725967.html>

¹²³ "U.N. Says Afghanistan's Court System Fails Women", April 19, 2015, at <http://www.latimes.com/world/afghanistan-pakistan/la-fg-un-afghanistan-women-courts-20150419-story.html>

¹²⁴ "U.N. Asks Kenya Not to Close Somali Refugee Camp in Wake of Garissa Killings", *The New York Times*, April 14, 2015 at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/15/world/africa/un-asks-kenya-not-to-close-somali-refugee-camp-in-wake-of-garissa-killings.html?_r=0

the Congo (MONUSCO) reiterated the need for cooperation between the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the UN forces in the aftermath of attacks on civilians by the Ugandan-based Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group.¹²⁵ Head of the MONUSCO, Martin Kobler also asserted that it was the duty of the mission to defend human rights and hence the mission is urging the President Joseph Kabila to allow space for opposition and human rights groups to mobilise ahead of next year's elections.¹²⁶

A joint report by UNICEF and UNESCO has highlighted that as a result of conflict in Middle East and North Africa, 12.3 million children have dropped out of school and another 6 million are on the verge of drop out.¹²⁷

The UNSC urged the warring parties in Libya to form a unity government or face sanctions.¹²⁸ A new round of political dialogue including all stakeholders in Libya, supported by the United Nations Support Mission (UNSMIL) and hosted by Morocco, convened again in April to discuss the Draft Agreement on Political Transition in Libya agreed to in March 2015. Bernardino León, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, urged all parties to be flexible and accommodative and agree to dialogue with the armed groups.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called for a scaling up of the EU response to protect lives at sea in the aftermath of the tragedy in which a boat carrying illegal migrants from Africa capsized in the Mediterranean Sea. He opined that "Operation Triton", which is more of a border patrol programme, is not suited to dealing with disasters of this nature.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, it is estimated that nearly 850 people have lost lives in the tragedy.¹³¹

The UNHCR has raised concerns over pre-election violence targeting sympathisers of political opponents has resulted in nearly 8000 Burundians fleeing the country and taking refuge in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Of them 7000 are in Rwanda and 60 per cent are children.¹³²

¹²⁵ "UN mission Condemns 'Murderous' Attack On Civilians In North-Eastern DR Congo Town", April 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50609#.VUDDitKqkko>

¹²⁶ "DR Congo Must Guarantee 'Space' For Opposition Ahead Of Vote: UN", April 19, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/dr-congo-must-guarantee-space-opposition-ahead-vote-203409478.html>

¹²⁷ "Resources Needed To Get 21 Million Children Into School In Middle East, North Africa - UNICEF", April 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50595#.VUC7JtKqkko>

¹²⁸ "U.N. Threatens Libya Sanctions, Urges Negotiations", April 14, 2015, at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/14/U-N-threatens-Libya-sanctions-urges-negotiations-.html>

¹²⁹ "Libyan Parties Open New Round of UN-Backed Political Talks Aimed At Restoring 'Stability And Prosperity'", April 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50597#.VUC7LdKqkko>

¹³⁰ "'Callous' EU Politics On Migrants Costing Lives, UN Rights Chief Warns", April 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50637#.VUDcLNKqkko>

¹³¹ "U.N. Estimates Up To 850 Migrants Perished In Capsized Boat Off Libya", April 21, 2015 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/un-says-between-800-and-850-migrants-died-in-boat-capsizing-off-libya/2015/04/21/a8383770-e803-11e4-9767-6276fc9b0ada_story.html

¹³² "Burundi: UN Refugee Agency Warns Surge In People Fleeing Pre-Election Violence", April 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50611#.VUDD5dKqkko>

The 19,000 UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) continues its work amidst continuing opposition from the Sudanese government. It denied visas to envoys from US, Britain and France who wished to travel to Darfur to investigate allegations of rape in the region.¹³³

UNICEF was successful in getting the release of a final batch of 283 children, including one girl from the Cobra Faction in Jonglei in South Sudan. This was agreed to in a peace agreement between the Government of South Sudan and the faction. 1757 children have been demilitarised so far.¹³⁴ On the anniversary of the kidnapping of 276 Nigerian girls, the UN brought out a report detailing the use of sexual abuse and rape as 'tactic' by the Boko Haram and the Islamic State as well as groups in 19 other countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and the Central African Republic, Syria and Iraq. 45 such groups are listed including the national police of South Sudan.¹³⁵ On April 19-20, the UN organised a regional consultation in Cameroon with experts from Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad, Nigeria, and Congo among others to discuss the situation in Central African Republic and the Boko Haram's attacks in the Far North Region of Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Niger.¹³⁶

