

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

May 18 – May 24, 5 (4), 2015

Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Yaqoob-ul Hassan

Gulbin Sultana

Gunjan Singh

Sampa Kundu

Rajorshi Roy

Zaki Zaidi

Saroj Bishoyi

Rajbala Rana

Arpita Anant

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives

China

Southeast Asia and Oceania

Russia and Central Asia

Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

United States of America

Internal Security Reviews

UN Reviews

Follow IDSA



Facebook



Twitter



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010
Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

CONTENTS

In This Issue	Page
I. COUNTRY REVIEWS	2-47
A. South Asia	2-13
B. East Asia	14-15
C. Southeast Asia and Oceania	15-18
D. Russia	18-23
E. Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf	23-25
F. United States of America	25-33
II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS	34-37
III. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS	38-47

I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(May 11-24, 2015)

- **Drug addicts rises to 3 million in Afghanistan; War imposed on Afghanistan; government official beheaded in Farah; NATO to remain in Afghanistan for a while; Afghans involved in Karachi attack; Terror to Intimidate People; Concerns about ANSF Capability; Afghan NDS chief oppose signing agreement with ISI; Reports: passports to Taliban leaders; Taliban visits Iran for Talks; Govt urged to invalidate agreement with Pakistan; Afghan soil won't be used against Neighbouring deal based on wrong assumptions' India's NSA; ISI-NDS accord not finalized and executive; Parliament warns to invalidate NDS-ISI MoU; Pakistan engaged in an undeclared war with Afghanistan; Daish-Taliban clash left at least 20 killed in Farah.**

A survey conducted by the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) with oversight by the institutional Review Board of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on May 12 revealed that number of the illicit drug users rose up to three million across the country. Briefing media about the survey report which has not been provided to the news reporters, Minister of Public Health, Ferozudin Feroz, said that out of three million drug users, 1.4 million are addicted to drugs and 1.6 million others are using and linked with drugs. The children are not using drugs but they are passive users because their parents are addicted, the minister said, adding that the survey was conducted in two phases: urban study was conducted in 2012 and rural study completed this year, which gives a nationwide profile of drug use in Afghanistan. He said that it is the first largest-scale survey based on 100 percent toxicological screening. Results of the combined urban and rural survey reveal a national drug use rate of 11 percent – one of the highest rate in the world. According to the survey in rural areas drugs usage rate is three times higher than urban areas. Thirteen percent of the Afghan rural population use drugs, where in Urban this rate is five percent. Opium is the most prevalent class of drugs used in Afghanistan, national opiates use rate is seven percent in rural areas. The minister said that there is a treatment facility having 2,500 beds, where the ministry could rehabilitate 35,000 addicted people, annually. “Even if we double the number of beds, we can rehabilitate 70,000 addicts, which are not enough. Besides treatment, comprehensive preventable programmes and strategies shall be initiated in the country to cope with the challenges,” he said.¹

¹ “Number Of Drug Addicts Rises To 3m In Afghanistan: Survey”, *Daily Afghanistan Times*, May 12, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/number-of-drug-addicts-rises-to-3m-in-afghanistan-survey/>

Visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on May 12 said sanctuaries of Taliban insurgents would be eliminated by direct action, when found, and would be monitored by the existing mechanism. Speaking at a joint press conference with President Ashraf Ghani, the prime minister said any effort by any militant or group to destabilise Afghanistan would be dealt with severely and such elements would be outlawed and hunted down. In case of terrorist activity, he remarked, both Pakistan and Afghanistan retained the right of counteractions in conjunction. He said that capacity building of Afghan police would be done as already offered including training. Coordinated operations would be planned and conducted on mutually agreed basis to target militant hideouts along the border, he continued. "We agreed that our bilateral relationship will continue to be guided by the policy of non-interference. We will not allow our respective territories to be used against the other." Nawaz said Afghanistan's enemies will be treated as Pakistan's enemies and Pakistan's enemies will be treated as Afghanistan's enemies."²

Unidentified gunmen have beheaded a senior government official in western Farah province. Abdul Raziq, 23, the director of statistics in Pusht Rud District was found dead in his home village after being kidnapped by unidentified gunmen. Abdul Raziq's family members say gunmen attacked the house in Dukan village and kidnapped him to an unknown location on May 11 night. Abdul Raziq was found beheaded the following day in the jurisdiction of the same village. Ghausuddin, governor of Pusht Rud District said that the brutal killing was the act of Taliban militants. However, spokesman of Taliban has not yet commented on the report.³

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will maintain a presence in Afghanistan following the conclusion of the alliance's on-going mission – The Resolute Support mission. The decision was taken during a meeting of the NATO Foreign Ministers in Antalya on May 13. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said "Today, we took a major decision which shows that we stay committed to Afghanistan. We agreed that we will maintain a presence in Afghanistan, even after the end of our current mission, Resolute Support." Mr. Stoltenberg further added "Our future presence will be led by civilians. It will have a light footprint. But it will have a military component." NATO's civilian and military authorities will now develop a plan for this continued NATO presence by this autumn. Mr. Stoltenberg pointed out "our aim will be to advise and instruct the Afghan security institutions, to help them become self-sufficient, and to build on what we have achieved so far, as part of the broader international effort." During today's meeting, ministers and partners took stock of the continued progress of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces as these are exerting full security responsibility across the country and discussed on their future cooperation with Afghanistan.⁴

The Pakistani officials hinted at Afghans involvement behind the deadly attack in Karachi city which left at least 45 dead. Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon has said that some clues were found at the crime scene but was unable to share these due to security reasons. The report

² "War Was Imposed On Afghanistan: Ghani", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 12, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12111

³ "Senior Government Official Beheaded in Farah", *Khaama Press*, May 13, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/senior-government-official-beheaded-in-farah-3345>

⁴ "NATO To Remain In Afghanistan After The End of RS Mission in 2016", *Khaama Press*, May 13, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/nato-to-remain-in-afghanistan-after-the-end-of-rs-mission-in-2016-1093>

further added that the suspects hail from Afghanistan and allegedly ran a small hotel business in the city. The claim by the Pakistani officials comes as a survivor of the attack said that the attackers were speaking fluent Urdu. According to Pakistani police officials, the militants entered a bus carrying members of the Ismaili community and started indiscriminate firing leaving at least 45 people dead and several others wounded. The Jundullah militants group – a splinter group of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility behind the attack.⁵

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said the people of Afghanistan are peace loving and war has been imposed on them. He expressed these views during a meeting with Michael Koch, special representative of Germany for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who called on him on May 13, a statement from the Presidential Palace said. Both dignitaries discussed wide range of issues of mutual interest, including security and regional issues, the statement said. The president said tactics of war had changed and terrorists had no principles of waging attacks, they wanted to spread horror and intimidate people to achieve their goals. He said the people of Afghanistan and Ulama had declared their support for Afghan forces and they praised the valour of Afghan security forces.⁶

Expressing concern about the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the accuracy of its personnel numbers, and its long-term sustainability, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), John F. Sopko, on May 13 said he is encouraged by the current US military leadership's approach to reconstruction and oversight in Afghanistan. "Optimistic assessments of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) progress often tell only part of the story and downplay long-standing problems such as high attrition rates, questionable capability reporting, and unverified personnel counts," Sopko said in his address to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies – a top American think-tank. Providing a review of the over 13 years and \$ 62.5 billion in US-led efforts to build capable and sustainable ANDSF, Sopko said the evidence suggests that Afghanistan lacks the capacity – financial, technical, managerial, or otherwise – to maintain, support, and execute much of what has been built or established during more than 13 years of international assistance.⁷

The Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief Rahmatullah Nabil opposed with the signing of an agreement with Pakistan's military intelligence – Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Informed sources quoted by Hasht-e-Subh newspaper said Nabil was against the agreement on mutual intelligence cooperation with ISI. This comes as sources privy to the development said that the agreement with ISI was signed by deputy NDS chief three days ago. The agreement will allow ISI to train and equip the Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) personnel. The Afghan intelligence and ISI will jointly interrogate the detained insurgents based

⁵ "Pakistan Hints Afghans Involved In Deadly Karachi Attack", *Khaama Press*, May 14, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-hints-afghans-involved-in-deadly-karachi-attack-9424>

⁶ "Terrorists Spreading Terror to Intimidate People: Ghani", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 14, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12117

⁷ "SIGAR Expresses Concern about ANSF Capability", *Daily outlook Afghanistan*, May 16, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12122

on the agreement. This comes ISI chief Gen. Rizwan Akhtar secretly visited Kabul nearly two weeks ago to meet President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. The latest agreement between Afghan government and ISI comes as the Afghan officials have long been criticizing ISI for supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. The conclusion of the agreement also sparked furore among the Afghan lawmakers who called on Lower House of the Parliament – Wolesi Jirga to summon the NDS chief Rahmatullah Nabil to brief the lawmakers regarding the agreement⁸.

