

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **EU wants full-fledged economic partnership with Bangladesh; Bangladeshi blogger killed; International community express concerns.**

European Union Ambassador in Dhaka Pierre Mayaudon has said the EU aims at bringing forward Bangladesh from a status of supplier of garment to a fully-fledged economic partner. "This country deserves better than the image associated to low-cost and cheap labour," he told a reception organised on the occasion of Europe Day 2015 at Westin Hotel on May 10.¹

An official of Pubali Bank's Jauwabazar branch in Sunamganj, Ananta is the third Bangladeshi blogger killed in less than three months in a similar fashion. He used to blog for Mukto-Mona, or free mind, the site Avijit Roy had launched. In many of his *Blogs* and *Facebook* posts, he wrote against religious fundamentalism.² The United Kingdom, the European Union and the Amnesty International (AI) have strongly condemned the brutal murder of blogger Ananta Bijoy Das in Sylhet on May 12. They also expressed concerns over the state of freedom of expression in Bangladesh.³ The United Nations, the United States and France have also expressed concern over the brutal murder of the blogger and called for thorough investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice.⁴

Sri Lanka

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **ADB proposes to double its annual funding to Sri Lanka; President Maithripala Sirisena and representatives from Indian fishermen associations hold talks; Sri Lanka becomes the first nation in the world to comprehensively protect all of its mangrove forests; Major General**

¹ "EU Sees Bangladesh As Full-Fledged Economic Partner", *The Daily Star*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/eu-sees-bangladesh-full-fledged-economic-partner-81826>

² "Blogger Killed Again in Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/blogger-killed-again-81969>.

³ "Amnesty, EU, UK Condemn Killing", *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/amnesty-eu-uk-condemn-killing-82026>.

⁴ "UN, US, France Call for Thorough Probe", *The Daily Star*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bring-killers-justice-82151>.

N.A Jagath C Dias appointed as the new Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army; India undertakes a project to renovate the Rabindra Memorial Library and Hall in Sripalee College; Sri Lankan delegation visits Qatar.

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was prepared to double its annual funding to Sri Lanka up to an estimated US\$ 1.2 billion in a bid to support the new Government's development agenda. Minister Karunanayake emphasized that the proposed line of credit was being granted to Sri Lanka based on independent reviews of the national economy carried out by the ADB and not as a result of any appeals or requests on the part of the Sri Lankan Government. He added that the funds would be utilized towards supporting the Government's development initiatives, budgetary allocations, capacity development and debt relief.⁵

President Maithripala Sirisena and representatives from Indian fishermen associations held talks on May 12 on the fishing dispute involving Sri Lankan and Indian fishermen. The President had told the Indians that he would like to see the issue resolved through negotiations and also ensure that the dispute does not harm Indo-Lanka ties. President Maithripala Sirisena said that he had also urged the Sri Lankan authorities to ensure talks aimed at reaching a solution over the issue continue, the President's office said.⁶

Sri Lanka has become the first nation in the world to comprehensively protect all of its mangrove forests. U.S.-based non-profit organization Seacology and Sri Lanka-based NGO Sudeesa, which was formerly known as the Small Fishers Federation of Lanka, along with the Sri Lankan Government have announced a joint programme that will make Sri Lanka the first nation in the world to comprehensively protect all of its mangrove forests. Announcing the programme at a media briefing in Colombo, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said it is the responsibility and the necessity of all government institutions, private institutions, non-government organizations, researchers, intelligentsia, and civil community to be united to protect the mangrove ecosystem.⁷

Sri Lanka Army has appointed a Major General N.A Jagath C Dias as the new Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Army, the Army Headquarters announced on May 14. Major General Dias, currently serving as the Commander, Security Force - Mullaitivu, is the 46th Chief of Staff in the Army. Major General Jagath Dias has wide-ranging experience in various command, staff and instructional appointments. He commanded the 57 Division during the peak of the war for peace against terrorism.⁸

⁵ "Sri Lanka To Receive US\$ 1.2 Billion Line Of Credit from the Asian Development Bank", *ColomboPage*, May 11, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May11_1431323430CH.php.

⁶ "Maithripala, Indian Fishermen Hold Talks", *Colombo Gazette*, May 12, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/05/12/maithripala-indian-fishermen-hold-talks/>.

⁷ "Sri Lanka Becomes World's First Nation to Comprehensively Protect All of Its Mangrove Forest", *ColomboPage*, May 12, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May12_1431432656CH.php.

⁸ "Sri Lanka Army Appoints Major General Jagath Dias as New Chief of Staff", *ColomboPage*, May 14, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May14_1431627445CH.php.

India is undertaking a project to renovate the Rabindra Memorial Library and Hall in Sripalee College, Horana, at a total cost of Rs.38 million. In this regard, following a process of competitive bidding, a Contract Agreement was signed with M/s. Farzan Building Construction on May 13, 2015 in the presence of Mr. Arindam Bagchi, Acting High Commissioner of India, Mr. K.A.K. Ranjith Dharmapala, Additional Secretary (Procurement & Construction), Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka, and other officials of the Government of Sri Lanka. The project is being implemented in close consultation with the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka. The project is expected to be completed within a period of 240 days, and its implementation will be jointly monitored by the High Commission and the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka.⁹

A Sri Lankan delegation led by the Minister of Highways and Investment Promotion, Kabir Hashim met with Qatar's Minister of Economy and Commerce, Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed Al Thani on May 13 in Doha to discuss trade and investment opportunities. They reviewed bilateral relations between the two countries in economic, trade and investment fields and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to aspects of cooperation between the two countries, according to *Qatar News Agency*.¹⁰

Maldives

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Preliminary study on Free Trade Agreement between Maldives and China has been completed; Saudi Arabia provides \$20 million to the Maldives; State Trading Organisation signs an agreement with Colombo Dockyard Plc; Criminal Court issues arrest warrant for the leader of Jumhooree Party; IS enforces the death penalty against a Maldivian recruit in Iraq.**

Minister of Economic Development Mohamed Saeed has said that all work related to the first phase of the Free Trade Agreement between Maldives and China have been completed. Speaking at a press conference at Velaanaage on May 12, Saeed said that the preliminary study had been completed by both governments and the work being done now, was related to the feasibility study. Saeed said that work related to the second phase will continue in Beijing next month, which will include discussions between Maldivian and Chinese teams, followed by the signing of the agreement. He said that the aim, as mentioned prior to the commencement of the efforts, was to sign the agreement before the end of the year.¹¹

The government of Saudi Arabia has provided \$20 million to the Maldives. This was announced by Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Dr Mohamed Shainee, on *Twitter* on May 11. President

⁹ "India To Renovate Horana Rabindra Memorial Library in Sripalee College", *ColomboPage*, May 14, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May14_1431595480CH.php.

¹⁰ "Sri Lankan Delegation in Qatar Discuss Trade and Investment Opportunities", *ColomboPage*, May 14, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May14_1431543289CH.php.

¹¹ "Saeed: First Phase of Free Trade Agreement Completed", *SunOnline*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29713>.

Yameen, upon conclusion of his state visit to Saudi Arabia in March 2015, said that Saudi Arabia had promised to provide assistance in the fields of education, military, and Islamic affairs. Saudi Arabia has provided 150 higher education opportunities to Maldivian students, as well as 1,000 hajj slots.¹²

State Trading Organisation (STO) has signed an agreement with Colombo Dockyard Plc regarding the supply of a tugboat and a barge. The agreement was signed by Managing Director of STO Ahmed Shaheer, and Managing Director of Colombo Dockyard Ranil Wijegunawardena.¹³

Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for the leader of Jumhooree Party, Qasim Ibrahim. The warrant for the arrest of Qasim Ibrahim was issued for funding the opposition protest, “to end tyranny” held on May 1. While an arrest warrant has been issued against the leader of Jumhooree Party, the party’s Vice President Ameen Ibrahim and the Foreign and Public Relations, Sobah Rasheed along with the MDP Chairperson, Ali Waheed and leader of Adhaalath Party, Sheikh Imran Abdulla has been arrested for supporting and encouraging conflict between the protestors and the security forces in their speeches at the protest.¹⁴

The militant organisation Islamic State has enforced the death penalty against a Maldivian recruit in Iraq. Reportedly, the Maldivian was thrown off the top of a tall building in April 2014. He was sentenced to death by an IS court, but the alleged offence is unclear. The Maldivian had travelled to IS-held territories in Syria in late 2014 and had gone to Iraq in April following a military offensive by the Iraqi army to recapture Tikrit. A number of Maldivians jihadis who travelled to fight in the Syrian civil war have been reported dead. Commissioner of Police Hussein Waheed in early January estimated over 50 Maldivians could be fighting in foreign wars. Most Maldivian jihadis are believed to have joined the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat Al Nusra front in Syria.¹⁵

B. East Asia

China

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **China and Vietnam discuss maritime issues; Chinese Foreign Minister meets US Secretary of State; Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits China; Chinese President Xi Jinping concludes Eurasia trip; Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will visit Latin America.**

The Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan met with the Vietnamese Defence Minister Phung

¹² “Maldives Receives \$20 Million from Saudi Arabia”, *SunOnline*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29698>.

¹³ “STO, Colombo Dockyard Sign Agreement for Supply of Tugboat, Barge”, *SunOnline*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29722>.

¹⁴ “Court Order Issued for the Arrest of Qasim”, *SunOnline*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29744>.

¹⁵ “IS Enforces Death Penalty against Maldivian Recruit”, *Minivan News*, May 13, 2015 at <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/is-enforces-death-penalty-against-maldivian-recruit-98074#sthash.uzKp7N1r.dpbs>.

Quang Thanh in Mengzi on May 17. During the meeting the Chang said that, “both China and Vietnam have the wisdom and capability to achieve a success in tackling maritime issues”. This was the first meeting between the defence ministers of the two countries.¹⁶

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with the US Secretary of State John Kerry on May 16. During the meeting Wang said that, “China’s development on some of the islands and reefs in Nansha is something fully within the scope of China’s sovereignty”. Both sides agreed they had differences with respect to the South China Sea issue, however acknowledged that there was a need to avoid miscalculations.¹⁷

Discussing the visit of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to China, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stated that the talks had met his expectations. Li stated that, “We just had in-depth talks and touched a wide range of topics, which we both expect to yield common ground and results. It is fair to say that we met expectations”. During the meeting both sides signed 24 MOUs with respect to railways, mineral exploitation, aerospace, marine science and vocational education.¹⁸

The Chinese President Xi Jinping recently concluded his Eurasia trip. It was argued that this trip infused new vitality into the Belt and Road initiative. China and Belarus agreed to strengthen the partnership. This was the first visit by a Chinese President to Belarus in 14 years. While meeting the Russian President, Xi agreed to integrate the Belt and Road Initiative with the Russian vision of trade and infrastructure across Eurasia. During his meeting with the Kazakhstan President both sides discussed bilateral trade and cooperation.¹⁹

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying announced on May 11 that the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will be paying an official visit to Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Chile from May 18 to May 26, 2015.²⁰

¹⁶ “China, Vietnam Vows Confidence In Solving Maritime Issues”, By Zhang Yunbi in Mengzi, Yunnan province, *China Daily*, May 17, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/17/content_20742495.htm, accessed on May 18, 2015

¹⁷ “China’s Will To Safeguard Sovereignty ‘Unshakable’: Foreign Minister”, *China Daily*, May 16, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/16/content_20736636.htm, accessed on May 18, 2015

¹⁸ “Premier Li Says Talks with Modi ‘Meet Expectations’”, *China Daily*, May 15, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015modivisitchina/2015-05/15/content_20726711.htm, accessed on May 15, 2015

¹⁹ “Xi’s Eurasia Trip Boosts Belt and Road”, *China Daily*, May 12, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/12/content_20698998.htm, accessed on May 15, 2015