Sahrawi President Mohamed Abdelaziz of the liberated territories of Sahrawi, called on the UN to protect the Sahrawi people from Moroccan oppression, since the MINURSO was mandated to oversee the referendum for self-determination of the Sahrawis in Western Sahara.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, the Polisario Front threatened to withdraw support to the UN mission if it failed renew that stalled talks with Morocco on the status of Western Sahara.¹³⁸

In Asongo, northern Mali, the UN barracks of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was attacked by a suicide bomber, killing three civilians and injuring 9 UN peacekeepers from Niger.¹³⁹ The Al-Qaeda linked Mohktar Belmokhtar's Al-Murabitoun group claimed responsibility for the attack, arguing that this was their revenge for Niger President

¹³³ "Sudan Won't Give Visas To U.S., British, French Envoys: Diplomats", April 22, 2015 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/22/us-sudan-darfur-un-idUSKBN0NC2NF20150422>

¹³⁴ "UNICEF Welcomes Final Release Of Child Soldiers By Armed Group in South Sudan", April 24, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50680#.VUGC4dKqqko>

¹³⁵ "Islamic State, Boko Haram Use Rape As Tactic Of War: UN", April 13, 2015, at <http://news.yahoo.com/islamic-state-boko-haram-rape-tactic-war-un-214751848.html>. Also see "Emerging Threats Demand Renewed Fight Against Sexual Violence In Conflict - UN Envoy", April 14, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50574#.VUC5GNKqqko>

¹³⁶ "Cameroon: CAR, Boko Haram Crises - UN Discusses Security, Development Implications", April 22, 2015, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504220907.html>

¹³⁷ "Protection, Security of Sahrawi People Incumbent Upon UN", April 22, 2015, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504220932.html>

¹³⁸ "Western Sahara's Polisario Threatens To Review U.N. Cooperation", April 22, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/22/us-westernsahara-un-idUSKBN0ND1V220150422>

¹³⁹ "Spate of Violent Attacks in Mali Draws UN Rights Office Concern", April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50571#.VUC4v9Kqqko>. Also see "Three Killed In Suicide Attack on UN Peacekeepers in Mali, April 15, 2015 at <http://news.yahoo.com/three-killed-suicide-attack-peacekeepers-mali-un-161519815.html>

Mahamadou Issoufou participating in a protest rally in France against the attack on the Charlie Hebdo office and allowing French and American troops to be stationed in Niger.¹⁴⁰ Four UNICEF workers lost their lives as a road side bomb blew up a UN vehicle in north east Somalia. The Al Shabaab is suspected of planting the IED.¹⁴¹ Another UN vehicle was blown up in the Puntland region by the Al Shabaab.¹⁴² Three staff members of the World Food Programme went missing in South Sudan in early April. As fighting renewed in Malakal, the WFP raised this concern with the UNMISS.¹⁴³ Three members of the MONUSCO were kidnapped in the DRC.¹⁴⁴ A Chilean peacekeeper in the UN Mission for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was killed in a firing by violent protestors in Haiti.¹⁴⁵

As the second deadline for submitting national plans for reducing emissions in June is nearing, the EU has indicated that China, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Chile, Morocco, Singapore, Armenia, Honduras, Georgia, Jordan and Senegal are among nations who are most likely to submit their plans. India, Japan, Brazil, Australia and Indonesia however would not be doing so, with India likely to do so by September.¹⁴⁶

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) informed the UN Inter Consultative Process on the Law of Sea that the under guidance from the International Maritime Organisation, the shipping industry had adopted measures to reduce emissions and had succeeded in cutting them down by 10 per cent from 2007-2012.¹⁴⁷

The 13th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice organised by UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was held from April 12-19 in Doha, Qatar. Officials underscored the importance of equal access to justice and non-discriminatory laws in promoting equitable and inclusive development, thus reinforcing the integration of crime prevention and development in