Reports suggest that Afghan government is issuing political passports to Taliban. Afghan media outlet reports that the government is issuing 210 political passports to Taliban leaders. The media quoting a source states that during the recent visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif to Kabul it was agreed that some of the Taliban leaders need to be removed from the blacklist of the United Nations and reopening their political office. Source is saying that currently 180 Taliban leaders are using Pakistani passports but government will change their Pakistani passports to Afghan passports. He is further saying that 210 Taliban leaders are scheduled to receive Afghan political passports. Representatives of Taliban and peacemakers from the country recently had face-to-face talks in Qatar in which considerable improvement for initiating peace talks were being reported. Taliban staged an insurgency in Afghanistan after their government was toppled in 2001.⁹

According to reports a delegation of Afghan Taliban representatives visited Iran recently to hold talks with the Iranian officials. The delegation was led by Tayyeb Aqa head of the Taliban bureau in Qatar and arrived in Tehran on May 18. Iran's *Tasnim News Agency* reported that the delegation met with the Iranian security officials on regional issues, particularly the developments in the Islamic world. The source further added that the delegation also held talks on matters relating to the Afghan refugees. This was the third visit by the Taliban delegation to Iran already dispatched political delegations to Iran two times, for meeting Iranian security officials and for attending an international conference on Islamic Awakening movement. The visit by Taliban delegation to Tehran comes as the group's representatives held preliminary talks with the Afghan officials in Qatar earlier this month. The group welcomed peace efforts following two days of preliminary negotiations on reconciliation process and said Taliban is prepared to have a comprehensive cooperation with all the neighbouring and other countries on all aspects. In the meantime, the Taliban-led insurgency has been rampant since the group launched its summer offensive and staged numerous attacks across the country including the capital Kabul.¹⁰

The government of national unity has been urged to immediately invalidate the Memorandum of Understanding between the Afghan intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Unity of Hezb-e-Islami Councils of Afghanistan

⁸ "Afghan NDS Chief Opposed Signing Agreement with Pakistan's ISI", *Khaama Press*, May 18, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-nds-chief-oppose-signing-agreement-with-pakistans-isi-9429/>

⁹ "Reports: Afghanistan Issuing Political Passports To Taliban Leaders", *Khaama Press*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/reports-afghanistan-issuing-political-passports-to-taliban-leaders-3374/>

¹⁰ "Afghan Taliban Delegation Visits Iran for Talks", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 20, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12143

expressed concerns regarding the conclusion of agreement between intelligence agencies of the two nations. A statement released by the Unity of Hezb-e-Islami Councils of Afghanistan said ISI has been direct involved and played a key role in destructive activities in Afghanistan during the past four decades. The statement further added that the leadership of the Unity of Hezb-e-Islami Councils call on Afghan government to prevent signing such agreements in the future which are against the national interests of the country. This comes as the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said he is deeply concerned with the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the Afghan Intelligence and Pakistan's Military Intelligence – Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). The office of the former president issued a statement calling on unity government leaders to immediately cancel the agreement.¹¹

Gen. Murad Ali Murad, Deputy Army chief, on May 20 reiterated Afghanistan would never allow its soil to be used against neighbouring or regional countries. Speaking at a graduation ceremony of 900 commandos in Kabul, the general said those responsible for glaring war crimes in Afghanistan and the region should be identified. "The international community should know what the war criminals have done to Afghanistan. And they could do the same if they get the chance," he warned. The war on terror, he recalled started back in 2001 and was still not over. The fight to eliminate the terror should reach to the hideouts of terrorists, he remarked. "We have urged the global community not to call Afghanistan a safe haven for terrorists. Afghans have their own history and will never allow anybody to rise up from Afghanistan and pose a threat to world. But everyone should shoulder their responsibility in this fight," he reminded. In 2014, he added, the enemies faced with heavy defeats and their new "Azm" operation has yielded nothing but defeat and bad name for them. He added conflict was ongoing in all provinces and security forces had eliminated many terrorists' sanctuaries.¹²

India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on intelligence sharing between Pakistan's military intelligence – Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) with Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) was based on wrong assumptions. "What Pakistan wanted was to take assurance and pressurize Afghanistan that they will not allow their territory to be used for any security related work by India. That is the crux of it. This is based on a faulty assumption that India probably uses Afghan soil or Afghan nationals for its security purposes," Doval quoted by Indian newspapers said. Reports regarding the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ISI and NDS emerged last week. Sources privy of the development said the two intelligence agencies will share intelligence information based the agreement and jointly fight terrorism in the region. Ajmal Obaid Abidy, spokesman for President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, said both parties and head of agencies from the two countries will sign the agreement once it has been finalized.¹³

¹¹ "Afghan Govt Urged To Invalidate Intelligence Agreement with Pakistan", *Khaama Press*, May 20, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-govt-urged-to-invalidate-intelligence-agreement-with-pakistan-9438>

¹² "Afghan Soil Won't be Used Against Neighbouring States: Murad", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 20, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12149

¹³ "Pak-Afghan Intelligence Deal Based On Wrong Assumptions: India's NSA", *Khaama Press*, May 23, 2015 at <http://www.khaama.com/pak-afghan-intelligence-deal-based-on-wrong-assumptions-indias-nsa-1127/>

National Directorate of Security (NDS) – Afghanistan’s intelligence agency – says that the Memorandum of Understanding with Pakistan is not yet finalized and executive. NDS headquarters in Kabul say that contact and cooperation among the intelligence agencies of countries are required for certain issues but the agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not yet finalized and executive. NDS has recommended the following steps in order to finalize the accord.

1. The frame, authorization and limits of the accord need to be specified by the President.
2. Specialists of the related government agencies (NDS, foreign ministry, national security advisor and chief executive officer’s office who are directly reporting to the president) review and draft the contents of this accord.
3. Discussion over the draft in a meeting of the National Security Council.
4. Consultative meeting with political and Jehadi leaders as well as the elected representatives of the nation in a national consensus.
5. Handing over its text of the accord to Pakistan.

Different reports were being published regarding the accord between the intelligence agencies of the two neighbouring countries. Several members of Parliament and political leaders criticized such an accord because of the bad image of Pakistan’s ISI in Afghanistan.¹⁴

Lawmakers in the Lower House of the Parliament – Wolesi Jirga have warned to invalidate the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Afghan Intelligence and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) if their conditions were not met. The preconditions set by the Lower House of Parliament include “Specification of the executive limits in the Memorandum of Understanding and all other issues must be clarified”. The National Security Council and Presidential Palace have been urged to carefully act while signing the Memorandum of Understanding. The Chief Executive Office, Afghan lawmakers, political and Jihadi leaders must be consulted and their views must be obtained regarding the MoU, according to the conditions set by the Lower House.¹⁵

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said on May 24 that Pakistan is engaged in an undeclared war with Afghanistan while commenting Afghan government’s efforts to end the ongoing violence in the country. He said Afghanistan is in need of reconciliation process in two different phases which includes peace with neighbouring Pakistan as the country is engaged in an undeclared war with Afghanistan. President Ghani made the remarks during a ceremony where Masoom Stanikzai was formally introduced to assume charge as the acting defence minister. He said the Afghan government and people want a dignified, substantial and endurable peace since the

¹⁴ “ISI-NDS Accord Not Yet Finalized And Executive”, *Khaama Press*, May 24, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/isi-nds-accord-not-yet-finalized-and-executive-3359>

¹⁵ “Afghan Parliament Warns To Invalidate NDS-ISI MoU if Conditions Not Met”, *Khaama Press*, May 24, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-parliament-warns-to-invalidate-nds-isi-mou-if-conditions-not-met-1132>

national interests of the country are only guaranteed through a peace achieved with dignity. He assured the Afghan police, army, members of the intelligence agency and the Afghan people that the government will never compromise with national interests of the country and promised that the reconciliation process would take place within the framework of the Afghan constitution and based on the instructions of Islamic values.¹⁶

A clash between the fighters of the Islamic State or Daish and Taliban left 20 killed from both sides in western Farah province. Hanif Razai, spokesman for Afghan National Army in Farah province says that gunmen belonging to Daish and Taliban are fighting in Sarkhash Mazar area of Khak-i-Safid District since last night. He said more than a dozen fighters from Daish and about a dozen others from Taliban have been killed in the clash so far. Razai added that 12 fighters from Daish including four women who are not from Afghanistan have been taken hostages by Taliban. The militant groups have not yet commented on the report but they are against each other. This is second clashes being reported between the two groups this month. The first report came on surface from Nazyan and Dur Baba districts of eastern Nangarhar province on May 16 leaving three Taliban commanders killed. Ministry of Defence issuing a statement stated that the Taliban commanders killed comprised of Taliban shadow-governor for Dur Baba District, head of Taliban's security commission for this District and Qari Manan who was commander of a group of Taliban in Nazyan District.¹⁷

Pakistan

(May 11-24, 2015)

- **PM chairs APC to allay China-Pak corridor fears; Internal, external forces out to derail CPEC; Joint action against Afghan, Pak Taliban; Perpetrators, backers to be punished; Sectarian rivalry is hurting Karachi; Phenomenal achievements made in counter terror ops; 100's arrested in Peshawar search operations; FC killed 29 militants in Balochistan in one month.**