²⁰ “Premier Li To Visit Latin America”, *China Daily*, May 11, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-05/11/content_20685471.htm, accessed on May 15, 2015

C. Southeast Asia and Oceania

ASEAN

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Southeast Asia migrant crisis: Over 700 asylum seekers rescued off Indonesia's coast; Refugee crisis not Malaysia's burden to carry, Malaysian PM says.**

More than 700 migrants, most of them from Bangladesh and Myanmar, were rescued after their boat sank off the coast of Indonesia's Aceh province on May 15. The report of the rescue comes amid a growing refugee crisis in Southeast Asia, where nearly 25,000 people have attempted to cross the Bay of Bengal to reach Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia between January and March. The incident, which reportedly took place in the early hours of May 15, comes just a day after the Malaysian government turned back two refugee boats carrying over 800 migrants. Malaysia has since closed its territory to migrants flooding its shores and said that it would only consider rescuing asylum seekers on humanitarian grounds if their boats capsized. Meanwhile, the Indonesian navy prevented the entry of another migrant boat with hundreds aboard on May 15, according to media reports. Earlier in the day, a boat with over 400 migrants had been towed out to sea by the Thai navy. It is not clear if the boat rejected by Indonesia is the same vessel.²¹

Malaysia must not be burdened with the "problem" of Rohingya refugees as it is an issue which needs to be addressed collectively by all ASEAN countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said on May 16. National news agency *Bernama* quoted Najib as saying that although Malaysia allowed "some" of the refugees to land here and provided aid, there are still thousands more waiting to escape Myanmar. "We are unwilling or pleased with this matter. Because of that we allow some of them to land and provide humanitarian aid to them but Malaysia must not be burdened with this problem as there are thousands more waiting to flee from their region," Najib had reportedly said. Najib, who is also ASEAN chairman, said an ASEAN solution through the network of member countries must be taken to address the matter before it becomes a humanitarian catastrophe.²²

Southeast Asia

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Cambodia deports wanted Russian tycoon; Indonesia urged to end military recruit virginity tests; Indonesian president backs defence increases; Indonesian war planes violate PNG**

²¹ "Southeast Asia Migrant Crisis: Over 700 Asylum Seekers Rescued Off Indonesia's Coast", *International Business Times*, available at <http://www.ibtimes.com/southeast-asia-migrant-crisis-over-700-asylum-seekers-rescued-indonesias-coast-1923745>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

²² "Refugee Crisis Not Malaysia's Burden to Carry, PM Says", *Malay Mail Online*, available at <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/refugee-crisis-not-malaysias-burden-to-carry-pm-says#sthash.7yJw4Bf1.dpuf>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

airspace; Malaysia, Bangladesh foreign ministers to discuss migrant crisis; Myanmar denies responsibility for migrant boat crisis; Myanmar extends martial law in war-torn northern region; 72 killed in fire at footwear factory in Philippines; New naval base is Philippine military's top priority: Armed forces chief; Japan, Philippines hold first South China Sea naval exercises; Iranian ships fire warning shots at Singapore cargo vessel: Report; Singapore and Malaysia test chemical-spill readiness in joint exercise; Asia's biggest maritime expo to kick off; Singapore Armed Forces concludes relief mission in Nepal; Vietnamese, Singaporean air forces bolster cooperation; Vietnam values extensive strategic partnership with Japan; Vietnamese Central Highlands, Northeast Cambodia strengthen ties; Vietnam defends construction in disputed South China Sea.

Cambodian authorities deported a Russian tycoon back to his country on May 17, two days after he was arrested on charges of overstaying his visa in the Southeast Asian country, a Cambodian police official told *Kyodo News*. Sergei Polonsky, 43, was deported at 7:20 a.m. and bound for Moscow via Vietnam, said Ouk Hai Sela, chief of the immigration department's investigation unit at the Interior Ministry. Polonsky possessed weapons and caused disorder in the southwestern province of Sihanoukville where he reportedly owns some real estate, he said.²³

Indonesia is facing calls to stop virginity tests for women seeking to join the military, with a leading rights group calling the practice "cruel, inhuman and degrading". Human Rights Watch (HRW) said interviews with female members of the military showed that the examination, normally conducted through a "two-finger test" to ensure the hymen is intact, was required of women joining the armed forces or planning to marry military officers. The armed forces defended checking female applicants' virginity, saying that people of low morals could "damage the military", but denied that those planning to marry officers were also subject to the checks. The national police faced criticism last year for forcing female applicants to undergo the examinations.²⁴

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has vowed to more than double the country's defence budget in 2016 if Indonesia's economy achieves 7 per cent GDP growth this year. In comments published by state-run news agency *Antara* on May 13, Widodo said that if the GDP target is achieved the government would "set aside a budget of IDR210 trillion (USD16 billion) for the Indonesian armed forces". In 2015 the defence budget is set at about IDR100 trillion. The pledge is an apparent indication of a commitment to accelerate a spending plan outlined in April by the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). This plan features incremental budgetary increases over the next few years, rising to IDR200 trillion by 2020. This plan, in turn, is tracked against the Widodo administration's previous pledge to increase military spending as a proportion of GDP from the existing 0.9 per cent to 1.5 per cent.²⁵

²³ "Cambodia deports wanted Russian tycoon", *The Bangkok Post*, available at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/563899/cambodia-deports-wanted-russian-tycoon>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

²⁴ "Indonesia Urged to End Military Recruit Virginity Tests", *Al Jazeera*, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/indonesia-urged-military-recruit-virginity-tests-150515023046467.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

²⁵ "Indonesian President Backs Defence Increases", *HIS Jane's 360*, available at <http://www.janes.com/article/51431/indonesian-president-backs-defence-increases>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

A Papua New Guinea report says two Indonesian military jets were scrambled to confront an Australian Defence Force aircraft near the border over West Sepik on May 15. The Post Courier reports the information was in a PNG intelligence report which said in the process, the Indonesian aircraft violated PNG air space although the presence of the Australian aircraft was also a surprise. Neither the Australians nor the Indonesians have confirmed the incident. However, PNG Air Services, which is responsible for air traffic movement, says that it approved the flight of the Australian Kingair aircraft over West Sepik. According to the intelligence report the Indonesian jets flew over Wutung village, which is next to the PNG-Indonesia border post. PNG Customs Service officers at the Wutung, servicing the border post, also confirmed this. The incident comes a month after a group of Indonesian soldiers were alleged to have made a brief unauthorised border crossing.²⁶

Malaysia's Foreign Minister will meet his Bangladeshi counterpart on May 17 to discuss the crisis involving a surge in stricken boat people from Bangladesh and Myanmar flooding to Southeast Asia, state media said. "It is one of the topics and a very important issue in the agenda," Foreign Minister Anifah Aman was quoted saying in a brief dispatch by Malaysia's official news agency *Bernama*. The meeting with Bangladesh's A H Mahmood Ali will take place in the Malaysian city of Kota Kinabalu. Reports in Bangladeshi media suggested that the country's top diplomat was in Malaysia as part of a pre-planned trip rather than in response to the growing international uproar over the migrant influx. Malaysian foreign ministry officials could not be immediately reached for comment. More than 1,000 migrants have washed ashore in Malaysia over the past week, with hundreds of others reaching Indonesia.²⁷

Myanmar's government has said it is not responsible for the migrant boat crisis in south-east Asia, and may not attend an emergency summit on the issue. Thousands of migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar are feared stranded in boats in the Andaman Sea after their crews deserted them. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have been turning away migrant boats. Survivors have described desperate conditions on the boats, with people thrown overboard amid fights for food. Rohingya Muslims have been leaving Buddhist-majority Myanmar, also known as Burma, because they are not recognised as citizens and face persecution. Many of the Bangladeshis at sea are thought to be economic migrants.²⁸

Myanmar extended a state of emergency in a conflict wracked northern region near China on May 15, with the defence minister arguing that continued military control of the area was necessary to ensure "peaceful relations" across the border. Fighting between government troops and ethnic Chinese rebel fighters has raged in the Kokang region of Shan state since early February, raising fears over the country's peace process and causing tens of thousands of people to flee, many into China. Myanmar air strikes have also drifted into Chinese territory, killing several civilians and

²⁶ "Indonesian War Planes Violate PNG Airspace", *Radio NZ*, available at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/273931/indonesian-war-planes-violate-png-airspace>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

²⁷ "Malaysia, Bangladesh Foreign Ministers to Discuss Migrant Crisis", *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/malaysia-bangladesh/1852484.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

²⁸ "Myanmar Denies Responsibility for Migrant Boat Crisis", *BBC News*, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32766748>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

prompting a rebuke from Beijing which scrambled its fighter jets. A state of emergency giving the military sweeping powers has been in place in Kokang since February and Myanmar's parliament on May 15 approved an extension, following an application from defence minister Lieutenant general Wai Lwin.²⁹

Seventy-two people died in a huge blaze at a footwear factory in the Philippines, authorities said on May 14, as angry relatives and workers described sweatshop conditions including dismal fire safety standards. Firefighters and police pulled dozens of corpses out of the ruins of the two-storey building in Manila on May 14, a day after the blaze trapped the terrified workers with apparently few exits and no fire safety training. "Many of those retrieved were reduced to skulls and bones," national police Chief Leonardo Espina said during an emotional press conference, as local authorities confirmed 72 people had died.³⁰

The Philippine military's top priority is to build a naval base on the country's western coastline, opposite the disputed Spratly islands, although the plans have been delayed by funding bottlenecks, the Philippine armed forces chief told media. General Gregorio Catapang said U.S., Japanese and Vietnamese naval vessels would be allowed to make port calls once the facility at Oyster Bay on the Philippine island of Palawan was finished. Developing the island paradise into a military facility could exacerbate tensions with China, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, including the Spratlys. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also claim parts of the vital waterway. Palawan, part of the main Philippine island chain, is about 160 km (100 miles) from the Spratlys, where China's rapid land reclamation around seven reefs is causing alarm among some Asian countries and drawing increasing criticism from Washington.³¹

Japan and the Philippines held their first joint naval exercises in the South China Sea on May 12. According to media reports, following a port call, two Japanese destroyers and a Philippine warship participated in a maritime safety exercise to the west of Manila in the South China Sea. It involved some 600 Japanese personnel on the two navy destroyers – JS Harusame and Amigiri – engaging in a "passing exercise" with some 100 Philippine navy complement of the Filipino warship BRP Ramon Alcaraz as well as a Philippine helicopter landing on one of the Japanese ships. The exercise is part of a broader effort by Japan and the Philippines to boost their defence relationship amid growing anxiety about Beijing's actions in the maritime domain and Japan's increased engagement with Southeast Asia under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.³²

²⁹ "Myanmar Extends Martial Law In War-Torn Northern Region", *Nation Multimedia*, available at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Myanmar-extends-martial-law-in-war-torn-northern-r-30260212.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³⁰ "72 Killed In Fire at Footwear Factory in Philippines", *Telegraph*, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/philippines/11604522/72-killed-in-fire-at-footwear-factory-in-Philippines.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³¹ "New Naval Base Is Philippine Military's Top Priority: Armed Forces Chief", *The Economic Times*, available at: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-12/news/62082874_1_spratlys-south-china-sea-top-priority, accessed on: May 19, 2015.