¹⁴⁰ "Al-Qaeda-Linked Jihadists Claim UN Suicide Attack in Mali", April 17, 2015 at <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-jihadists-claim-un-suicide-attack-175045765.html>

¹⁴¹ "UN Condemns 'Horrific' Attack That Killed Four UNICEF Staff In Somalia", April 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50630#.VUDbeNKqqko>

¹⁴² "Further Nine Killed in United Nations Bus Bomb Attack in Somalia", April 26, 2015, at <http://www.coastweek.com/3816-At-least-nine-killed-in-United-Nations-bus-bomb-attack-in-Somalia.htm>

¹⁴³ "UN Food Relief Agency 'Extremely Worried' About Missing Staff In Volatile South Sudan", April 22, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50656#.VUF8o9Kqqko>

¹⁴⁴ "Tough Week For UN as Three Members of DRC Mission Kidnapped, Days After Somalia Staffers Were Killed", April 24, 2015, at <http://mgafrica.com/article/2015-04-24-tough-week-for-un-as-three-members-of-drc-mission-kidnapped-days-after-somalia-staffers-were-killed>

¹⁴⁵ "UN Condemns Killing Of Chilean Peacekeeper in Haiti", April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50573#.VUC44tKqqko>

¹⁴⁶ "European Union Sees Progress By June Towards UN Climate Deal", April 24, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-european-union-sees-progress-by-june-towards-un-climate-deal-2080486>

¹⁴⁷ "ICS Highlights Ocean Governance Issues At Important United Nations Meeting", April 15, 2015, <http://www.marineoffshoretechnology.net/marine-business-regulation-news/ics-highlights-ocean-governance-issues-important-united-nations>

the post 2015 development agenda.¹⁴⁸ Academic and government experts also dwelled on the move away from death penalty with nearly 160 countries foregoing this form of punishment. It was noted that the punishment is used widely in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁴⁹ The conference deliberated on the need of more involvement of NGOs in the settlement of victims of human trafficking.¹⁵⁰ It also sought to alleviate the condition of prison overcrowding by 120 per cent to 400 per cent in nearly 77 countries of the world.¹⁵¹ It discussed the need to prevent cyber crime and the efforts of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank, Interpol, Europol and the Microsoft Corporation in this regard.¹⁵² In all 230 meetings and workshops were held in the week-long Congress.¹⁵³

In the lead up to the NPT review conference to be held from 27 April – 22 May 2015, various Christians denominations came together to press for the abolition of nuclear weapons at a public panel discussion on “Nuclear Weapons and Moral Compass” organised at the UN headquarters.¹⁵⁴ Ironically, with a breakthrough in the talks between Iran and the P5+Germany, Russia has given a go ahead for the supply of S300 missiles that could be used to defend Iranian nuclear sites. This violated the UNSC imposed sanctions that bar the sale of high-tech weapons to Iran.¹⁵⁵

The ICAO, a UN specialized body, launched a website to issue warning about risks to civil aircrafts over flying conflict zones. The need for this became imminent in the light of the downing of the MH 17 over Eastern Ukraine. Risk information will only be received from authorised state officials.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁸ “UN Officials Spotlight Equal Access To Justice In Promoting Inclusive Economic Development”, April 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50559#.VUCrQNKqqko>. For more details see, “13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”, April 13, 2015 <http://un.org.au/2015/04/13/13th-united-nations-congress-on-crime-prevention-and-criminal-justice/>

¹⁴⁹ “At Crime Congress, UN Experts Cite ‘Shift’ As More States Move Away From Death Penalty”, April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50567#.VUC9qtKqqko>

¹⁵⁰ “UN Anti-Crime Conference Session Urges Boosting Assistance To Trafficking Victims”, April 14, 2015 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50575#.VUC47dKqqko>

¹⁵¹ “At Crime Congress, UN Spotlights ‘Epidemic’ Of Prison Overcrowding”, April 16, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50602#.VUC80NKqqko>

¹⁵² “UN Conference Weighs Efforts To Combat Cybercrime, Create Safer Digital World”, April 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50610#.VUDD0dKqqko>

¹⁵³ “UN Crime Congress Holds Record 230 Meetings in Doha”, April 18, 2015, at <http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/333102/un-crime-congress-holds-record-230-meetings-in-doha>