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on May 13 chaired a meeting in which representatives of all political parties were briefed on the proposed route of the CPEC project. The government in April 2015 had assured political parties that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will soon brief them on key national issues, including the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (PCEC), electoral reforms and rights of the provinces. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had said that the prime minister, after his return from abroad, would convene a meeting to take all political forces into confidence on key national issues – PCEC project, election reforms, rights of the provinces and NFC award – to develop a consensus on how to overcome hurdles in these matters. The project is part of Beijing's "Belt and Road" plan to expand its trade and transport footprint across Central and South Asia. It will give China easier access to Middle Eastern oil via the deep-water port of Gwadar.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Pakistan Engaged In An Undeclared War with Afghanistan: Ghani", *Khaama Press*, May 25, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-engaged-in-an-undeclared-war-with-afghanistan-ghani-1131>

¹⁷ "Daish-Taliban Clash Left At Least 20 Killed in Farah", *Khaama Press*, May 26, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/daish-taliban-clash-left-27-killed-in-farah-3363>

¹⁸ "PM Chairs APC To Allay China-Pak Corridor Fears", *Dawn*, May 13, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1181714/pm-chairs-apc-to-allay-china-pak-corridor-fears>

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on May 14 that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project was not being welcomed by many internal and external forces who did not want to see progress and development in the country. "These people do not want to see the country get new roads, power houses, infrastructure, health and education," he said while addressing a ceremony held at the Prime Minister's Office to launch a credit guarantee scheme for small farmers. The prime minister said that \$45 billion investment in projects under the CPEC was an eyesore for many and urged the nation to pray to Almighty Allah to protect the country from intentions of the evil.¹⁹

Expressing an unprecedented solidarity with Afghanistan, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on May 12 termed the Afghan Taliban's new spring offensive – Operation Azm – an act of terrorism. In his media interaction before returning home from Kabul, Nawaz condemned the increase in violence and attacks by the Afghan Taliban under the new offensive. He maintained that all sanctuaries, whenever found, would be eliminated by direct action and would be monitored by the existing mechanism. Earlier, Nawaz met the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah separately. The prime minister's delegation included COAS General Raheel Sharif, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Adviser to the PM on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, Special Assistant to the PM on Foreign Affairs Syed Tariq Fatemi, DG ISI Lieutenant General Rizwan Akhtar Malik, Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Pakistan's envoy in Kabul Syed Ibrar Ahmad and senior officials. The prime minister said the continuation of the fresh Afghan offensive and attacks would be construed as terrorism. The Afghan Taliban had announced Operation Azm in April 2015 to target the foreign occupiers and the Afghan government.²⁰

After cancelling his three-day scheduled visit to Sri Lanka due to terrorist attack on a bus in Karachi on May 13, the Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif immediately dashed to the port city to take stock of the situation. Upon arrival in Karachi, the COAS went straight to the Karachi Corps Headquarters where he was given briefing on the tragic incident by the corps commander. Director General Sindh Rangers also attended. General Raheel Sharif also telephoned to Prince Karim Agha Khan and offered his heartfelt condolences on the killings of innocent people in Karachi terrorist attack. "Our heart goes out for the bereaved families. No efforts will be spared to apprehend and punish perpetrators of this terrorist act, their abettors, and backers," army chief assured Prince Agha Khan, spiritual leader of Ismaili community.²¹

Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Naveed Mukhtar on May 18 gave his opinion on the Karachi operation at a seminar organized by the National Defence University in Karachi. Lt Gen Naveed Mukhtar said, "I assure citizens that our struggle against terrorism will continue unabated." Speaking against militants and target killers, Gen Mukhtar said, "We are committed to eliminating

¹⁹ "Internal, External Forces Out To Derail CPEC, Says PM", *Dawn*, May 15, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1182077/internal-external-forces-out-to-derail-cpec-says-pm>

²⁰ "Nawaz Vows Joint Action Against Afghan, Pak Taliban", *The News*, May 13, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-37438-Nawaz-vows-joint-action-against-Afghan-Pak-Taliban>

²¹ "Perpetrators, Backers To Be Punished: COAS", *The Nation*, May 14, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/national/14-May-2015/perpetrators-backers-to-be-punished-coas>

all forms of terrorism.” He said that all political stakeholders should contribute in maintaining Karachi’s security situation. Authorities and police must stay away from political influence, he added. “Karachi generates 65 percent of the Pakistan’s total income,” he said. “The problems in Karachi are a result of political and sectarian rivalry,” Gen Mukhtar concluded.²²

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif on May 18 termed the achievements as phenomenal in the ongoing military operations against terrorists. Addressing the closing ceremony for the 4th Army Physical Agility and Combat Efficiency System (PACES) Championship, General Sharif declared strategic knowledge and operational preparedness of soldiers as indispensable for making big gains in war against terrorism. Lauding the performance of the participating players, the Army Chief said that maintaining modern standards in physical fitness would be essential for combating future battles. Gen Raheel Sharif later called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at PM’s House in Islamabad and exchanged views on national security issues. According to sources, they also deliberated on the reports of national security institutions pertaining to involvement of Indian intelligence agency RAW in recent terrorist acts in the country.²³

Security forces and law enforcement personnel carried out search operations in different parts of Peshawar on May 23, arresting at least 100 suspects including foreign nationals. Police said that they have also busted a three-member gang of dacoits operating in the city. The joint-operation was carried out in the jurisdictions of Cantonment circle’s West and East police stations as well as Pishta Khara and Gulberg areas. Police said 100 suspects were arrested including 25 Afghan nationals residing illegally in Peshawar. Five pistols, one rifle and hundreds of live bullet-rounds were recovered from the suspects. Police further claimed that they have also busted a three-man gang of robbers who were involved in robberies in the Peshawar Cantonment areas.²⁴

Security forces have killed over two dozen militants belonging to outlawed Baloch insurgents and the TTP and also destroyed a number of their hideouts in various districts of Balochistan in the past one month. “Frontier Corps [FC] killed 29 militants associated with the Baloch separatist groups and the TTP, including two suicide bombers, during the search operation in the province,” said Home Minister Sarfaraz Bugti and DIG FC Brig Mohammad Tahir in a news briefing at the FC Help Centre in Kholia Phattack on May 22. They also destroyed eight insurgents’ hideouts during the month-long operation, he added. The home minister said the TTP militants were sneaking into Balochistan from North Waziristan Agency where Zarb-e-Azb operation is in its decisive phase. But the FC did not let them set up camps in the province, he added. He said the FC carried out the search operation in various districts including Kalat, Mastung, Awaran, Turbat, Zhob, Loralai and Killa Abdullah where the security forces killed notorious militants during the shootout.²⁵

²² “Sectarian Rivalry Is Hurting Karachi: Corps Commander”, *The Nation*, May 16, 2015, at <http://nation.com.pk/karachi/16-May-2015/sectarian-rivalry-is-hurting-karachi-corps-commander-karachi>

²³ “Phenomenal Achievements Made In Counter Terror Ops: Army Chief”, *The News*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-185216-Phenomenal-achievements-made-in-counter-terror-ops-Army-Chief>

²⁴ “100 Including Foreigners Arrested In Peshawar Search Operations”, *The News*, May 23, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-185807-100-including-foreigners-arrested-in-Peshawar-search-operations>

²⁵ “One-month Operation: Fc Killed 29 Militants in Balochistan, Says Minister,” *The Express Tribune*, May 25, 2015, at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/890948/one-month-operation-fc-killed-29-militants-in-balochistan-says-minister/>

Bangladesh

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Fourth meeting of Malaysia-Bangladesh Joint Commission held in Sabah; Prime Minister directs the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories to produce more arms and explosives.**

Bangladesh and Malaysia agreed to continue cooperation with other countries of the region and make coordinated efforts to fight the growing menace of human trafficking. They reached the agreement at the fourth meeting of Malaysia-Bangladesh Joint Commission in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia on May 17. During the meeting Dhaka requested Kuala Lumpur to recruit more workers from Bangladesh and consider opening up other potential sectors for Bangladeshi workers. The Bangladeshi delegation was led by Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali and Malaysia's by his counterpart Dato' Sri Anifah Aman. The two foreign ministers discussed possible cooperation in the fields of infrastructure development, tourism, culture, education, agriculture and science and technology. Both sides agreed to explore options to organise the Bangladesh-Malaysia Investment Forum. They also agreed to establish a mechanism between the meteorological departments of Malaysia and Bangladesh to promote the exchange of seismic measurement data in real time. Referring to International Mother Language Day, the Bangladesh side proposed construction of a Shaheed Minar in Malaysia. Anifah Aman took note of the idea for consideration.²⁶

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories (BOF) to produce arms, ammo, weapons and explosives for various forces to reduce dependence on import. "You [ordnance factories] will have to keep in mind that we won't import all the arms and explosives.... If we can produce enough, we'll go for export in future," she told a meeting of high officials of the defence ministry and its associated bodies at the ministry conference room on May 21. Hasina, also in-charge of the ministry, said the ordnance factories have been producing 7.62 millimetre auto rifle, cartridges of various calibre and hand grenades for the Bangladesh Army. She hoped that steps would be taken to enhance the capacity of the officials and employees of the BOF to meet the local demand for arms, ammo and explosives.²⁷

Sri Lanka

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Tamils in the north commemorate the thousands of dead in the final stages of the war; A team of high-powered US prosecutors and investigators visit Sri Lanka; Special envoy of**

²⁶ "Dhaka, KL Agree to Check Human Trafficking", *The Daily Star*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/dhaka-kl-agree-check-human-trafficking-83377>.