³² "Japan, Philippines Hold First South China Sea Naval Exercises", *The Diplomat*, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/japan-philippines-hold-first-south-china-sea-naval-exercises/>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

Iranian naval vessels fired warning shots at a Singapore-flagged cargo ship in the Persian Gulf on May 14, media reported. Five purported Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps navy boats supposedly confronted the vessel in international waters, firing shots across its bow. The Singapore cargo ship entered the United Arab Emirates' territorial waters to escape the Iranian navy. It was subsequently escorted by UAE vessels. It's unclear whether the cargo ship suffered any damage. No American citizens or vessels were involved in the confrontation, reports said. The operators of the Singapore ship did not contact the U.S. Navy.³³

Rescue teams comprising personnel from 24 agencies from Singapore and Malaysia swung into action on May 14 to tackle a simulated chemical spill at Tuas. The scenario involved a collision between four vehicles - a hazardous chemical tanker, lorry, mini-bus and car - which resulted in ammonium hydroxide spilling onto the roads. Drums of hydrochloric acid also fell into the sea, after the impact of the accident caused them to roll off the lorry. Concentrated hydrochloric acid and ammonium hydroxide are highly corrosive and can cause burns to a person's skin. Their fumes can cause irritation to one's respiratory tract. Singaporean agencies which participated in the exercise included SCDF, the Singapore Police Force, the MPA and the NEA. Each year, about 110,000 tonnes of hazardous chemicals are transported between Singapore and Malaysia through the Second Link.³⁴

Singapore's quest for a new maritime patrol aircraft, a mid-life upgrade for F-16s and possible purchase of the F-35 are among the expected areas of interest at this year's Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (IMDEX), experts say. The 10th biennial IMDEX will be held at Singapore's Changi Exhibition Centre from May 19-20. This will be *Defence News*' fifth IMDEX coverage, begun in 2007. Show officials have said this year will have many new attractions, including the first India pavilion. The India pavilion will join seven other country pavilions: France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States. The US presence will include three naval vessels: the littoral combat ship Fort Worth, the destroyer Mustin and the SSN-752 Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine. The class-leading LCS Freedom attended the show in 2013. US defence companies exhibiting this year will include Caterpillar, General Dynamics, L-3, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Sikorsky. Overall, Singapore's leadership position in the region and its role in safeguarding the sea lines of communication and anti-piracy missions make IMDEX a must-attend event for international defence industry and government officials. Navy chiefs from 24 countries will be attending, along with 20 warships from 12 countries.³⁵

³³ "Iranian ships Fire Warning Shots at Singapore Cargo Vessel: Report", *International Business Times*, available at <http://www.ibtimes.com/iranian-ships-fire-warning-shots-singapore-cargo-vessel-report-1922326>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³⁴ "Singapore and Malaysia Test Chemical-Spill Readiness in Joint Exercise", *The Strait Times*, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/environment/story/singapore-and-malaysia-test-chemical-spill-readiness-joint-exercise#sthash.D9Vm4TCJ.dpuf>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³⁵ "Asia's Biggest Maritime Expo to Kick Off", *Defence News*, available at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/industry/2015/05/17/taipei-asias-biggest-maritime-expo-to-kick-off/27290979/>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has concluded its relief efforts in Nepal, said the Ministry of Defence in a statement on May 11. The SAF relief contingent arrived in Singapore this afternoon after 12 days of deployment in Nepal. Those deployed consisted of 38 people, including a medical team as well as staff from the Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (RHCC). Seven staff members from the Ministry of Health (MOH) and eight staff members from the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) had worked together with SAF's medical team. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) C-120 aircraft made a total of 11 flights to Nepal since April 26. The trips were to transport people, equipment, relief supplies and also to evacuate 71 Singaporeans - along with 24 other nationals - from Nepal.³⁶

Vietnam's Air Defence-Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Phuong Minh Hoa was leading a Vietnam People's Army delegation to pay a working visit to Singapore from May 13-15. On May 14, Hoa met with Chief of the Singaporean Air Force Major General Hoo Cher Mou, during which they emphasised the need for strengthened defence cooperation in line with the two countries' strategic partnership to create a model for air force coordination among ASEAN members. They pledged to continue exchanging high-ranking delegations and young officers, sharing information and experience, and coordinating in search and rescue activities. The Vietnamese officer invited his host to visit Vietnam, who then accepted and expressed his intention to visit Vietnam in July of this year. The same day, Commander Hoa paid a courtesy visit to Singaporean Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen. He also visited the Singaporean Aeromedical Centre and the Air Force Training Command.³⁷

Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Quoc Cuong affirmed Vietnam's recognition of high importance to developing a wide-ranging strategic partnership with Japan at a May 14 reception for visiting Vice Foreign Minister Kazuyuki Nakane in Hanoi. The Japanese Vice Foreign Minister expressed his delight at the strong, substantive and comprehensive growth of bilateral relations over recent years. Japan always considers Vietnam an important partner and will continue providing high levels of ODA funding to support the country in ensuring sustainable development, improving the infrastructure system and responding to climate change, Kazuyuki Nakane told his host. The two sides exchanged views on measures to further deepen Vietnam-Japan relations across the board, maintain regular exchange visits and contacts at all levels, and promote the efficiency of existing cooperation mechanisms.³⁸

Multi-faceted cooperation, especially in defence and security, between the Vietnamese Central Highlands and neighbouring northeast Cambodia will be expanded as agreed upon by officials

³⁶ "Singapore Armed Forces Concludes Relief Mission in Nepal", *Asia One*, available at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/singapore-armed-forces-concludes-relief-mission-nepal#sthash.8ZSWNvyB.dpuf>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³⁷ "Vietnamese, Singaporean Air Forces Bolster Cooperation", *Viet Nam Net Bridge*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/130767/vietnamese-singaporean-air-forces-bolster-cooperation.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

³⁸ "Vietnam Values Extensive Strategic Partnership with Japan", *Viet Nam Net Bridge*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/130767/vietnamese-singaporean-air-forces-bolster-cooperation.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

on May 15. The consensus was reached at a working session between Vice Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Central Highlands Trieu Xuan Hoa and Ratanakiri Governor Thong Sa Vun in Vietnam's Dak Lak province. They agreed to consolidate coordination mechanisms, enhance joint patrols and work together to combat crime to preserve peace, stability, and development in border areas. The two regions will promote twinning relations between their residential areas, send outstanding Cambodian students to study at Central Highlands educational facilities, and improve the efficiency of medical check-ups and treatment given to northeast Cambodian people.³⁹

Vietnam admitted for the first time its construction activities on the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. It claimed its actions have not affected the status quo, nor escalated tensions in the region. Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh described the construction as "normal and lawful" during a media conference on May 14 in the capital Hanoi. The infrastructure improvement projects are meant to meet the basic needs of residents on the Spratly Islands managed by Vietnam, said Mr Binh. He also urged all parties involved against further actions that could threaten regional stability. Vietnam's reclamation work in the area appeared to include military installations, according to a report by *Reuters*, citing the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Last week, the US research institute released new satellite images showing Vietnam had carried out significant land reclamation at two sites, namely Sand Cay and West London Reef in the Spratly archipelago. The work could have started even before China's larger-scale reclamation projects in the disputed waters.⁴⁰

Oceania

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Fiji, France to work together; NZ soldiers arrive in Iraq to begin deployment; West Papua issue stirs during Jokowi's PNG visit; Indonesia, Papua New Guinea sign various cooperation agreements; Papua New Guinea bans Australians from travelling to Bougainville.**

French forces could be stationed in Fiji soon. This was revealed by the French Ambassador to Fiji Michel Djokovic on May 16. France and Fiji signed a defence co-operation document on May 15 and Mr Djokovic said he was hopeful a status of forces agreement might also be signed to give framework to Franco-Fijian military relations. A status of forces agreement is an agreement between a host country and a foreign country stationing forces in that country. "I can mention that May 15 night the Commander for French Forces in New Caledonia signed an agreement for co-operation between our two forces with Brigadier General Mosese Tikoitoga so it's kind of co-operation planned for two years. "2015-2016 will have a lot of exercise exchanges, strategic dialogue and

³⁹ "Central Highlands, Northeast Cambodia Strengthen Ties", *Viet Nam Net Bridge*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/130767/vietnamese-singaporean-air-forces-bolster-cooperation.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴⁰ "Vietnam Defends Construction in Disputed South China Sea", *Channel News Asia*, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/vietnam-defends/1847516.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

we hope to negotiate also SOFA-Status of Forces Agreement to also give framework to all activities planned according to the wish of both parties,” Mr Djokovic said.⁴¹

New Zealand soldiers have arrived at Camp Taji in Iraq to begin their deployment, the Defence Force has confirmed. Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant General Tim Keating said this morning that the deployment was now in place at the military base north of Baghdad, and was preparing to train Iraqi Security Forces. Lieutenant General Keating said the training would cover a broad range of individual and organisational military skills, including basic weapons training. “It also includes the planning of operations, and medical and logistics support to operations,” he said in a statement. He said a comprehensive training strategy was designed ahead of the deployment by a team of specialists included linguists, security force assistance, training evaluation and “irregular warfare”. “The New Zealand contingent will emphasise and model the Profession of Arms behaviours, demonstrating how a modern and professional defence force operates.” New Zealand is deploying 143 troops to the region in a non-combat role for the battle against the Islamic State (Isis), for what is expected to be a two-year deployment.⁴²

The thorny issue of West Papua has stirred controversy during a state visit by Indonesia’s President, Joko Widodo, to Papua New Guinea. Joko Widodo’s plane touched down in Port Moresby on May 11, greeted by a 21-gun salute and military guard of honour. But outside the airport, a group was protesting Indonesian rule in the western half of New Guinea. That protest was led by the PNG Union for a Free West Papua. Its general secretary, David Dom Kua, said police broke up the protest just before Mr Widodo touched down, and that he and six others were detained for several hours. The group was later released without charge yet Mr Kua said their detention was illegal and an attempt to hide them from the visiting President. “We are not in Indonesia, we are in Papua New Guinea,” he said. “This is our own country, we are stepping on our own soil and our own laws and so if there is any political interference or influence whatsoever, how can the police or our government think they can do what the Indonesian government has been doing?”⁴³

President of Indonesia Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Peter O'Neill witnessed the signing of cooperation agreements in various fields between the two countries on May 12. Indonesia was represented by Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi and Energy Minister Sudirman Said at the signing. “We welcomed the signing of this memorandum of understanding,” President Jokowi said after the ceremony at the Papua New Guinea Parliament Building in Port Moresby. He added that the agreements were related to establishing cooperation to overcome cross-border crimes, including those related to narcotics and terrorism, among others. Other agreements signed were related to capacity building of human resources to explore the oil and energy sectors.⁴⁴

⁴¹ “Fiji, France To Work Together”, *Fiji Times*, available at <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=306105>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴² “NZ Soldiers Arrive in Iraq to Begin Deployment”, *NZ Herald*, available at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11447245, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴³ “West Papua Issue Stirs during Jokowi’s PNG Visit”, *Radio NZ*, available at <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/273475/west-papua-issue-stirs-during-jokowi’s-png-visit>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴⁴ “Indonesia, Papua New Guinea Sign Various Cooperation Agreements”, *Antara News*, available at <http://www.antaranews.com/en/news/98908/indonesia-papua-new-guinea-sign-various-cooperation-agreements>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

Papua New Guinea has banned Australians from travelling to the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, following Canberra's announcement of plans to open a new diplomatic mission on the island. Bougainville is an autonomous part of PNG, but will be holding a referendum in the next five years to consider independence. Island-wide elections are currently underway to elect a government that will negotiate the date and wording of the referendum question. The timing of Australia's announcement of the new diplomatic post angered the PNG government, with foreign minister Rimbink Pato calling the move "outrageous" and "mischievous".⁴⁵

India-Southeast Asia Relations

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Delegation of Royal Brunei Armed Forces on Mumbai visit; Vietnam, India cooperate in remote sensing technology.**

A 34-member delegation of Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command and Staff Course (AFCSC) is on a three-day visit to Mumbai. The delegation comprising 17 Brunei and 16 Foreign Armed forces officers which arrived here yesterday is likely to be stayed put till tomorrow, a Navy release said. The delegation has already visited Naval Dockyard, Heritage Hall and the guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai. In addition, the delegation interacted also with officers of Western Naval Command, the release said. The defence ties between the two nations, the release said include exchange of officers for training and visits by warships.⁴⁶

The Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Indian Department of Space will promote cooperation in remote sensing and outer space technology via joint projects in human resources training and in applying remote sensing technology. The two sides made the joint decision during working sessions between a delegation of the Vietnamese ministry, which made a three-day visit to India recently, and officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Space, and Space Research Organisation. A cooperation agreement between Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and India's Department of Space was also discussed by the two sides. The two sides reviewed preparations for establishing a centre for satellite tracking and data reception and processing for ASEAN – to be located in Vietnam, as part of the ASEAN-India cooperation framework. After three years of preparation, the project has been approved by the ASEAN Secretariat and the Indian Government, with a total budget of 23 million USD sourced from the ASEAN-India cooperation fund.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Papua New Guinea Bans Australians from Travelling to Bougainville", *Radio Australia*, available at <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/2015-05-18/papua-new-guinea-bans-australians-from-travelling-to-bougainville/1448726>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴⁶ "Delegation of Royal Brunei Armed Forces on Mumbai Visit", *Zee News*, available at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/delegation-of-royal-brunei-armed-forces-on-mumbai-visit_1596252.html, accessed on May 19, 2015.