¹⁵⁴ “Global Christian Groups Call for Worldwide Nuclear Weapons Ban at UN”, April 14, 2015, at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/global-christian-groups-call-for-worldwide-nuclear-weapons-ban-at-un-137447/>

¹⁵⁵ “Russia Ignores UN Sanctions To Provide Iran With Missile System Which Could Be Used To Defend Missile Sites”, April 13, 2015 at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3037407/Russia-ignores-sanctions-provide-Iran-missile-used-defend-missile-sites.html>

¹⁵⁶ “UN Agency Unveils New Online Tool To Reduce Risks To Aircraft In Conflict Zones”, April 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50561#.VUCtdNKqqko>

At their annual spring meeting in Washington DC, the World Bank, IMF and Regional Development Banks, discussed the issue of rehabilitation of Ebola affected nations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It pledged to provide \$650 million to the countries over the next year and a half to help rebuild their economies and lives. For the first time in history, the Secretary General of the UN addressed the Development Committee.¹⁵⁷ Ban ki-Moon stressed on the need to maintain response capacity for at least a year more. Ebola has now been restricted to a small coast in Guinea and Sierra Leone. The WHO data states that 25,826 people have been infected and 10,704 have died from the Ebola virus.¹⁵⁸ He also emphasised that lending by the World Bank and IMF can help with achieving climate change targets if it done based on suitable carbon pricing, reducing subsidies on fossil fuels and insisting on energy efficiency.¹⁵⁹

The 14th session of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous People commenced on April 20.¹⁶⁰ On April 21-22, the General Assembly held a thematic debate on “Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism.” It was attended by religious and faith leaders from around the world.¹⁶¹

The UNESCO adopted a French resolution on school related gender based violence (SRGBV) and 58 member countries have signed up to it.¹⁶² At the 7th meeting of the World Water Forum, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation released a report titled *Towards a Water and Food Secure Future*. The report states that by 2050, the world demand for food will be up by nearly 60 per cent. It therefore urges governments to help farmers to use water efficiently and increase food output.¹⁶³

India and the UN

(April 13-26, 2015)

- **India pushes for UNSC reform in bilateral and multilateral fora; India moving on climate change; India makes pertinent points on peacebuilding, sexual violence, youth extremism and Myanmar's transition in UN; India in UN reports on E-Waste and Happiness.**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the country's claim to a permanent seat in the Security

¹⁵⁷ “UN United Nations: Secretary-General's Remarks To The Development Committee (As Prepared For Delivery)”, April 18, 2015, at <http://www.4-traders.com/news/UN-United-Nations-Secretary-Generals-remarks-to-the-Development-Committee-as-prepared-for-delive-20214344/>

¹⁵⁸ “Last Mile Of Ebola Struggle ‘May Be Most Difficult,’ Ban Says In Washington”, April 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50613#.VUDDu9Kqqko>

¹⁵⁹ “Public, Private Sectors Essential For Progress On Climate Change, Says UN Chief”, April 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50617#.VUDD9NKqqko>

¹⁶⁰ “As Forum Opens, Deputy UN Chief Says 2015 A ‘Critical Year’ For World's Indigenous Peoples”, April 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50635#.VUDcPdKqqko>

¹⁶¹ “Warning of ‘Empathy Gap,’ Ban Urges Faith Leaders To Speak Up Against Injustice And Brutality”, April 22, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50655#.VUF8j9Kqqko>

¹⁶² “UN Passes Resolution On School-Related Gender Based Violence”, April 22, 2015, at <https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2015/04/22/un-passes-resolution-on-school-related-gender-based-violence/>

¹⁶³ “UN Warns Of 2050 Deadline For Dwindling Water Supplies, Urges Government Action”, April 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50564#.VUCu0dKqqko>

Council during his visit to Germany. He said in the 70th year of UN and 100th of the World War I, India deserved “justice”.¹⁶⁴ The point was reiterated by the Minister of State for External Affairs, V.K. Singh at the Asia-Africa conference in Jakarta.¹⁶⁵ India, with support from African nations, pushed for inclusion of the issue in the declaration “Reinvigorating the New Asian African Strategic Partnership (NAASP)” adopted at the end of the conference, thus overcoming a bid by China and Pakistan to exclude the issue.¹⁶⁶