²⁷ "PM For Exporting Arms, Ammo", *The Daily Star*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/pm-exporting-arms-ammo-85447>.

Malaysian Prime Minister meets President Sirisena; Sri Lankan government awards scholarships to two Afghan students; India releases 16 Sri Lankan fishermen; Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs addresses the German Council on Foreign Relations.

Despite a court order banning pro-LTTE commemorations in the former battleground of Mullaitivu District in Northern Sri Lanka, few politicians of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and civilians paid tribute to the thousands of dead in the final stages of the war that ended on May 18, 2009. Under heavy surveillance, TNA members of the Northern Provincial Council (NPC) and local leaders lit oil lamps and offered flowers at a makeshift memorial in Mullivaikkal village in northern Sri Lanka.²⁸

A team of high-powered United States prosecutors and investigators visited in Sri Lanka to assist their Sri Lankan counterparts to trace and recover billions of rupees worth of assets syphoned off from Sri Lanka and stashed in financial institutions in the United States, the Government Information Department said. The team comprised officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security.²⁹

Datu Seri Utama Samy Vellu, special envoy of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, called on President Maithripala Sirisena at his official residence on May 21 and expressed interest in major joint ventures and investments in several areas between Sri Lanka and Malaysia.³⁰

The Sri Lankan government has awarded scholarships to two Afghan students to receive training at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University. In order to give considerations to a request made by the former President of Afghanistan Hameed Karzai during his visit to Sri Lanka in 2014, the Cabinet has approved a proposal made by the President Maithripala Sirisena in his capacity as the Minister of Defence to provide training opportunities for two Afghan students and to offer two scholarships for them.³¹

Sri Lanka Navy brought home 16 Sri Lankan fishermen released from custody by the Indian officials. Indian Coast Guard Ship "Rajtarang" has handed over the released fishermen to the Sri Lanka Navy at the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the seas north off Kankasanthurai on May 23, 2015. Sri Lanka Coast Guard vessel CG 42 has safely brought the

²⁸ "Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka Commemorate War Dead despite Ban", *ColomboPage*, May 19, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May19_1432006197CH.php.

²⁹ "High-level US Team Visits Sri Lanka to Assist Investigators Probing Financial Crimes", *ColomboPage*, May 18, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15A/May18_1431924215CH.php.

³⁰ "Malaysian PM's Special Envoy, Maithri Hold Talks", *Colombo Gazette*, May 21, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/05/21/malaysian-pms-special-envoy-maithri-hold-talks/>.

³¹ "Two Afghan Students Offered Scholarships to Study at Sri Lanka's Defence University", *Colombo Page*, May 22, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/May22_1432271782CH.php.

fishermen to the Kankasanthurai harbor.³² Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mangala Samaraweera addressed the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) on May 22, 2015.³³

Maldives

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan launched; Maldives signs an agreement with China Machinery Engineering Corporation; Saudi Arabia grants \$2 million to the Maldives.**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dunya Maumoon has launched the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan on May 21. Officiating the ceremony held at Citron, Minister Dunya underscored the commitment of the Government to combat human trafficking in the country. The five year action plan reflects a comprehensive strategy that adopts a holistic approach by all stakeholders in combating human trafficking. It seeks to address prevention, victim protection, criminal prosecution and international cooperation, and provides for separate shelters for male and female victims of trafficking. Furthermore the National Action Plan will also focus to formulate policies to combat trafficking and create awareness within the community.³⁴

The government on Maldives has signed an agreement with China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC), for the development of a resort dedicated to Chinese tourists in the Maldives. The agreement was signed on behalf of the government by Minister of Tourism Ahmed Adeeb. Speaking to the media, Adeeb said that CMEC is expected to invest about \$200 million in the Maldives. Adeeb said that the feasibility study will be completed and construction will begin before the end of 2015.³⁵

The government of Saudi Arabia has granted \$2 million to the Maldives. This was on May 20 by Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Dr. Mohamed Shainee, who said on *Twitter* that the Saudi government has granted \$1 million for the iHaven feasibility study and another \$1 million for President Abdulla Yameen's priority projects. The Saudi government also provided \$20 million earlier this month as budget support. Saudi Arabia has provided 150 higher education opportunities to Maldivian students, as well as 1,000 hajj slots.³⁶

³² "Sri Lanka Navy Brings Home 16 Fishermen Released From India", *Colombo Page*, May 23, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/May23_1432387460CH.php.

³³ "Sri Lanka Seeks German Assistance to Ensure Durable Peace and Prosperity for People", *Colombo Page*, May 23, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/May23_1432382417CH.php.

³⁴ "FM Dunya Launches Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan", *Miadhu*, May 21, 2015 at <http://miadhu.com/article/en/2378>.

³⁵ "Agreement Signed for Development of Resort for Chinese Tourists", *SunOnline*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29897>.

³⁶ "Saudi Arabia Provides Additional \$2 m", *SunOnline*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/29898>.

B. East Asia

China

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **The visit by the Japanese delegation highlights improvement in ties between China and Japan; China reports that it has spent around 100 billion yuan helping people in need for medical assistance; China is concerned about the recent reports of espionage against Chinese citizens in the United States; China rejects Vietnamese counter to fishing ban in the South China Sea; China announces economic reform priorities.**

In a recent development a Japanese delegation consisting of 3000 members visited China. This development is being called as a good progress considering that the relationship was pretty low. This delegation consisted of Japanese business community. In another development both sides had also announced on May 21 that they would be resuming the official ministerial-level talks between the financial chiefs of China and Japan.³⁷

According to the Chinese Ministry of Finance, China has spent around 100 billion yuan in the last six years helping people who cannot afford medical assistance. China had established a national medical assistance system in 2008.³⁸

As per the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei, "China is strongly concerned over six Chinese nationals charged with economic espionage in the United States". He further added that, "The Chinese side is strongly concerned over the matter and we are checking further details about it".³⁹

Recently China announced a temporary fishing ban from May 16 to August 1 in the parts of South China Sea. Vietnam had objected to this ban. However China rejected this act. As a response Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said that, "this is China's international responsibility and obligation". China claims that the action is directed towards safeguarding marine resources.⁴⁰

On May 18, 2015, the Chinese State Council, the cabinet, unveiled the priorities for yearly economic reforms. As per a statement, the State Council said, "to streamline administration and deregulate

³⁷ "Japanese Visit Underlines Thaw In Relations", by Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, May 22, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-05/22/content_20789012.htm, accessed on May 22, 2015

³⁸ "China Invests 100 Bln Yuan in Medical Aid" *China Daily*, May 22, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/22/content_20788361.htm, accessed on May 22, 2015

³⁹ "China 'Concerned' over US Espionage Charges" *China Daily*, May 20, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/20/content_20776287.htm, accessed on May 22, 2015

⁴⁰ "Fishing Ban Objection By Vietnam Dismissed" By Li Xiaokun, *China Daily*, May 19, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-05/19/content_20755146.htm, accessed on May 22, 2015

power to lower level, promote yuan's convertibility under the capital account, and launch a trail scheme to connect Shenzhen and Hong Kong stock exchanges".⁴¹

C. Southeast Asia

ASEAN

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Update on Rohingya exodus; Two-day seminar on awareness on intellectual property rights action plan and Madrid protocol; Australia-ASEAN cooperation agreement extended.**