⁴⁷ "Vietnam, India Cooperate in Remote Sensing Technology", *Viet Nam Net Bridge*, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/science-it/130904/vietnam-india-cooperate-in-remote-sensing-technology.html>, accessed on May 19, 2015.

D. Russia

National

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Putin prioritizes the task of Armed Forces modernization; Russian foreign direct investment dropped 40 per cent in 2014; Russia develops a comprehensive programme to manufacture drones; Iskander-M missile systems to be deployed in Kaliningrad region till 2018; Russia's military infrastructure on Cape Schmidt and Wrangel Island to be built by late 2015; Russian Pacific Fleet's aviation steps up flights in area around Kuril Islands; Russia's Uran combat robotic system passes field testing.**

President Putin has, on May 12, called for prioritising the modernisation of Russia's armed forces. He added that the share of modern weapons should reach 32 per cent and 33 per cent in the Army and the Air Force respectively and 40 per cent in the Airborne Troops and over 50 per cent in the Navy and the Aerospace Defence Forces. According to the President, the newly created modified samples of weapons, military and special equipment will reduce the number of their types. This will likely lead to a reduction in the expenditure for the whole rearmament programme.⁴⁸

Overseas investment by Russian companies fell to US\$ 56 billion in 2014, a 40 per cent decline from 2013, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The figure means that Russia in 2014 was the world's sixth-largest foreign direct investor, equal with France. In 2013, Russia was placed fourth, with its companies investing US\$ 95 billion overseas.⁴⁹

Russia has initiated a comprehensive programme to develop the domestic unmanned aircraft industry. The programme reconciles the requirements of military and law enforcement agencies for drones, the state programme for armaments and the industrial measures crucial to implementing the federal agencies' plans.⁵⁰

The commander of Russian army's missile forces and artillery Maj Gen Mikhail Matveyevsky has said, on May 16, that the guided missile brigade stationed in the westernmost Kaliningrad region will be reequipped with the Iskander-M ballistic missile systems till 2018.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Putin Prioritizes Task To Keep Pace Of Armed Forces Modernization", *Itar-Tass*, May 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794225>

⁴⁹ "Russian Foreign Direct Investment Dropped 40% in 2014", *The Moscow Times*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russian-foreign-direct-investment-dropped-40-in-2014/521066.html>

⁵⁰ "First Comprehensive Program For Drones Manufacturing Created in Russia – Official", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795257>

⁵¹ "Iskander-M Missile Systems To Be Deployed In Kaliningrad Region Till 2018", *Itar-Tass*, May 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795113>

Russia's Eastern Military District spokesman Alexander Gordeyev has said, on May 15, that the development of the military towns' infrastructure on Cape Schmidt and Wrangel Island in the Arctic zone will be completed in 2015. To protect Russia's interests in the Arctic, the Joint Strategic Command was formed in 2014 in the polar zone on the basis of the Northern Fleet. Force groupings, combined in the Joint Task Force, have already been formed on the Novaya Zemlya, New Siberian Islands, Wrangel Island and Cape Schmidt. The "North" Joint Strategic Command responsibility area includes the North Pole. The Defence Ministry is building a total of 6 military towns in the Arctic, including on the Chukchi Sea coast and in the area of the Amderma settlement, which will make it possible to control the Northern Sea Route.⁵²

The Eastern Military District's spokesman Roman Martov has said, on May 13, that the naval aviation of Russia's Pacific Fleet has stepped up flights in the area around the Kuril Islands. This includes carrying out various exercises involving search for submarines in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk.⁵³

Russia's multifunctional robotic systems of the Uran family have successfully passed complex army field testing. The Rayevsky range tests included engineer terrain intelligence and long-range target engagement drills with the use of a variety of weapons systems: machine guns and automatic cannons. At the final stage of the tests, the military robots drilled firing antitank guided missiles at armoured vehicles.⁵⁴

International

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Russian President Putin meets US Secretary of State John Kerry in Moscow; Russian and Chinese Navy begin exercises in the Mediterranean; CSTO conducts military drills near the Afghan-Tajik border; Russia will not join the International Arms Trade Treaty; Russia asks Latvia to answer for controversial art installation; Russia says Iran and P5+1 still far from resolving military component of Iran's nuclear programme; Russia ready to cooperate with international partners to ensure progress at talks on the Cyprus problem; Putin discusses bilateral ties with Abkhazia's President; Russia says NATO's interference in Arctic affairs is fraught with serious consequences; Japan develops a freight-passenger link with Russia's Pacific coast; Russia denies the presence of its soldiers in Donbass; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to boost transport cooperation; Eurasian Economic Commission to discuss free trade agreement with Iran; New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty not on Russia's agenda;**

⁵² "Russia's Military Infrastructure On Cape Schmidt, Wrangel Island To Be Built By Late 2015", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794880>

⁵³ "Russian Pacific Fleet's Aviation Steps Up Flights In Area of Kuril Islands", *Itar-Tass*, May 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794424>

⁵⁴ "Russia's Uran Combat Robotic System Passes Field Testing — Source", *Itar-Tass*, May 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794676>

Russia to join declaration of Arctic biological resources; A joint mission to find Soviet soldiers remains launched in China; Russia accuses the West of trying to destabilise Macedonia.

Russian President Putin has met the US Secretary of State John Kerry in Moscow on May 12. This was Putin's first meeting with a senior US official since the cooling of relations over the Ukrainian crisis. A number of issues ranging from developments in Ukraine, Syria and Iran to western economic sanctions on Russia were discussed. The Kremlin later issued a statement that said 'Moscow sees Kerry's visit to Russia as positive, since the adjustment of the troubled relations between Russia and the US is only possible through political dialogue'.⁵⁵

Russian and Chinese naval ships have, from May 18, begun a joint exercise in the eastern Mediterranean wherein they will practise measures to ensure the safety of shipping lanes. The navies will be practising manoeuvres in four tactical groups- anti-sabotage, anti-submarine, anti-ship and anti-air defence protection.⁵⁶

Collective Rapid Reaction Force (CRRF) of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) have completed the first stage of anti-terrorism drills in the area around the Tajik-Afghan border. Around 2,500 servicemen were involved in the drills that witnessed the use of aviation and heavy armoured vehicles. The aim was to prepare the forces to counter the possible invasion of terrorist groups from Afghanistan.⁵⁷

The head of the Foreign Ministry's department on arms control Mikhail Ulyanov has said, on May 17, that Russia has made the decision not to join the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 'as considers it too weak'.⁵⁸

Russia's Embassy in Latvia has, on May 16, sent a note to the country's Foreign Ministry over an installation in Riga which features a crucified person. The installation featuring a crucified man resembling Russian President Vladimir Putin was set up at the former building of Latvia's State Security Committee in Riga which hosts several expositions. The authors of the project who wished to remain anonymous offered everyone to put a nail into the effigy on the cross.⁵⁹

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has said, on May 15, that Iran and P5+1 have failed to reach a solution to a possible military component of Iran's nuclear programme. The

⁵⁵ "Putin is Holding Meeting With US Secretary of State John Kerry", *Itar-Tass*, May 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794254>

⁵⁶ "Russian, Chinese Ships Begin Exercise In Mediterranean To Ensure Shipping Safety", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795280>

⁵⁷ "Defence Line At Tajik-Afghan Border Defined At CSTO Drills — Tajikistan's Defence Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795270>

⁵⁸ "Russia not to Join International Arms Trade Treaty", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795143>

⁵⁹ "Russia Asks Riga To Answer For Controversial Art Installation", *Itar-Tass*, May 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795033>

⁶⁰ "Iran, P5+1 still Far From Solving Probable Military Component Of Iran's Nuclear Programme", *Itar-Tass*, May 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795025>

discussions continue on the list of facilities in Iran that international experts will be granted access to and on what grounds they will obtain this access. He was quoted as saying 'the question is in the access: how much, how often and why the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can gather information in Iran'... 'another aspect is a parallel process of a step-by-step solution to the issues [of possible military aspects of Iran's nuclear programme] that is underway between Iran and the IAEA'.⁶⁰

The spokesperson for the Russian foreign ministry Maria Zakharova has said, on May 15, that Russia is ready to cooperate with international partners to ensure progress at talks on the Cyprus problem. The leaders of the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus had agreed to resume, from May 15, 2015 the United Nations-brokered negotiations to solve the island's longstanding problem. She stated that 'Russia believes that any attempts to impose artificial time limits or ready-to-use settlement solutions are inadmissible. A mutually acceptable and lasting compromise solution can only be agreed by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots'.⁶¹

Russian President Vladimir Putin has, on May 15, discussed relations with his Abkhazian counterpart Raul Khadzhimba in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. Agreements on pensions and on higher salaries for certain groups of public-sector employees were approved while it was stated that work on subjects related to defence, border protection and law enforcement agencies of Abkhazia and Russia is being underway.⁶²

Russia's Permanent Representative at NATO Alexander Grushko has said, on May 15, that NATO's involvement into the Arctic affairs is fraught with serious consequences for global security. He was quoted as saying 'so far, I don't see NATO has any a clear strategy in the Arctic. From time to time, certain countries, forces in NATO try to throw an idea that there is a process of militarization in the Arctic, that the Arctic may soon become a battle-ground in a serious competition for resources, for the right to transport routes, that the global warming is to be reckoned with by the alliance member countries, that the alliance is dependent on energy and must secure access to energy resource in the Arctic. I believe that the policy of understanding that the Arctic region must not be militarized will get the upper hand and that NATO will not get involved in any games around Arctic problems,' the Russian diplomat underscored. "It should be clear that NATO's involvement into the Arctic affairs will be fraught with the most serious consequences for global security".⁶³

Japan has developed a project of a new ferry link between Niigata and the Russian ports of Vladivostok and Zarubino in the Primorye Territory on Russia's Pacific coast. The ferry is designed to transport both tourists and cargoes, including cars and auto spare parts. The ferry travel will

⁶¹ "Russia Ready For Cooperation To Ensure Progress And Talks On Cyprus Problem – ForMin", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/794963>

⁶² "Putin Discusses Bilateral Relations With Abkhazia's President", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794992>

⁶³ "NATO's Interference In Arctic Affairs Fraught With Serious Consequences – Russian Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794947>

cost half the price of an air flight. The distance between Niigata and Vladivostok is about 860 kilometers while Niigata and Tokyo have a distance of about 300 km.⁶⁴

Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov has denied the presence of Russian military in Donbas. Earlier, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko had stated that around 11,000 Russian troops are present in the southeast of Ukraine.⁶⁵

During a meeting of the SCO transport ministers held in Ufa on May 14, it was agreed to boost cooperation in international motor and rail transportation and transport infrastructure. The projects will use the capacities of international development bank, among them the SCO Development Bank. Proposals regarding the formation of an integrated transportation system in the SCO and the use of the potential of the Trans-Siberian and Baikal-Amur railroads coupled with the Silk Roads Economic Belt project will be drawn up by relevant departments by the next meeting whose date and venue will be decided later.⁶⁶

The Eurasian Economic Commission (EAEC) trade minister Andrey Slepnev has said, on May 14, that the Commission will discuss a free trade agreement with Iran. He was quoted as saying 'a relevant initiative of the Iranian side has been stated fairly recently. We are planning to initiate preparation of formal decisions related to joint studies and subsequent negotiations. EAEC representatives agreed to hold consultations with the Armenian business and regulators on development of directives and approaches for such negotiations. Armenia is the only member-nation of the Eurasian Union having land border with Iran and a solid experience of working with this nation'.⁶⁷

The director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Mikhail Ulyanov has said, on May 13, that 'the issue of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is not on Russia's agenda at the moment due to unstable global situation concerning the strategic balance'. He added that 'the situation concerning the strategic stability is very uncertain today. It goes for what we have repeatedly stated about and it is the US missile shield, which is being upgraded and changes a lot in the modern world, the possible deployment of weapons in space as well as misbalances in the sphere of conventional weapons'.⁶⁸

Russia will join declaration on the prevention of unregulated fishing in the high seas of the Arctic Ocean. The order to do so was signed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on May 13. The

⁶⁴ "Japan Develops Project Of Freight, Passenger Ferry Link With Russia's Pacific Coast", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/794940>

⁶⁵ "Russian Defence Ministry Dismisses Poroshenko's Statement As Juggling With Figures", *Itar-Tass*, May 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794899>

⁶⁶ "SCO Set To Boost Transport Cooperation", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, May 15, 2015 at http://rbth.com/news/2015/05/15/sco_set_to_boost_transport_cooperation_46060.html

⁶⁷ "Eurasian Economic Commission will Discuss Free Trade Agreement With Iran — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, May 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/794736>

⁶⁸ "New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty not on Russia's Agenda — Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, May 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/794476>

government's explanatory note stated 'due to the intensive exploitation of living aquatic resources in the World Ocean, one of the priorities is the creation of conditions preventing their uncontrolled fishing. The Arctic remains the region uncovered by international agreements in the sphere of fishing because of the fact that the current ice conditions in the central part of the Arctic Ocean does not allow for any fishing activities. However, in the future the conditions may be created for active exploitation of living aquatic resources in these waters because of climate change. As a result of negotiations between the concerned departments of the Arctic states a draft declaration on the prevention of unregulated fishing in the high seas of the Arctic Ocean was prepared'.⁶⁹

A Russian-Chinese search team has launched the first ever joint search for remains of Soviet soldiers in north-eastern China, where a rifle division of the Soviet army was engaged in fighting with Japanese units in August of 1945. Their work will continue till June 10, 2015 and the team will work in Muling country of Mudanjiang, southeastern Heilngjiang province. A total of 515 Soviet servicemen, including 52 officers and 463 common soldiers and sergeants were killed in the fight against Japanese troops.⁷⁰

Russia has accused "Western organizers" of trying to foment a "colour revolution" in Macedonia, where political tensions have been building in the last week or so. Opponents of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski have demanded his resignation over wire-tap disclosures that appear to indicate widespread abuse of office by senior government officials. Moreover, a bloody gun battle took place last weekend during a police raid on an ethnic Albanian neighbourhood of northern Macedonia that left 18 people dead – 10 ethnic Albanians described by the government as terrorists and eight policemen. Russia has often been critical of Western policy in the Balkans. It strongly backed the Serbs – fellow Orthodox Christian Slavs – in their conflict with their mainly Muslim ethnic Albanian minority in the 1990s. Moscow opposed granting independence to Kosovo, formerly a Serbian province with a mainly ethnic Albanian population. Macedonia, just to the south of Kosovo, is also home to a large ethnic Albanian minority.⁷¹

India-Russia Relations

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **India accepts Russia's offer to assemble advance twin-engine Kamov helicopters.**

India's Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has, on May 14, accepted Russia's proposal to assemble advance twin-engine Kamov helicopters in India. The cost and other modalities for the 200 Kamov

⁶⁹ "Russia To Join Declaration Of Arctic Biological Resources", *Itar-Tass*, May 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/794389>

⁷⁰ "First Joint Mission To Find Soviet Soldiers' Remains Launched in China", *Itar-Tass*, May 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/794300>

⁷¹ "Macedonia Led to 'Color Revolution' by West - Russian Foreign Ministry", *Sputnik News*, May 16, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150516/1022221328.html#ixzz3bPouyb37>

Ka-226T helicopters would be worked out later and some of them are likely to be bought off the shelf.⁷²

E. Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

Iran

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Iran insists it is firm to resolve nuclear issue; Persian Gulf Arab states back Iran nuclear deal: Qatari Emir.**

In separate meetings with South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane in Tehran President Hassan Rouhani and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani have said that Iran is determined to resolve the nuclear standoff with the West. Iran has shown “strong determination” in resolving the nuclear issue with the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) Rouhani said on May 11. “Our basis in the talks is respecting and observing the international regulations and at the same time doing peaceful nuclear activities in the area of nuclear technology on the path of development,” the president stated.⁷³

The Qatari emir says the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council ([P]GCC) backs a possible final deal between Iran and the P5+1 group over the Islamic Republic’s nuclear programme. “The [US] president spoke about the ... agreement with Iran and I am here to say that the [P]GCC welcomes this agreement,” said Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in a joint press conference with US President Barack Obama. “We hope at the same time that this will be a key factor for stability in the region,” the Qatari emir added.⁷⁴

Iraq and Syria

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Islamic State claims responsibility for Karachi bus attack that killed 43 Shiites; ISIL advances on Syria’s ancient city of Palmyra; Abu Sayyaf, key ISIS figure in Syria, killed in U.S. raid.**

Gunmen on motorcycles boarded a bus and opened fire on commuters in Karachi on May 13, killing at least 43, police said. Militants affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility

⁷² “Govt Clears Big-Ticket Defence Deals, Accepts Russia Offer For Choppers Under Make in India”, *Hindustan Times*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/govt-clears-a-string-of-big-ticket-defence-deals/article1-1346959.aspx>

⁷³ “Iran insists It Is Firm To Resolve Nuclear Issue”, *Tehran Times*, May 12, 2015 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=246680

⁷⁴ “Persian Gulf Arab States Back Iran Nuclear Deal: Qatari Emir”, *Presstv*, May 15, 2015 at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/05/15/411155/qatar-Iran-nuclear-Persian-Gulf-Obama>

for the attack. Later, a *Twitter* account from militants identifying themselves as IS claimed responsibility. It was not possible to verify their claims and they did not provide details of the attack. "Thanks to God 43 apostates were killed and close to 30 others were wounded in an attack by the soldiers of Islamic State on a bus carrying people of the Shia Ismaili sect in Karachi," said a statement distributed on *Twitter* by a group calling itself Khorasan Province Islamic State.⁷⁵

Fighters belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have advanced on Syria's ancient city of Palmyra, one of the Middle East's most famous UNESCO heritage sites, with fierce clashes taking place close to the city's historic citadel. Photos circulating on social media sites on May 16 appeared to show intense clashes near the 13th century citadel of Fakhr-al-Din al-Ma'ani as ISIL fighters engaged the Syrian military. Talal Barazi, the governor of central Homs province, where the city is located, said on May 14 that the "army has sent reinforcements and it is bombing the [ISIL] positions from the air". Palmyra, a 2,000-year-old desert oasis, is believed to be home to some 100,000 people, including displaced Syrians who fled there after their home towns were engulfed in violence.⁷⁶

U.S. Special Operations forces killed a key ISIS commander during a daring raid in eastern Syria overnight on May 15 to May 16 securing intelligence on how the terror organization operates, communicates and earns money, U.S. government officials said. The ISIS commander, identified by his nom de guerre Abu Sayyaf, was killed in a heavy firefight after he resisted capture in the raid at al-Omar, U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter said in a statement. The officials identified Sayyaf's captured wife as Umm Sayyaf, an Iraqi. She is now being held in Iraq.⁷⁷

The Gulf

(May 11-17, 2015)

● Saudi Arabia continues air attacks ahead of Yemen ceasefire.

Saudi Arabia's bombardment of Yemen has left its war-ravaged capital, Sana'a, a "ghost town", as opposing sides in the conflict prepared to implement a ceasefire due to begin on May 12 evening. Jets from the Saudi-led coalition continued their air offensive targeting arms dumps in the capital, in what fleeing residents said was the heaviest assault since Riyadh launched its aerial campaign against Houthi rebels at the end of March.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ "Islamic State Claims Responsibility For Karachi Bus Attack That Killed 43 Shiites", *The Indian Express*, May 14, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/neighbours/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-karachi-bus-attack-that-killed-43/>

⁷⁶ "ISIL Advances On Syria's Ancient City of Palmyra", *Aljazeera*, May 16, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/isil-seizes-parts-famed-castle-syria-palmyra-150516052303945.html>

⁷⁷ "Abu Sayyaf, Key ISIS Figure in Syria, Killed in U.S. Raid", *CNN*, May 17, 2015 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/16/middleeast/syria-isis-us-raid/>

⁷⁸ "Saudi Arabia Continues Air Attacks Ahead Of Yemen Ceasefire", *Financial Times*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/16ee961a-f889-11e4-be00-00144feab7de.html#axzz3aUTorwEZ>

F. The United State of America

National

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **President nominates Milley, Richardson to lead Army, Navy; US House votes to end NSA phone collection programme; Official: Cybercrime must be seen as foreign policy priority; House passes bill to let Congress review Iran nuclear deal; US Senate advances Obama trade agenda; US court sentences Bin Laden aide to life in prison; Boston bomber sentenced to death; Carter names James H. Baker as new net assessment director; Winnefeld: DoD must strengthen public, private ties; US republican presidential contenders take aim at Obama, Clinton.**

President Barack Obama has nominated Gen. Mark A. Milley as the next Army chief of staff, and Adm. John M. Richardson as the next chief of naval operations, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said in Washington on May 13. If confirmed by the Senate, Milley would replace Gen. Ray Odierno and Richardson would replace Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert. Milley and Richardson would be members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Army Secretary John M. McHugh, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, accompanied Carter at the lectern. Milley is currently serving as the commander U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Richardson now is the director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Programme.⁷⁹

Legislation that would end the U.S. National Security Agency's massive collection of telephone records of ordinary Americans has been overwhelmingly approved by the House of Representatives. The legislation, known as the USA Freedom Act, passed on May 13 by a vote 338-to-88. Instead of the bulk collection of phone records, including the date, time, and duration of the phone call, the bill would require the NSA to obtain the records from private phone companies after getting a court order from a secret national security court. The programme came under fire from advocates of civil liberties after former contractor Edward Snowden disclosed it to journalists in 2013. The House bill received strong support from both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, as well as President Barack Obama.⁸⁰

The U.S. State Department's point person on computer security issues says progress is being made in fighting cybercrime worldwide but that the international community is only starting to wake up to the issue's importance. The recent hacker attack targeting Sony Pictures, which North Korea was allegedly behind, and another targeting email systems belonging to the State Department and White House, allegedly the work of Russian hackers, graphically illustrated the

⁷⁹ Garamone, Jim, "President Nominates Milley, Richardson to Lead Army, Navy", *DoD News*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128799>