India beginning to make signal changes in its position on climate related issues. In one such case, ahead of the Bangkok meeting on the Montreal Protocol, India has proposed an amendment to the Protocol, to speed-up the phase of hydroflourocarbons (HFCs) that are used in refrigerators and air-conditioners to reduce their impact on the Ozone layer. This requirement, a part of the Montreal Protocol (1989), was initially opposed by India due to high costs of transition to more environment-friendly technology.¹⁶⁷

India also made a case for carrying out this discussion as part of the Kyoto Protocol that places a higher onus for reducing green house gases on developed countries.¹⁶⁸

Participating at a debate on sexual violence in armed conflicts, the Permanent Representative (PR) to UN Asoke Mukerji said that India supports deployment of more women and at higher levels, women protection advisors and gender advisers in peacekeeping operations considering the impact of conflict on women. He said India was willing to raise its contribution of women as part of peacekeeping troops. He highlighted the challenge of bringing to justice the non-state actors who perpetrate most acts of sexual violence.¹⁶⁹ He also participated in a discussion on peacebuilding and reiterated the need for local ownership of these processes. He hoped that the UN would go beyond “short term fixes” and focus on long term development needs of conflict-affected countries.¹⁷⁰ At a meeting of the ‘Partnership Group for Peace, Development and Democracy in Myanmar’ He made a case for greater UN appreciation of the political and economic

¹⁶⁴ “India Should Get Justice By Getting Permanent Seat in UNSC: PM Narendra Modi”, April 14, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-14/news/61142485_1_unsc-united-nations-permanent-seat

¹⁶⁵ “Willing To Combat Terrorism in All Its Forms: India”, April 20, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/willing-to-combat-terrorism-in-all-its-forms-india_1581996.html

¹⁶⁶ “China and Pakistan Bid To Omit United Nations Line Foiled”, April 24, 2015, at <http://www.asianage.com/india/china-and-pakistan-bid-omit-united-nations-line-foiled-972>

¹⁶⁷ “India Reverses Stance on Potent Greenhouse Gases Ahead of Talks”, April 17, 2015, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-17/india-reverses-stance-on-potent-greenhouse-gases-ahead-of-talks>.

¹⁶⁸ “India Takes “Significant Step” in HFC Decision: US Envoy”, April 18, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-18/news/61278893_1_montreal-protocol-hfcs-climate-agreement

¹⁶⁹ “India Backs Deployment Of Women Peacekeepers in UN Missions”, April 16, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-16/news/61217896_1_armed-conflict-sexual-violence-un-asoke-mukerji

¹⁷⁰ “United Nations Should Go Beyond ‘Short Term Fixes’: India”, April 17, 2015 http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-17/news/61253587_1_peace-agreement-united-nations-un-ambassador-asoke-mukerji

changes being brought about by the Government of Myanmar, rather than being overly critical of human rights issues in the country.¹⁷¹ The Deputy PR, Bhagwant Bishnoi, participated in the UNSC debate on “Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace”, where he emphasised on the need for systems of education that promoted tolerance and peace.¹⁷²

India figured in some reports of UN institutes. According to the Global E-Waste Monitor, 2014, published by the UN University, India has emerged as the fifth largest producer of e-waste generating 1.7 million tonnes (Mt) of electronic and electrical equipment in 2014.¹⁷³ In the 2015 World Happiness Report published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), India was ranked 117th among 158 nations. The index was based on GDP per capita, life expectancy, social support and freedom to make life choices as indicators of happiness.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ “UN Must Show Greater Responsiveness To Myanmar Reforms: India”, April 25, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-25/news/61518597_1_myanmar-reforms-un-ambassador-asoke-mukerji-permanent-representative

¹⁷² “There Should Be Zero Tolerance towards Violent Extremism: India at UNSC”, April 24, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-24/news/61493951_1_violent-extremism-unsc-zero-tolerance

¹⁷³ “India Fifth Biggest Generator of E-Waste in 2014: UN Report”, April 19, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-fifth-biggest-generator-of-e-waste-in-2014-un-report-756259>

¹⁷⁴ “India Not A Happiest Nation: United Nations Report Reveal”, April 24, 2015 <http://www.newsnation.in/article/76625-india-a-happiest-nation-united-nations-report-reveal.html>