Thousands of Rohingyas from Myanmar as well as economic migrants from Bangladesh were found stranded in the shores of Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia since late April 2015. The Rohingyas from Myanmar were lured into human trafficking as they are subject to inhumane conditions in Rakhine state, Myanmar where they are the majority community. The Rohingyas are stateless people as the 1982 Citizenship Law cancelled their citizenship rights and since then thousands of Rohingyas have migrated to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia and various Southeast Asian countries. In Southeast Asia, southern Thailand and Malaysia have been their preferred destinations because of the religious affinity they share with the local communities and due to the demand of cheap labourer in those countries. In April 2015, Thailand launched an anti-trafficking operation across its coastlines which forced the alleged smugglers of the Rohingyas to abandon the boat people and fled away. The exact number of the boat people is still not clear. Apart from Thailand, both Indonesia and Malaysia have refused to take responsibilities of the boat people saying this would overburden their existing economies which has already absorbed many Rohingyas in the past. However, on May 23, 2015, the foreign ministers of Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia met in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the matter and they agreed to provide the boat people (around 7000-8000) temporary relief materials and shelters. Malaysia, the country chair of ASEAN has clearly mentioned that it is the responsibility of Myanmar to resolve the issue of illegal and irregular movement of people and other ASEAN countries cannot be burdened with this problem. Philippines, a signatory to the UNHCR's 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, extended its helping hand to the boat people. Countries like Turkey and Gambia too have declared that they would send boats to rescue the stranded people and help them in resettling. UN has called for immediate action to address the issue. On May 29, the relevant countries (Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia) will meet again to discuss the issue. However, despite being invited to join the meeting, initially Myanmar had indicated that they won't participate in the meeting if the name 'Rohingya' is mentioned, as it would give an idea to the Rohingyas that they are treated as citizens in Myanmar. However, after separate meetings with the visiting ministers from Malaysia and Indonesia, Myanmar has softened its stance and said it may attend the regional meeting on May 29 as they have been promised that the term

⁴¹ "China Sets Economic Reform Priorities For 2015" *China Daily*, May 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/18/content_20752740.htm, accessed on May 22, 2015

'Rohingya' would not be used and instead, 'illegal migrants' would be used to address the issue. Myanmar uses 'Bengali' to describe the Rohingyas living inside the country as it considers them migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.⁴²

A two-day awareness generating seminar was organised for Myanmar government officials, Intellectual Property (IP) practitioners, attorneys, small and medium scale entrepreneurs in Yangon on May 20-21. This was a part of ASEAN's efforts to modernise their trademark regime including accession to Madrid Protocol. This would enable ASEAN to evolve as a competitive region which is an aim of ASEAN Economic Community. Before this two-day training, a series of other events took place in Bangkok and Manila. A basic regional training on Madrid Protocol for administrative, information, and trademark examiners was held in Bangkok on 23-24 April 2014. Another regional training on Madrid Protocol for IP Attorneys and Trademark Examiners from ASEAN IP Offices was held from May 12 to 14, 2015 in Manila, Philippines. An advanced regional training on Madrid operations for ASEAN Madrid examiners and future Madrid examiners would be organised on May 27-29, 2015 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Madrid Protocol is an international trademark treaty administered by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and ASEAN IP Rights Action Plan 2011-2015 aims to join that. Singapore and Vietnam had joined Madrid Protocol before 2011. Followed by the implementation of the ASEAN IPR Action Plan, Cambodia and Philippines too have joined the Protocol.⁴³

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's representative on the ASEAN Agreement for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2010-2015 at the ASEAN Secretariat signed Amendment No. 6 to the Cooperation Arrangement between ASEAN and Australia on May 19. ASEAN was represented by its Deputy Secretary-General for Socio-Cultural Community, H.E. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala who appreciated Australia's continuous efforts towards community building efforts, especially in the field of disaster management. Australia's first Resident Commissioner to ASEAN, Amb. Merrifield said, "Australia has supported the implementation of the AADMER and the establishment of the AHA Centre from the beginning, and the signing today, extending our support until the end of 2016, demonstrates our commitment to using regional solutions to prepare and respond to disasters, and our recognition of ASEAN's importance in this regional role". Australia-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2010 and since then, it has been extended by adding amendments and as of now, Australia has pledged to contribute AUD 4,565,000 towards the implementation of the cooperation agreement.⁴⁴

⁴² Cochrane, Joe, "In Reversal, Myanmar Agrees to Attend Meeting on Migrant Crisis", *The New York Times*, May 21, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/22/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-migrant-crisis-malaysia-thailand-indonesia.html?_r=0.

⁴³ "ASEAN Enhances Awareness and Technical Capacity on Trademarks and Madrid Protocol", *ASEAN Secretariat*, May 22, 2015, at http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-enhances-awareness-and-technical-capacity-on-trademarks-and-madrid-protocol?category_id=27.

⁴⁴ "ASEAN, Australia Strengthen Partnership to Support ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response", *ASEAN Secretariat*, May 19, 2015, at http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-australia-strengthen-partnership-to-support-disaster-management-and-emergency-response?category_id=27.

Southeast Asia

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Singapore has no stake in South China Sea, says Defence Minister at Imdex Asia; Myanmar Blaming Kokang rebels for shelling inside China; Singapore President visited France; General election in Thailand delayed for six months.**

Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said that China and claimant countries in the South China Sea disputes should sign the Code of Conduct in an order that first use of force can be avoided. He was speaking at the International Maritime Defence Exhibition & Conference (Imdex), held at Changi Exhibition Centre. Though Singapore has no stake in the disputes, Dr. Ng Eng Hen said, his country is concerned with the development of severe uneasiness in the region. For instance, in April, China's coast guard vessels fought with Filipino fishing vessels off Scarborough Shoal. Imdex Asia had its tenth edition this year and attended by 23 navy chiefs and vice chiefs.⁴⁵

In a meeting with China's ambassador to Myanmar, the latter's Chief of Army Staff, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing mentioned that the shelling from Myanmar to Yunnan Province was conducted by the Kokang rebels and not by the Myanmar army. This came as China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying asked Myanmar to stop shelling and air stripping inside China.⁴⁶ For last few weeks, Myanmar army is fighting the Kokang rebels along China-Myanmar border in Shan state. Kokangs are ethnic Chinese who migrated to Myanmar and are living inside the country for decades.

Francois Hollande, the President of France hosted a state banquet for the visiting Singaporean President Tony Tan Keng Yam on May 19. In Southeast Asia, Singapore is France's largest export destination and both sides want to enhance their economic ties in potential areas including high-speed railways, aeronautics, urban mobility etc. Singapore is France's strategic partner since 2012, which was, in fact, Singapore's second strategic partnership agreement after the one signed with the US. At present, both sides are focusing on economic cooperation with each other.⁴⁷

The *Junta* government in Thailand that ousted former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in a coup in May last year, announced that it would not organise general election in February 2016, as promised earlier. Instead, the election will be delayed for at least another six months. Since the *Junta* took over power in Thailand, the international community has been urging the military rulers to allow the country to cast their votes. Recently, Ms. Shinawatra has requested the court to

⁴⁵ Chow, Jermin, "Asean, China Should Conclude Pact to Ease Tensions in South China Sea: Ng Eng Hen", *The Straits Times*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/asean-china-should-conclude-pact-ease-tensions-south-chi>.

⁴⁶ "Myanmar's Army Chief Blames Ethnic Rebels for Recent Shelling inside China", *Fox News*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/05/19/myanmar-army-chief-blames-ethnic-rebels-for-recent-shelling-inside-china/>.

⁴⁷ Kotwani, Monica, "Scope to Expand France-Singapore Economic Links: President Hollande", *Channel News Asia*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/scope-to-expand-france/1856666.html>.

start the trial of her case which was filed by the *Junta* on negligence charges over a rice subsidy programme. She said that she is confident about her innocence and henceforth, not afraid of the legal procedure.⁴⁸

Oceania

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Singapore celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relations with Australia and New Zealand.**

Singapore and Australia celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations with a visit by Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to Singapore on May 20. In Singapore, Ms. Bishop launched *50 Bridges* programme, an initiative to promote Australian art and community engagement in Singapore. The Foreign Minister also met Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Foreign Minister Shanmugam. As part of the programme, an annual high-level women's dialogue programme was also launched where senior and successful women representatives from the government as well as private sectors of Singapore and Australia would meet to discuss about empowerment of women. Australia was the first country that established diplomatic relations with Singapore in 1965 after its independence. Besides Australia, Singapore marked 50 years of diplomatic relations with New Zealand too and May 25, the foreign minister, K. Shanmugam, visited New Zealand.⁴⁹

D. Russia

National

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Russia's finance ministry proposes budget cuts; Underwater robotics cluster to be created in Russia's Far East by 2017; Russia's Bal coastal defence system to get 300-kilometer range missile; Russian Navy's new destroyer to be nuclear-powered.**

Russia's Finance Ministry has proposed steep budget cuts through 2018 as the government battles to keep its growing deficit in check. The Finance Ministry, on May 19, presented four different state spending proposals to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. The first plan proposes cutting 864 billion roubles (\$17 billion) from the 2016 budget. This plan would see progressively smaller budget cuts through 2018 and would avoid draining the Reserve Fund. The second plan would

⁴⁸ "Thailand General Election Delayed Six Months, Hours After Former PM Yingluck Shinawatra Fronts Court", *abc net.au*, May 19, 2015, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-19/former-thai-pm-yingluck-in-court-on-negligence-charges/6481182>.