⁸⁰ "US House Votes to End NSA Phone Collection Programme", *VOA News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-house-votes-to-end-nsa-phone-collection-program/2767045.html>

threat of cybercrime. According to Christopher Painter, the State Department's coordinator for cyber issues, the international community has been playing catch-up. "While the Internet has been growing and evolving for a few decades now, the international community has only more recently begun to fully grasp cyber issues as a foreign policy priority," he told a Senate subcommittee on May 14. The Obama administration put forward its strategy for keeping cyberspace secure in 2011 with the release of the International Strategy for Cyberspace. That strategy document says the U.S. will "oppose those who would seek to disrupt networks and systems" and respond to cyber-attacks as it would to any other threat to the country. It also stresses the need for international cooperation.⁸¹

In a rare show of bipartisanship, the U.S. House of Representatives has overwhelmingly passed legislation that would let Congress review any potential deal to curb Iran's nuclear programme before sanctions are lifted. The vote was 400-25, and came one week after the Senate passed the same measure by a vote of 98-1. Most Democratic lawmakers came to the House floor to praise the president and his administration for their efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon – using diplomacy instead of threats of war. But many Republicans, including Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, said the emerging deal is a bad one, granting Iran concession after concession, without getting anything in return.⁸²

The U.S. Senate has bolstered President Barack Obama's trade agenda by voting 65-33 to begin debate on a bill facilitating the approval of a free trade pact among 12 Pacific Rim nations that account for 40 percent of global economic output. "This debate will determine whether our nation is willing and able to accept the challenges of the world economy, or whether we continue in retreat and yield to the siren song of isolationism and protectionism," said Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who co-authored Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), a bill that subjects trade accords to up-or-down congressional votes with no amendments allowed. Two days after Democrats blocked debate on TPA, a faction of pro-trade Democrats joined with Republicans on May 14 to advance the measure, which has the firm backing of the Obama administration.⁸³

A New York court on May 15 sentenced a former aide to Osama bin Laden to life in prison for his role in al-Qaida's plan to kill Americans. Khalid al-Fawwaz, 52, a citizen of Saudi Arabia, was convicted earlier this year of conspiring to kill Americans. U.S. prosecutors accused Fawwaz of playing multiple roles in al-Qaida through the 1990s, including as London-based media adviser to bin Laden during the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people. Prosecutors also said Fawwaz trained at and eventually led an al-Qaida training camp in Afghanistan. He was arrested in Britain in 1998 and was extradited to the United States in 2012.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Hetherington, Kells, "Official: Cyber Crime Must Be Seen as Foreign Policy Priority", *VOA News*, May 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/cyber-crime-must-be-seen-foreign-policy-priority/2771391.html>

⁸² Saine, Cindy, "House Passes Bill To Let Congress Review Iran Nuclear Deal", *VOA News*, May 14, 2015

⁸³ Bowman, Michael, "US Senate Advances Obama Trade Agenda", *VOA News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-senate-advances-obama-trade-agenda/2767898.html>

⁸⁴ "US Court Sentences Bin Laden Aide to Life in Prison", *VOA News*, May 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/court-sentences-bin-laden-aide-life-in-prison/2771251.html>

Meanwhile, Convicted Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev has been sentenced to death over the April 2013 attack that killed three people and wounded 264 others. A Boston jury, consisting of seven men and five women, reached the decision on May 15 in the penalty phase of the trial after deliberating for more than 14 hours over three days. The jury unanimously determined that, based on the “aggravating and mitigating circumstances,” Tsarnaev should be sentenced to death.⁸⁵

Defence Secretary Ash Carter appointed James H. Baker to serve as the director of the Office of Net Assessment according to a Defence Department news release issued on May 13. “From his service in uniform to his work on the Joint Staff, Jim Baker has devoted much time and energy to thinking about the future security environment,” Carter said. Baker will leave his post as principal deputy director for strategic plans and policy and strategist for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin E. Dempsey. The Office of Net Assessment is an independent organization within DoD and is charged with identifying emerging or future threats and opportunities for the United States. To do so, the office develops and assesses standing trends and future prospects of U.S. military capabilities, in comparison with other countries. Baker will report directly to Secretary of Defence Carter. He succeeds Andrew Marshall, who retired in January after 42 years of DoD service.⁸⁶

The military has two jobs for America: to fight today’s wars and to prepare to fight the wars of the future, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in West Point, New York, on May 14. More than ever, the military is going to have to harness the power of all aspects of America’s economy – including private industry – to field the pre-eminent force of the future, Navy Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr. told an audience of military, industry and government officials attending the Joint Service Academy Cyber Security Summit at the U.S. Military Academy. Driving the shift is a movement of money from public or government research and development to private sources, Winnefeld said. Although research and development is the seed corn for tomorrow’s capabilities, DoD’s investment in it has fallen precipitously, the admiral noted. The department’s fiscal year 2016 science and technology budget request is about \$12.3 billion.⁸⁷

U.S. Republican presidential candidates are continuing their quest to woo conservative voters with a barrage of attacks on President Barack Obama and the leading 2016 Democratic contender to replace him, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Nine declared or possible Republican candidates spoke on May 9 at the Freedom Summit in the Southern state of South Carolina. South Carolina is a staunch Republican state that will hold one of the early party nominating contests next year, a prelude to picking the Republican presidential nominee for the national election in November 2016.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ “Boston Bomber Sentenced to Death”, *VOA News*, May 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/jury-reaches-decision-on-boston-bomber-penalty/2768933.html>

⁸⁶ “Carter Names New Net Assessment Director”, *DoD News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128808>

⁸⁷ Garamone, Jim, “Winnefeld: DoD Must Strengthen Public, Private Ties”, *DoD News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128810>

⁸⁸ “US Republican Presidential Contenders Take Aim at Obama, Clinton”, *VOA News*, May 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-republican-presidential-contenders-take-aim-at-obama-clinton/2762105.html>

International: Asia

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Marine helicopter goes missing during Nepal relief mission; Task Force continues humanitarian aid, missing Helo search in Nepal; Kerry urges closer ties among allies to battle IS; President Obama hails US-Saudi ties; Carter, Saudi leader discuss defence relationship; Obama maintains hope for two-state solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict; US 'deeply concerned' over Morsi death sentence; DoD announces plan to deploy CV-22 Osprey Squadron in Japan; DoD outlines strategies to counter Chinese aggression; China concerned about possible US patrols around islands; US, China remain divided over South China Sea disputes; US officials brief key lawmakers on China nuclear deal; China, US have weapons for cyber assault; Chinese investors flood US entrepreneur visa programme.**

A U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Huey helicopter with six Marines and two Nepalese service members aboard was declared missing on May 12 near Charikot, Nepal, Joint Task Force 505 officials reported. Officials said the status of those aboard is unknown. The Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 469 helicopter was flying in support of Joint Task Force 505, delivering humanitarian aid to people affected by a recent earthquake and was evacuating casualties back to Kathmandu. Joint Task Force 505 personnel are responding to the emergency, officials said, and Nepalese military forces near the helicopter's last known location are searching for the missing aircraft.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Joint Task Force 505 continued efforts to find a missing U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Huey helicopter, as well as to provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief for the country of Nepal. So far, two UH-1Y Hueys, two MV-22 Ospreys, one Indian Mi-17 and three Nepalese helicopters have searched for the Huey that went missing May 12 near Charikot, Nepal, while conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Augmenting the aerial search are Nepalese troops – a special forces platoon and a battalion-sized element.

U.S. Marine Huey and Osprey aircraft delivered 174,706 pounds of emergency relief supplies since Operation Sahayogi Haat began.⁹⁰ On May 17, Joint Task Force 505 officials identified the six U.S. Marines who were killed along with two Nepalese soldiers when their UH-1Y Huey helicopter went down in the mountains of Nepal May 12.⁹¹

On May 13, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for closer ties among allies in the battle against the Islamic State militant group. Kerry, speaking on the side-lines of a NATO meeting of

⁸⁹ "Marine Helicopter Goes Missing During Nepal Relief Mission", *DoD News*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128790>

⁹⁰ "Task Force Continues Humanitarian Aid, Missing Helo Search in Nepal", *DoD News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128807>

⁹¹ "Marines Killed in Nepal Helo Crash Identified, Recovered", *DoD News*, May 17, 2015 at

⁹² Jones, Dorian, "Kerry Urges Closer Ties Among Allies to Battle IS", *VOA News*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-now-is-critical-moment-for-ukraine-conflict/2765581.html>

foreign ministers in the Turkish Mediterranean resort city of Antalya, called for a more coherent approach among the six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council, known as the GCC, and the rest of the wider alliance of countries fighting the Islamic State group.⁹²

U.S. President Barack Obama says the United States and Saudi Arabia have an “extraordinary friendship” that dates back to former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, more than seven decades ago. President Obama hailed U.S.-Saudi ties as he welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for talks at the White House on May 13, a day before the summit with leaders of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council nations at Camp David, Maryland. The gathering began late Wednesday with a dinner at the White House. The summit continues on May 14 at the presidential retreat north of the U.S. capital.⁹³

On May 13, Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Defence Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss the U.S.-Saudi bilateral defence relationship, according to a Defence Department news release. The meeting was held ahead of Prince Mohammed’s scheduled visit to Camp David on May 14, as part of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council summit, the release said. Carter emphasized the importance of the U.S.-Saudi strategic partnership and reiterated both countries shared commitment to ensuring a stable and secure Middle East, the release said. He also pointed out the importance of working together through bilateral security cooperation to confront the most pressing security challenges in the region.⁹⁴

President Barack Obama said he has not given up hope for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but noted that simmering tensions in the region and “serious questions” about overall commitment have stifled progress. In a wide-ranging interview on May 12 with the London-based Arabic-language newspaper *Ashaq al-Awsat*, Obama said peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is not only possible, but is in the national security interest of the United States as well. He said that is why the U.S. has worked so hard over the years for a two-state solution and to develop innovative ways to address Israeli security and Palestinian sovereignty needs. Obama said he expects the new Israeli government and the Palestinians to demonstrate a genuine commitment to a two-state solution.⁹⁵

The United States says it is “deeply concerned” about the death sentences handed down to former President Mohamed Morsi and more than 100 other defendants for a 2011 mass prison break. “We have consistently spoken out against the practice of mass trials and sentences, which are conducted in a manner that is inconsistent with Egypt’s international obligations and the rule of law,” a State Department official said on May 17. The sentences were handed down on May 16 in

⁹³ Pande, Aru, “Obama Hails US-Saudi Ties”, *VOA News*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-says-us-saudi-arabia-have-extraordinary-friendship/2766262.html>

⁹⁴ “Carter, Saudi Leader Discuss Defence Relationship”, *DoD News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128806>

⁹⁵ Richman, Mike, “Obama Maintains Hope for Two-State Solution to Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, *VOA News*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-maintains-hope-for-two-state-solution-to-israeli-palestinian-conflict/2765481.html>

a Cairo court. The Grand Mufti, Egypt's top religious authority, will make the final decision on the sentences on June 2. The former president is also facing espionage charges. A lawyer for Morsi said he would appeal his client's death sentence. Muslim Brotherhood supporters called for protest against Morsi's death sentence.⁹⁶

The Department of Defence announced plans to station a special operations squadron of CV-22 Osprey aircraft at Yokota Air Base, Japan, according to a DoD news release issued on May 11. The first three aircraft will arrive in the second half of 2017 with an additional seven aircraft scheduled to arrive by 2021, the release said. The deployment of tilt-rotor aircraft will provide increased capability for U.S. Special Operations forces to respond quickly to crises and contingencies in Japan and across the Asia-Pacific region, including humanitarian crises and natural disasters, according to the release. The deployment will also increase interoperability, enhance operational cooperation, and promote stronger defence relations with the Japan Self-Defence Forces, according to the release. The CV-22 Osprey is a highly advanced aircraft with unique capabilities and an excellent operational safety record, the release said. The deployment reflects the United States' steadfast commitment to defend Japan and to station its most advanced capabilities forward as part of the Asia-Pacific Rebalance, according to the release.⁹⁷

While China's land reclamation and maritime disputes in the South China Sea are troubling, they are nothing new, the assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific security affairs David B. Shear told a Senate panel on May 13. Shear told Senate Foreign Relations Committee members that China's acts of aggression are "decades old," and he outlined ongoing Defence Department actions to safeguard American interests in the South China Sea.

Although several nations and territories in the Asia-Pacific region also have set up outposts, "China's 2,000-acre reclamation since 2014 dwarfs the other claimants," and suggests new and troubling changes in the regional status quo, Shear said. China's actions could pose a range of military implications, he said, such as developing long-range radars and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft to berthing deeper-draft ships and developing a diversion airfield for carrier-based aircraft.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, China expressed "serious concern" about reports that the U.S. is considering sending military ships and planes to challenge Chinese claims to islands it is building in the South China Sea, and said it would resolutely defend what it considered its sovereign territory. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the U.S. needs to clarify its stance on the matter and that countries should avoid "risky and provocative approaches to maintain the regional peace and stability." While the U.S. military already operates in the South China Sea, crossing the 12 nautical

⁹⁶ "US 'Deeply Concerned' Over Morsi Death Sentence", *VOA News*, May 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-deeply-concerned-over-morsi-death-sentence/2773935.html>

⁹⁷ "CV-22 Osprey Squadron Headed for Japan", *DoD News*, May 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128784>

⁹⁸ Cronk, Terri Moon, "DoD Outlines Strategies to Counter Chinese Aggression", *DoD News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128805>

mile (22.2 kilometres) territorial limit around the islands could raise tensions if China chose to respond.⁹⁹

Despite growing tensions over a territorial dispute in the South China Sea, Chinese President Xi Jinping says relations with the United States remain stable. Xi told visiting U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on May 17 that he looks forward to his upcoming visit to the U.S. in September and he believes that, working together, the two sides can bring Chinese-U.S. relations to a new height. China has been building reefs and outcroppings at seven maritime sites in a push to strengthen its claims. The Philippines has called for “urgent action,” while the Association of Southeast Asian Nations recently warned that Chinese encroachment was a threat to regional peace. U.S. officials said this past week that the Defence Department was considering sending military ships and planes to the South China Sea to enforce freedom of navigation. Beijing countered, saying that any such move would be considered provocative.¹⁰⁰

U.S. security and nuclear energy officials briefed key lawmakers on May 11 about the proposed 30-year extension of a U.S. nuclear power cooperation deal with China. The closed-door meeting in Washington was called as Congress begins to consider whether to renew a pact that has been in effect for the past 30 years and expires at the end of this year. A new agreement would permit China, with the biggest nuclear power market in the world, to buy more U.S.-designed reactors and other nuclear technology to reprocess plutonium from spent fuel.¹⁰¹

As the World Wide Web has evolved and grown more complicated, so have the tools and techniques of cyber-espionage and military action. Perhaps nowhere is this evolution more clearly seen than in China’s recently disclosed “Great Cannon” and its similarities to a tool reportedly possessed by the United States known as “QUANTUM.” Depending on how they are wielded, both can serve as a high-tech tool for spies, intimidating weapons of cyber assault, or a combination of both, analysts say. Jeff Rathke, acting deputy spokesperson for the State Department, said any effort to censor the Web or use it in an offensive fashion is troubling. “We are concerned by reports that China has used a new cyber capability to interfere with the ability of worldwide Internet users to access content posted outside of China,” Rathke said.¹⁰²

The huge demand from wealthy Chinese citizens for U.S. investor visas has resulted in a shortage and a two-to-three year waiting list for many of those applying. The supply of, and demand for, U.S. investor visas track how China’s newly wealthy are eagerly pursuing U.S. visas. Congress created the so-called EB-5 visa programme in 1990 as a way to give foreign entrepreneurs the

⁹⁹ “China Concerned About Possible US Patrols Around Islands”, *Associated Press*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-china-concerned-about-possible-us-patrols-around-islands/2765651.html>

¹⁰⁰ Ide, William, “US, China Remain Divided Over South China Sea Disputes”, *VOA News*, May 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-china/2771542.html>

¹⁰¹ “US Officials Brief Key Lawmakers on China Nuclear Deal”, *VOA News*, May 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-officials-brief-key-lawmakers-on-nuclear-power-deal-with-china/2763215.html>

¹⁰² Bernard, Doug, “China, US Have Weapons for Cyber assault”, *VOA News*, May 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-us-have-weapons-for-cyberattack/2760213.html>

opportunity to live and work in the United States by investing in American businesses. Gaining a visa broadly requires foreigners to invest in a business that either creates or saves 10 jobs in the United States. The entrepreneurs must invest at least \$1 million or \$500,000 if the business is located in certain rural areas or places of high unemployment. By doing so, the investor can gain a “green card,” which is a document granting permanent residence.¹⁰³

India-US Relations

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **US House calls for expansion of India-US defence cooperation; Defence ministry okays \$3.4 billion deals including procurement of US-origin M777 artillery guns; M777 Howitzers deal to bring over \$200 million investment in India; Fuelled by immigration, Hinduism becomes fourth-largest faith in US; Pakistan ‘haven’ for Islamist terror groups: US CRS Report.**

Ahead new US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter’s visit to India, the House of Representatives on May 15 passed an amendment calling for expansion of the Indo-US defence cooperation and welcoming India’s role in providing security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. The amendment to the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2016 was moved by a bipartisan group of Congressmen including Joe Crowley, Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus; Eliot Engel, Ranking Member of House Foreign Affairs Committee; Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and the two Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans Ami Bera and George Holding.

In addition to urging an overall expansion in defence ties, the amendment specifically calls for the US to welcome the role India plays in providing security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.¹⁰⁴

In what will be a major fillip to the private defence manufacturing sector, the government has cleared three ‘Make in India’ contracts worth \$3.4 billion, including a project to procure US-origin M777 artillery guns. *The Economic Times* was the first to report on May 8 that the ultra-light howitzers could be partly made locally with BAE proposing to shift its production unit in New Delhi in partnership with a private firm. In the race for this \$700-million deal are Mahindra, L&T and Tata, who can get a share in the ammunition, spares and maintenance of the guns. Another major contract cleared by the Manohar Parrikar-led defence ministry has the potential of turning Tata into an Indian aviation giant. A partnership venture of Airbus and Tata have been cleared to produce a new series of transport planes for the Indian Air Force. This deal, which mandates setting up of a

¹⁰³ Sant, Shannon Van, “Chinese Investors Flood US Entrepreneur Visa Programme”, *VOA News*, May 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/chinese-investors-flood-us-entrepreneur-visa-program/2767092.html>

¹⁰⁴ “US House calls for Expansion of India-US Defence Cooperation”, *PTI*, May 15, 2015 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/US-House-calls-for-Expansion-of-India-US-Defence-Cooperation/2015/05/15/article2816174.ece>

production line in India, is worth \$2 billion. While the initial order is for 56 aircraft, as first reported by *The Economic Times* it is likely to expand to at least 64 on the strength of a coast guard requirement.¹⁰⁵

The decision to acquire 145 pieces of M777 Ultra-Light Howitzers from the US under a government to government deal, would see its manufacturer BAE Systems investing over \$200 million here, which will give a boost to the government's 'Make in India' initiative. The investment will be part of the 30 per cent offset policy. It envisages investing in about 40 Indian defence suppliers with an emphasis on the Defence PSUs and the MSME (Medium, Small & Micro Enterprises) sector. It also offers to establish an Assembly Integration and Test facility for the weapon system in India in partnership with an Indian industrial company. "In discussion with the US government, BAE Systems has developed a strong case with a fully compliant offset proposal, which meets India's offset objectives, of over \$200 million," Vice President (Business Development and Strategic Planning Land and Armament) BAE Systems, John Kelly said.¹⁰⁶

Fuelled by immigration, America's Hindu population has reached 2.23 million, an increase of about one million or 85.8 percent since 2007, making Hinduism the fourth-largest faith, according to estimates based on wide-ranging study of religions in the nation. The proportion of Hindus in the US population rose from 0.4 percent in 2007 to 0.7 percent in 2014, according to the Pew Research Centre's "Religious Landscape Study" published on May 12. The study only gave the percentage shares of Hindus in the population, rather than numbers, but calculations by IANS using the population proportions in the report and census projections showed that the number of Hindus rose from 1.2 million in 2007 out of a total US population of 301.2 million that year to 2.23 million in 2014 in a population of 318.88 million. This amounts to an increase of 1.03 million or 85.8 percent in the Hindu population during the seven-year period.¹⁰⁷

Pakistan is a "haven" for several Islamist terror groups and successive Pakistani governments are widely believed to have supported some outfits as proxies in the country's historical conflicts with its neighbours, according to a US Congressional Research Service (CRS) report. "Pakistan is a haven for numerous Islamist extremist and terrorist groups, and successive Pakistani governments are widely believed to have tolerated and even supported some of these as proxies in Islamabad's historical tensions and conflicts with neighbours," said the latest report by the independent Congressional Research Service (CRS) on Pakistan. The report titled *Pakistan-U.S. Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress* by K. Alan Kronstadt dated May 14, notes that Pakistan's security services are seen by many independent analysts to be too willing to make distinctions

¹⁰⁵ Pubby, Manu, "Make in India: Defence Ministry Okays \$3.4 Billion Deals Including Procurement of US-Origin M777 Artillery Guns", *The Economic Times*, May 14, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/make-in-india-defence-ministry-okays-3-4-billion-deals-including-procurement-of-us-origin-m777-artillery-guns/articleshow/47274605.cms>

¹⁰⁶ "M777 Howitzers Deal To Bring Over \$200 Million Investment in India", *PTI*, May 15, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/m777-howitzers-deal-to-bring-over-200-million-investment-in-india/articleshow/47297149.cms>

¹⁰⁷ "Fuelled by Immigration, Hinduism Becomes Fourth-Largest Faith in US", *IANS*, May 13, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Fueled-by-immigration-Hinduism-becomes-fourth-largest-faith-in-US/articleshow/47268625.cms>

between what they consider to be “good” and “bad” Islamist extremist groups, maintaining supportive relations with Afghan insurgents and anti-India militant groups operating from Pakistani territory.¹⁰⁸

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Government of India identifies 73 roads for development along the international border with China; Initial investigations into the Sukhoi-30 crash at Pune do not indicate human error or technical defect as the cause.**

The defence minister has informed the Rajya Sabha that the government has identified 73 roads for development along the International Border with China. Of these 73 Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs), 61 roads of total length 3410 km have been entrusted to Border Roads Organisation (BRO). Certain norms in this regard have been relaxed for projects concerning national defence and security or involving other strategic considerations. Out of 61 ICBRs with BRO, 19 roads of length 625 Km has already been completed. The connectivity has been achieved on 24 roads and the work is under progress on 16 roads, while works on 2 roads is yet to commence. Out of the remaining 42 ICBRs, the target set for completion for 40 ICBRs is 2018 and for 2 roads the completion is expected to go beyond 2018.¹⁰⁹

The defence minister Manohar Parrikar has informed the Rajya Sabha that the investigations into the Sukhoi-30 crash on 14.10.2014 at Pune are still going on and till now it has not indicated human error or technical defect as the cause. All Sukhoi-30 aircraft crashes have been investigated thoroughly by Indian Air Force and there is no proposal to reinvestigate any of these accidents.¹¹⁰