⁴⁹ "50 Years Of Australia-Singapore Friendship", Media Release, *Minister of Foreign Affairs*, May 20, 2015, at http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2015/jb_mr_150520b.aspx?ministerid=4.

see the government trim 58 billion roubles (\$1.2 billion) from next year's budget, leaving massive cuts for later years. The measure would, however, empty out the Reserve Fund. A third variant would spread spending cuts more evenly across the three years but would also drain the Reserve Fund. The fourth and most radical proposal would have the government embark on a programme of deep structural reforms, including steep cuts in social spending. Russia is set to see a budget deficit of about 2.7 trillion roubles (\$54 billion) in 2015. This is equivalent to 3.7 percent of the country's GDP.⁵⁰

The CEO and General Designer of the JSC Concern Morin form system - Agat Georgy Antsev has said, on May 20, that a cluster that will bring together several companies, creating underwater robots for military and civilian use, will be built in Russia's Far East by 2017.⁵¹

Russia's new Bal coastal missile system will receive an upgraded missile Kh-35E with a range of up to 300 kilometres, as well as drone target systems. The current range of the Bal system equipped with the Kh-35E missiles is 120 kilometres.⁵²

Russia's Defence Ministry has amended a technical assignment for developing the Leader-type missile destroyer for the Navy, which will now have a nuclear power unit as the sole option instead of a gas turbine power unit. This decision is prompted by the need to have an offshore maritime zone ship that can be sea borne for long distances. The Severnoye design bureau in St. Petersburg in northwest Russia is preparing the technical design, which is expected to be completed in 2016. The Leader-type destroyers are set to replace Project 956 and Project 1155 ships. The Russian Navy intends to order 12 new destroyers, six for the Northern and six for the Pacific Fleet.⁵³

International

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Russia and the US discuss developments in Syria; Moscow says the agreement for transiting Western military cargo through Russia to Afghanistan has expired; Russia to take measures if Ukraine hosts foreign missile defence elements; Russia says constitutional reform in Ukraine being carried out in breach of the Minsk deal; Ukraine to participate in the creation of Russia-China helicopter; Ukraine denounces the agreement on military transit to Moldova**

⁵⁰ "Russia's Finance Ministry Proposes Steep Budget Cuts – Report", *The Moscow Times*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-finance-ministry-proposes-steep-budget-cuts—report/521785.html>

⁵¹ "Underwater Robotics Cluster To Be Created in Russia's Far East by 2017", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795702>

⁵² "Russia's Bal Coastal Defence System To Get 300-Kilometer Range Missile – Contractor", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795701>

⁵³ "Russian Navy's New Destroyer To Be Nuclear-Powered, Gas Turbine Option Dropped – Source", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795458>

with Russia; Russia to allow meat and cheese deliveries from Iran; Russia seeks parliamentary dialogue with Japan for 'more pragmatic' ties; Moscow plans no response to Kiev's decision on foreign debt moratorium; Ukraine to cut all military-technological cooperation with Russia; China proposes building high-speed railway to Vladivostok; Russia to file claim for Arctic shelf expansion to UN in 2015; Gazprom plans to build about 50 kms of Power of Siberia pipeline in 2015; Iraqi Prime Ministers visits Moscow.

Russia and the US have held expert level consultations on Syria in Moscow on May 19. The discussions were steered by Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and African Countries, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov on the Russian side while the US team was led by special envoy for Syria Daniel Rubinstein. Mr. Bogdanov stated that the Moscow meetings and contacts in Geneva fit into the overall effort to prepare the full-format "Geneva-3" process. He was quoted as saying 'contacts of de Mistura in Geneva, the contacts of Syrians themselves, of the Syrian opposition - all they take place within the framework of our common goal of preparing the Geneva-3. This is the format for the organisation of inter-Syrian negotiations, as it is written in the Geneva Communique of June 30, 2012, that is, between the government and various groups of the Syrian opposition, as well as the Syrian civil society, with the assistance of the international community and under the UN auspices.' He added that there is no alternative to the Geneva Communique for settling the Syrian issue.⁵⁴

According to a document, published on May 18, on the Russian government's website on administrative information the Russian government's instruction on military cargo transits through the country to Afghanistan has expired. On July 6, 2009, Moscow and Washington had signed the Military Transit Agreement according to which US military transport aircraft could make at least 4,500 flights per year to Afghanistan via Russian airspace. Earlier in 2014, under the NATO-Russia arrangement, Moscow had allowed Afghanistan-bound NATO transport to ship non-lethal equipment through its territory as an alternative to transit routes through Pakistan, where NATO convoys were frequently attacked by militants.⁵⁵

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, on May 20, that Russia will take measures to protect its own security if Ukraine hosts components of a foreign missile defence system. He was quoted as saying 'if the point at issue is Ukraine's wish to host US missile defence components, of course this can be perceived only negatively, because that would pose a threat to Russia's security. This will entail the need for taking retaliatory measures that would ensure Russia's security'. Earlier, the head of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council had said that he did not rule out consultations over the possibility of deploying a missile defence system in Ukraine to counter 'a nuclear threat posed by Russia'.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "Russian-American Special Consultations On Syria To Be Held in Moscow", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795207>

⁵⁵ "Military Cargo Transits Through Russia to Afghanistan Expired - Government", *Sputnik International*, May 18, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/military/20150518/1022264395.html#ixzz3bKYsRVJR>

⁵⁶ "Russia to Take Measures If Ukraine Hosts Foreign Missile Defence Elements - Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795725>

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on May 19, that constitutional reform in Ukraine is being carried out in violation of previously reached agreements since it did not involve representatives of the country's eastern self-proclaimed republics. Constitutional reform is a key part of peace agreements worked out by leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France in Minsk on February 12, 2015.⁵⁷

The CEO of Russian Helicopters Alexander Mikheev has said, on May 21, that Ukraine's Motor Sich engine manufacturer will participate in the creation of the Russian-Chinese helicopter with the contract expected to be signed in late 2015.⁵⁸

Ukraine has cancelled its agreement with Russia on military transit to Moldova. A total of 265 deputies of the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada (parliament) voted on May 21 for the law on denunciation of the intergovernmental Ukrainian-Russian agreement on the transit of Russian military to Moldova through Ukrainian territory. Joint peacekeeping forces of Russia, Moldova and Transdniestria, as well as a group of military observers from Ukraine are now maintaining peace on the two banks of the Dniester River.⁵⁹

Deputy head of Russia's agriculture watchdog Alexei Alexeyenko has said, on May 18, that Russia is likely to allow the delivery of meat and cheese from Iran, that should pave the way for a barter deal to exchange grain for dairy, fish and meat products.⁶⁰

State Duma chairman Sergey Naryshkin has said, in Tokyo on May 20 that parliamentary dialogue can make interstate relations between Russia and Japan "more pragmatic". He was quoted as saying 'we believe that our bilateral interaction and cooperation between Russia and Japan in economic, political and humanitarian spheres is of great intrinsic value and helps to make a better life for the people of our countries'. Mr. Naryshkin also met the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.⁶¹

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on May 20, that Russia plans no legal measures in response to a decision by Ukraine's parliament on a possible foreign debt moratorium. Earlier, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada had granted the government the right to declare a moratorium on foreign debt repayment, including the country's US\$ 3 billion debt to Russia. In late 2013 Russia had bought Ukraine's first Eurobond tranche worth US\$ 3 billion with a two-year maturity and a coupon rate of 5 per cent p.a. and coupon payments every six months.⁶²

⁵⁷ "Russia Says Constitutional Reform In Ukraine Being Carried Out In Breach Of Minsk Deal", *Itar-Tass*, May 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795570>

⁵⁸ "Ukraine To Participate In Creation Of Russian-Chinese Helicopter", *Itar-Tass*, May 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/795929>

⁵⁹ "Ukraine Denounces Agreement On Military Transit to Moldova with Russia", *Itar-Tass*, May 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795920>

⁶⁰ "Russia to Allow Meat, Cheese Deliveries From Iran in Coming Weeks", *Sputnik International*, May 18, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150518/1022284294.html#ixzz3bKaBEsAE>

⁶¹ "Russia Seeks Parliamentary Dialogue With Japan For 'More Pragmatic' Ties — Duma Chief", *Itar-Tass*, May 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795767>

⁶² "Moscow Plans No Response To Kiev's Decision On Foreign Debt Moratorium — FM", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/795759>

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk has said, on May 19, that the country will sever all military-technological cooperation with Russia. After the breakup of the Soviet Union Ukraine remained a country in possession of a large number of enterprises tightly integrated with the Russian defence-industrial complex, including nearly one-third of the former USSR's missile and aircraft design bureaus.⁶³

North-eastern China's Jilin province has, on May 21, proposed constructing a high-speed railway to Vladivostok through Hunchun which is a country-level city near the border with Russia. The first secretary of Jilin Provincial Committee of the CPC, Bayin Chaolu was quoted as saying 'we have an idea of building a high-speed rail to Vladivostok. By August, we will launch the leg to Hunchun. If we jointly manage to extend it, this will be the first high-speed trans-border main line between Russia and China'. The delegation of the Chinese province, including both officials and more than 50 representatives of various companies, had participated in the Pacific Tourist Forum held in Vladivostok.⁶⁴