International

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Troops from Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation taking part in joint exercises in Tajikistan; United States ups the ante in its war on the Islamic State in Syria.**

Reports say that Russia has deployed hundreds of troops for drills in Central Asia with its ex-

¹⁰⁸ Jha, Lalit K., “Pakistan ‘Haven’ For Islamist Terror Groups: US Report”, *The Outlook*, MAY 26, 2015 at <http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/pakistan-haven-for-islamist-terror-groups-us-report/898931>

¹⁰⁹ “Road Building Along China Borders,” *PIB*, May 12, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=121590>

¹¹⁰ “Crash of Sukhoi-30 Aircraft,” *PIB*, May 12, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=121589>

Soviet allies. The move is seen in the background of growing anxiety over a surge in fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan. Around 2,500 personnel from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) are taking part in joint exercises in Tajikistan. The move is seen as re-enforcing Russia's role as the main guarantor of the fragile region's security after US troops leave Afghanistan. The Russian deployment of about 500 troops for the drills started last week, bolstered by soldiers from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Belarus. Tajikistan is in a strategic spot, bordering Afghanistan's Kunduz province where over 200 people have died and 10,000 been displaced by a militant offensive. The surge in Afghan fighting has rattled Russia's ex-Soviet allies in Central Asia, and some have looked towards Russia for assistance. Tajikistan hosts a Russian military base and has called for Moscow to step up its military assistance to the country.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, according to reports, the United States has upped the ante in its war on the Islamic State in Syria. In a rare ground operation by special operations forces US commandos killed a dozen militants and a major fundraiser. The decision to send commandos to strike the inner circle of the IS group was an unexpected move by the United States, which has so far fought the extremists almost entirely from the air. The raid is the first publicly confirmed American ground operation targeting jihadists in Syria. The elite troops from the US Army's Delta special operations forces based in Iraq conducted these operations.¹¹²

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Militants attack CRPF in South Kashmir, 2 jawans killed; MHA approves over Rs 550 Cr worth projects for J&K; Security forces bust militant hideout in North Kashmir, recover arms cache.**

Militants on May 11 attacked a Road Opening Party (ROP) of CRPF in South Kashmir's Anantnag district, killing two of its personnel including an officer. Police officials said that the militants attacked a ROP party of CRPF's 90 battalion that was deployed at Sangam area in Anantnag district. "The attack took place at 3 pm and two CRPF personnel, including an ASI, who were deployed at Panzpora crossing in the district, died on the spot," said a police official. The police official said that militants also snatched away one rifle from the slain CRPF personnel.¹¹³

¹¹¹ "Russia Flexes Central Asia Military Might," *Defence News*, May 17, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/asia-pacific/2015/05/17/russia-flexes-central-asia-military-might-amid-afghan-fears/27494697/>

¹¹² "Top IS Fundraiser Killed In US Raid In Syria," *Defence News*, May 17, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/05/17/top-fundraiser-killed-rare-us-raid-syria/27494963/>

¹¹³ Akhzer, Adil, "Two CRPF Personnel Killed In Militant Attack in J&K", *The Indian Express*, May 11, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/two-crpf-personnel-killed-in-militant-attack-in-jk/>

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on May 15 approved projects worth about Rs 550 crores including those covered under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) for Jammu and Kashmir at a high level meeting held in New Delhi. The meeting was presided over by MHA's Special Secretary (Internal Security) Ashok Prasad, who had earlier served as Director General of Police (DGP) in Jammu and Kashmir. As reported by *Daily Excelsior*, out of Rs 740.79 crores worth projects submitted for approval by the State to the MHA, the Centre has given nod for over Rs 550 crores worth projects. However, in principle, the MHA has agreed to fund all projects worth Rs 740.79 crores provided that the State increased its spending capability.¹¹⁴

Security forces on May 16 busted a militant hideout in North Kashmir's Baramulla district after reports of continued militant movements in the area and a massive hunt continued for the militants who snatched weapons from security forces recently in South Kashmir and attempted weapon snatching in Budgam district on May 15. The Army launched the operation along with Special Operations Group of Jammu and Kashmir Police in forested area of Guriwan Village near Zandfaran, South of Gantamulla during the night and recovered huge cache of arms, ammunition and war like stores. The recovered arms and ammunition include one AK 47 rifle, 460 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, one Chinese pistol, two magazines of Chinese pistol, 28 rounds of Chinese pistol, 8 RPGs, 3 UBGL, 20 UBGL rounds, 8 RPG Boosters, 2 Radio sets and 1 GPS.¹¹⁵

Northeast India

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Assam not to bear burden of displaced people: MHA; Security forces arrest 2 NDFB(S) militants in Sonitpur; Centre keen to take views of all stakeholders in peace talks with the NSCN (I-M); Pro-talk ULFA, Centre hold talks.**

Highly placed sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) told *The Assam Tribune* that though there would not be any major displacement of population during the implementation of the land swap deal with Bangladesh, India would have to take some additional burden and the State affected by it would be West Bengal. Sources pointed out that there are 111 Indian enclaves in four districts of Bangladesh covering an area of 17,160.63 acres, while 51 Bangladeshi enclaves covering an area of 7110.02 acres are in India. As per the land swap deal, the enclaves would be exchanged. A head count of the people living in the enclaves was carried out jointly by India and Bangladesh in 2011 and it was found that 51,549 people are living in these enclaves. Around 37,000 persons are living in the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, while over 14,000 are living in the Bangladeshi enclaves in India, which are located in the Coochbehar district of West Bengal. But sources asserted that Assam would not be affected by any extra burden of population. Meanwhile, according to a report of the Ministry of External Affairs on the land swap deal, Assam would be the only affected State that would not gain land from the deal.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ "MHA Approves Over Rs 550 Cr Worth Projects Under SRE", *Daily Excelsior*, May 16, 2015 at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/mha-approves-over-rs-550-cr-worth-projects-under-sre/>

¹¹⁵ Bukhari, Fayaz, "Massive hunt against weapon snatching militant modules", *Daily Excelsior*, May 17, 2015 at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/massive-hunt-against-weapon-snatching-militant-modules/>

¹¹⁶ Choudhury, R Dutta, "Assam not To Bear Burden Of Displaced People", *The Assam Tribune*, May 11, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1115/at050>

Two NDFB(S) cadres were arrested by a joint team of 36 Assam Rifles, Cobra Bn and Assam Police on May 9 from Lakhpathar under Charduar PS in Sonitpur, police said. They have been identified as Julish Basumatari alias Jojai and Sankosh Basumatari alias Swailsha.¹¹⁷

The Government of India is keen on taking into consideration views of all the stakeholders including public representatives while carrying forward the peace talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (I-M). The government is also keen on completing the peace process within this year. As reported by *The Assam Tribune*, the Centre's interlocutor for the Naga talks RN Ravi, who is also chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), would be in Nagaland on a three-day visit from May 13 to hold a series of talks with representatives of different organisations. The Centre's interlocutor is scheduled to hold talks with all the public representatives irrespective of their party affiliation and the Speaker of the Nagaland Assembly has already been informed in this regard. Apart from the public representatives, he would also hold talks with different civil society organisations including Naga Ho Ho, as their views are important to carry forward the peace talks.¹¹⁸

The first round of interaction between the pro-talk faction of ULFA and NDA government was described as "positive". A tripartite meeting, involving the representatives of the Government of Assam and ULFA, was held under the chairmanship of Union Home Secretary LC Goyal to review the progress made in talks with ULFA. The delegation also called on Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju, who assured them of the Centre's firm commitment to resolve their demands at the earliest. The delegation was also assured that the government is working on getting Anup Chetia released.¹¹⁹

Left-Wing Extremism

(May 11-17, 2015)

- **Chhattisgarh seeks Naga battalions to take on Naxals; CPI (Maoist) warns of attack against Salwa Judum-II; Lalgah movement: Chhatradhar Mahato and five others get life imprisonment; Police arrest Central committee member among 8 Maoists in Bihar.**

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh has sought battalions of Nagaland armed police force personnel from the Union Home Ministry to take on Naxals in his state. "Experience shows that Nagaland battalions were very useful in fighting the Naxalites. They are very good at jungle warfare," Singh told *PTI*. CM Raman Singh said his government was determined to end the Naxal menace in the state. Asked about his views on deployment of Army to fight Naxals, Singh

¹¹⁷ "2 NDFB(S) Ultras Arrested", *The Assam Tribune*, May 11, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1115/at055>

¹¹⁸ Choudhury, R Dutta, "Centre To Take Views Of All Stakeholders", *The Assam Tribune*, May 13, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1315/at054>

¹¹⁹ Barooah, Kalyan, "Pro-talk ULFA, Centre Hold Talks", *The Assam Tribune*, May 16, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1615/at053>

expressed his reservation. "Neither our Constitution nor our conscience would allow deployment of the Army. They are for fighting external enemies. We will take on Naxals. Naxalism will be removed from the state soon," he said.¹²⁰

The outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) has warned to carry out another Jiram Ghati-like attack in response to the second phase of anti-Maoist militia Salwa Judum in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. "This Salwa Judum-2 is nothing but a Hindutva fascist BJP government-sponsored murderous goons gangster organization formed by the Congress Karma family and the goons of BJP and anti-people elements," said CPI (Maoist) Danda Karanya Special Zonal Committee (ZKSZC) spokesperson Gudsa Usendi, in a press statement. Calling for a strong resistance to Salwa Judum-2, the Maoist spokesperson appealed to the masses of Bastar, mainly the Tribals to become alert towards the "anti-repressive campaign" on the people that would displace them from their jal, jungle, zameen (water, forest and land) and also to put a vigil on those who become part of it. "This campaign is a big danger to the Tribals and non-Tribal people of Bastar. So we appeal to Tribals, non-Tribals, social organizations, sarva adivasi samaj and the sarva samaj not only to stay away from this anti-people campaign but also to stand in strong opposition to it," he added. However, Chhavindra Karma said that he would continue with "Salwa Judum-2" to bring "peace and development" to Bastar.¹²¹

A Midnapore court on May 12 sentenced Chhatradhar Mahato, the face of the Lalgah movement in West Bengal and the convener of Police Santrash Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee (People's Committee Against Police Atrocities), and five others to life imprisonment after holding them guilty under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for their alleged links with Maoists. The trial lasted six years.¹²²

Eight Maoists, including a central committee member of the outlawed outfit and a self-styled commander, were arrested from Punia Bigha village of Bihar's Naxal-hit Gaya district on May 16. Sub Divisional Police Officer of Tekari, Shaifur Rahman, said the police raided the village and arrested the Maoists following a tip off. Among those nabbed are the outfit's central committee member Gorelal Yadav and self-styled area commander Jairam Yadav. Five rifles, two can bombs, 2,300 bullets and Rs 2 lakh in cash were recovered from them, Rahman said, adding that the eight were being questioned.¹²³

¹²⁰ "Chhattisgarh Seeks Naga Battalions To Take on Naxals", *Business Standard*, May 11, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/chhattisgarh-seeks-naga-battalions-to-take-on-naxals-115051100494_1.html

¹²¹ Dahat, Pavan, "Maoists Warn Of Attack Against Salwa Judum-II", *The Hindu*, May 12, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/maoists-warn-of-another-jiram-ghati-like-attack-in-response-to-salwa-judum2/article7194113.ece>

¹²² "Lalgah Movement: Chhatradhar Mahato, Five Others Get Life In Jail", *The Indian Express*, May 13, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/west-bengal/west-bengal-chhatradhar-mahato-three-other-lalgah-movement-activists-convicted-under-uapa/>

¹²³ "Central Committee Member Among 8 Maoists Arrested in Bihar", *Business Standard*, May 16, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/central-committee-member-among-8-maoists-arrested-in-bihar-115051601025_1.html