Russia's Natural Resources Ministry is planning to file a claim with the UN on expanding Russia's Arctic shelf territory by partly including the Gakkel Ridge into it. The ministry's chief Sergey Donskoy had said, on May 21, that Russia has gathered enough evidence to support its claim and plans to increase its continental shelf in the Arctic by around 1.2 million square kilometres.⁶⁵

The deputy chairman of Gazprom's management committee Vitaly Markelov has said, on May 19, that the company plans to build about 50 km of the Power of Siberia pipeline in 2015. He added that Stroitransgaz company has won a bid to build 208 km of the pipeline stretch to the town of Lensk in Russia's republic of Yakutia. China's CNPC is expected to start building the Chinese stretch of the Power of Siberia pipeline in June. The Power of Siberia is a gas transportation system to deliver gas the Yakutsk and Irkutsk gas production centres in Siberia to Russia's Far East and China. The pipeline's capacity will be 61 billion cubic meters per year. The pipe's total length is 3,968 km. The estimated construction cost is \$21.3 billion.⁶⁶

Russian President Vladimir Putin has met the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Moscow on May 21 wherein he described the country as an old and reliable friend. Putin stated that Russia was implementing major projects in Iraq involving Russian companies. This includes LUKOIL, which is developing the Western Qurna-2 Field in Basra province in a project worth US\$ 5.3 billion. He also noted the development of the civilian, military and technical cooperation with Iraq. In the run up to the visit, Foreign Minister Lavrov had stated that Russia will try to meet Iraq's requests for the supply of arms in order to meet the challenge of the Islamic State (IS).⁶⁷

⁶³ "Ukraine is Severing Military-Technological Cooperation with Russia — Prime Minister", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/795765>

⁶⁴ "China Proposes Building High-Speed Railway To Russia's Vladivostok", *Itar-Tass*, May 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/795915>

⁶⁵ "Russia to File Claim For Arctic Shelf Expansion to UN This Year — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, May 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/795967>

⁶⁶ "Gazprom Plans To Build About 50 Km Of Power Of Siberia Pipeline in 2015", *Itar-Tass*, May 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/795482>

⁶⁷ "Russia's Trade Turnover With Iraq Grows 10-Fold Over Two Years — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, May 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/796049>

India-Russia Relations

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Russia offers to upgrade SAM Strela-10M3 for India; India will not participate in Russia's moon research project.**

Russia has offered to upgrade India's existing short-range Strela-10M3 mobile air defence system to the level of the Strela-10M4 or Strela-10MN (night version). The offer was made during the meeting of the Russia-India Inter-governmental Commission. The Strela-10M4 SAM is designed to protect military units, in various forms of battle and on the march, from air attack and reconnaissance devices, diving and flying at low and ultra-low altitudes.⁶⁸

The Space Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) has said, on May 21, that 'India has lost interest in the Russian project for the soil sample taking at the south pole of the Moon with the use of the Luna-27 station'. ITAR-TASS has noted that the parting of ways was mutual. It stated that India is not satisfied with the constant postponement of the Russian lunar missions and a high accident rate. Russia is not satisfied with the initial agreement on the launch of Luna-27 on an Indian rocket, the high costs of the spacecraft delivery and testing in India, as well as the need to include the "mini rover" in the mission, which made the project more risky.⁶⁹

E. Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf

Iran

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Iran's supreme leader rules out broad nuclear inspections; Iran ship with humanitarian aid for Yemen docks in Djibouti, WFP to deliver aid.**

Iran's supreme leader on May 20 ruled out allowing international inspectors to interview Iranian nuclear scientists as part of any potential deal on its nuclear programme, and reiterated that the country would not allow the inspection of military sites. In a graduation speech at the Imam Hussein Military University in Tehran, the supreme leader said "They say new things in the negotiations. "Regarding inspections, we have said that we will not let foreigners inspect any military centre."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "Russia Offers To Upgrade SAM Strela-10M3 for India", *Russia and India Report*, May 19, 2015 at http://in.rbth.com/economics/2015/05/19/russia_offers_to_upgrade_sam_strela-10m3_for_india_43205.html

⁶⁹ "India Refuses To Participate In Russian Moon Research Project", *Itar-Tass*, May 21, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/795972>

⁷⁰ Erdbrink, Thomas and Sanger, David E., "Iran's Supreme Leader Rules Out Broad Nuclear Inspections" *The New York Times*, May 20, 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/21/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks-inspections.html?_r=0

An Iranian ship carrying humanitarian aid for war-ravaged Yemenis arrived in Djibouti. The Iranian authorities said that they are in constant contact with the United Nations and the World Food Programme in a bid to dispatch humanitarian aid to the Yemeni port city of Hudaydah in the quickest time possible.⁷¹

Iraq and Syria

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Iraq's Ramadi falls to ISIS; ISIL captures ancient Syrian city of Palmyra; ISIS 'controls 50 per cent of Syria' after seizing historic city of Palmyra.**

The western Iraqi city of Ramadi fell to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), after the militants relentlessly bombarded the capital of the Anbar province with suicide bombers. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi ordered government forces to "hold their positions" in Ramadi, after ISIS said it overran the strategic city, his spokesman said. "There is continuous air cover that will help ground troops there hold their positions while waiting for support from other forces and the Popular Mobilization Units," he said of an umbrella group for Shiite militias.⁷²

Fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have taken full control of Syria's ancient city of Palmyra. The Syrian army has collapsed and ISIL has taken over the city, also known as Tadmur, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. Located in central Homs province, the city lies 210km northeast of Damascus in desert that stretches to the Iraqi frontier to the east. The fall of the city potentially opens the way for ISIL to advance towards key government-held areas, including the capital and Homs.⁷³

Islamic State is thought to be holding sway over half of Syria's landmass after its seizure of Palmyra, where it has reportedly begun massacring a rebellious tribe and faces no opposition to sacking the city's ancient ruins. "There are no forces to stop them [entering the ruins]," Rami Abdurrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said. "But the important thing also is they now control 50 per cent of Syria."⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Iran Ship With Humanitarian Aid For Yemen Docks in Djibouti", *Presstv*, May 22, 2015 <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/05/22/412386/Iran-Nejat-Ship-Yemen-Djibouti-Humanitarian>

⁷² "Iraq's Ramadi falls to ISIS After Army Deserts City", *Alarabia*, May 17, 2015 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/05/17/Iraq-Ramadi-falls-to-ISIS-after-army-leaves-city-.html>

⁷³ "ISIL Captures Strategic Syrian City of Palmyra", *Aljazeera*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/isil-takes-full-control-syria-palmyra-reports-150520184842272.html>

⁷⁴ "Isis 'Controls 50% Of Syria' After Seizing Historic City of Palmyra", *The Guardian*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/21/isis-palmyra-syria-islamic-state>

The Gulf

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **ISIL claims responsibility for shia mosque attack in Saudi Arabia.**

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group has claimed in an online statement that it carried out a deadly suicide bomb attack at a mosque in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province of Qatif. The statement said "the soldiers of the Caliphate" were behind Friday's attack by a suicide bomber "who detonated an explosives belt" in the mosque in the Shia-majority city of Qatif. The group identified the bomber as Abu Amer al-Najdi, and published a picture of him.⁷⁵

F. The United State of America

National

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **US releases documents recovered during Bin Laden raid; DoD exercise simulates home-grown terrorists, nuclear incident; US regulators warn of cyber threat to financial system; Work highlights U.S. military technology efforts; Climate change poses national security risks for US: President Obama; Secretary Kerry: US must clinch TPP deal or lose out; US Senate OKs Obama's 'Fast-Track' Trade Authority; US Senate blocks house bill on domestic surveillance; Six Baltimore police officers indicted in custody death; Foreign policy dominates early stage of 2016 campaign.**

On May 20, the U.S. government released dozens of documents it said were recovered during the 2011 raid on the compound in Pakistan where U.S. forces killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence said in a statement that the release of the documents followed a "rigorous" review by U.S. government agencies and "aligns with the president's call for increased transparency consistent with national security prerogatives." It said the 2014 Intelligence Authorization Act required the office to conduct a review of the documents for release.⁷⁶

In a geopolitical environment with proliferating threats, a Defence Department whole-of-government exercise held May 5-8 provided a realistic way for federal, state and local experts to interact in simulated situations involving mock home-grown terrorists and a nuclear incident.

⁷⁵ "ISIL Claims Responsibility For Saudi Mosque Attack", *Aljazeera*, May 23, 2015 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/saudi-shia-mosque-suicide-bomb-150522101-150522131614062.html>

⁷⁶ "US Releases Documents Recovered During Bin Laden Raid", *VOA News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-releases-documents-recovered-during-bin-laden-raid/2779383.html>

This year's Nuclear Weapon Accident Incident Exercise, or NUWAIX 2015, took place on Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor located on the Kitsap Peninsula in the state of Washington.⁷⁷

U.S. regulators highlighted concerns about the potential for a cyber-attack that could "significantly disrupt the workings of the financial system" as they presented an annual look at the challenges facing the economic sector. The report from the Financial Stability Oversight Council, released on May 19, cited large-scale data breaches during the past year that hit U.S. retailers and the high-profile attack that crippled computers at Sony, and stressed the need for having plans in place to respond to attacks.⁷⁸

America's defence companies and employees provide the capabilities, technologies, and services that underpin the nation's global military power, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work told industry representatives on May 21, according to a DoD news release. Work spoke at the Aerospace Industries Association's 70th Annual Spring Board of Governors and Membership Meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia. He noted the importance of industry and how defence companies and employees provide the capabilities, technologies, and services that underpin America's global military power, according to the release.⁷⁹

President Barack Obama said on May 20 that global climate change poses immediate risks to U.S. national security by increasing the possibility of natural disasters and humanitarian crises. The American leader told new graduates at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, that the effects of climate change will impact how the military defends the United States, and that the world needs to act urgently to combat the effects of rising temperatures. "Climate change, and especially rising seas, is a threat to our homeland security – our economic infrastructure, the safety and health of the American people," Obama said.⁸⁰

Secretary of State John Kerry was clear: Either the United States signs onto a wide-ranging Pacific Rim free trade pact, or risks getting left behind in the world of global economic competition. "If we don't clinch free-trade agreements in the Asia Pacific it doesn't mean that those agreements may not happen, it just means that we may not be part of them, and we may not shape them," Kerry said. The U.S. Senate is embroiled in a debate over the huge, 12-nation Pacific Rim trade deal, with lawmakers grappling with a multitude of national and local interests that could be affected by resulting international competition. If finalized, the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP would be the largest free trade agreement in history. According to the Brookings Institution, it would impact up to one-third of all world trade and roughly 40 percent of the global gross domestic product.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Pellerin, Cheryl, "DoD Exercise Simulates Home-grown Terrorists, Nuclear Incident", *DoD News*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128842>

⁷⁸ "US Regulators Warn of Cyber Threat to Financial System", *VOA News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-regulators-warn-of-cyber-threat-to-financial-system/2779126.html>

⁷⁹ "Work Highlights U.S. Military Technology Efforts", *DoD News*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128879>

⁸⁰ "Obama: Climate Change Poses National Security Risks for US", *VOA News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-says-climate-change-poses-national-security-risks-for-us/2779355.html>

⁸¹ Behn, Sharon, "Kerry: US Must Clinch Trans-Pacific Trade Deal or Lose Out", *VOA News*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-says-us-must-clinch-trans-pacific-trade-deal-or-lose-out/2778959.html>

The Republican-led U.S. Senate handed President Barack Obama a major victory on May 22 night when it passed the Trade Promotion Authority bill. The lawmakers voted 62-37 in favour of the so-called "fast-track" trade bill. The president's trade agenda faced opposition from some members of his Democratic Party who tried to block its passage. Afterward Obama called the bill "vital to expanding opportunities for the middle class, levelling the playing field for American workers, and establishing rules for the global economy that help our businesses grow and hire by selling goods 'Made in America' to the rest of the world."⁸²

The U.S. Senate has blocked a House of Representatives bill that would have ended the bulk collection of domestic telephone data by the National Security Agency (NSA). The Senate voted 57- 42 against the bill early on May 23, shortly after midnight. Sixty votes were needed to move ahead with the legislation that was overwhelmingly approved by the House last week. The legislation, known as the USA Freedom Act, passed in the House by a vote of 338 to 88. Instead of the bulk collection of domestic phone records, including the date, time and duration of phone calls, the House bill required the NSA to obtain the records from private phone companies after getting a court order from a secret national security court. The House bill received strong support from both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, as well as President Barack Obama.⁸³

The top prosecutor in the eastern U.S. state of Maryland says all six officers charged in the police-custody death of an African-American man have been indicted by a grand jury. State Attorney Marilyn Mosby said the grand jury found probable cause to formally indict the Baltimore Police Department officers in the arrest of Freddie Gray, who died in April after being injured while in police custody.⁸⁴

Though still early in the 2016 presidential campaign, foreign policy issues such as countering Islamic State militants and negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran continue to dominate the debate among Republican White House contenders. The early Republican focus on foreign policy is unusual in a presidential campaign, says John Fortier of the Washington-based Bipartisan Policy Centre. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake tells VOA that the 2016 race won't become a foreign policy election, saying voters will ultimately focus on the economy and their own prospects for the future. So far, six Republicans have officially declared their candidacies. Among Democrats, only Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders have declared.⁸⁵

⁸² Saine, Cindy, "US Senate OKs Obama's 'Fast-Track' Trade Authority", *VOA News*, May 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/senate-approves-obamas-fast-track-trade-authority/2787031.html>

⁸³ "US Senate Blocks House Bill on Domestic Surveillance", *VOA News*, May 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-surveillance/2786694.html>

⁸⁴ "Six Baltimore Police Officers Indicted in Custody Death", *VOA News*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/six-baltimore-police-officers-indicted-in-custody-death/2782582.html>

⁸⁵ Malone, Jim, "Foreign Policy Dominates Early Stage of 2016 Campaign", *VOA News*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/foreign-policy-2016-republican-presidential-hopefuls/2777609.html>

International: Asia

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Task force continues relief operations in Nepal; US Congress Reviews Lessons Learned From Nepal Earthquake; Officials: Airstrikes kill 15 militants in northwest Pakistan; US, Myanmar officials discuss treatment of Rohingya; US Envoy: Rohingya deserve 'path to citizenship'; Pentagon: Iraqi, coalition forces will retake Ramadi; Iraqi forces clear pathway to Beiji oil refinery; Defence Secretary Carter: Iraqi forces failed to fight for Ramadi; Syria operation was highly successful, official says; Secretary Kerry decries N. Korea's internet repression; China, US split on N. Korea sanctions: Analysts; U.S. pacific command symposium enhances regional stability; US Professor charged with providing sensitive technology to China; China warns US spy plane: CNN report; China-Russian military exercises effort to offset US primacy: experts.**

Joint Task Force 505 continues conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in Nepal, JTF 505 officials said in a news release issued on May 18. To date, JTF 505 helicopter and tilt-rotor assets have flown 142 sorties and delivered almost 220,000 pounds of supplies to those in need, including plastic sheeting, shelter kits, blankets, water, medical supplies, and supplemental and emergency food, the release said.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, DoD reported that Joint Task Force 505 is drawing down its earthquake relief operations as the Nepalese government and international aid agencies have postured for long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts. Nepal announced its transition from relief operations to the recovery phase of disaster response on May 19.⁸⁷

U.S. Congressmen are looking at Nepal's recovery needs after the earthquake that claimed some 8,600 lives in April 2015. Members of a foreign affairs subcommittee had high praise on May 20 for the U.S. government's rapid response, but also looked at the challenges ahead for the people of Nepal and the international community. Republican and Democratic members of the committee agreed the U.S. government response to the deadly earthquake April 25 made a significant difference, saving the lives of many in Nepal. Despite those efforts and the efforts of others, though, panel chairman Matt Salmon, a Republican, said the crisis for Nepal is far from over.⁸⁸

Airstrikes killed at least 15 suspected militants in Pakistan's northwestern Shawal Valley on May 21, intelligence officials said, a week after security forces moved in on Taliban strongholds there. The deeply forested ravines of the valley are a key smuggling route between Pakistan and

⁸⁶ "Task Force Continues Relief Operations in Nepal", *DoD News*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128846>

⁸⁷ "Nepal Joint Task Force Begins Drawing Down", *DoD News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128860>

⁸⁸ Saine, Cindy, "US Congress Reviews Lessons Learned From Nepal Earthquake", *VOA News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-congress-reviews-lesson-learned-from-nepal-earthquake/2780485.html>

Afghanistan, and are dotted with Taliban bases used as launch pads for attacks on Pakistani forces. The area is a stronghold of Khan “Sajna” Said, a leader of a Taliban faction whose name was added to a sanctions list of “specially designated global terrorists” by U.S. authorities last year. There have been a number of airstrikes in the Shawal Valley over the past week and two drone attacks, but no sign of a large ground offensive.⁸⁹

Myanmar says it will work to protect members of the country’s Rohingya Muslim minority that are risking their lives to flee poverty and persecution in the country. According to a presidential spokesman, President Thein Sein said the government is committed to verifying the nationality of those in need of aid, as well as protecting and assisting Myanmar citizens. He added that authorities will provide assistance and arrange repatriation to other people found in Myanmar. The announcement follows a meeting on May 21 between the president and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the capital, Nya-pyitaw. The senior U.S. diplomat had called on Myanmar officials to “improve conditions in Rakhine state so that people don’t feel that their only choice is to put their lives at risk by leaving and taking to sea.”⁹⁰

Meanwhile, a senior U.S. diplomat says Myanmar’s Muslim Rohingya, who have been fleeing poverty and persecution in the country, should have a “path to citizenship” as a way to help solve the current humanitarian crisis in the region. “The uncertainty that comes with not even having any status is one of the things that may drive people to leave,” U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said on May 22 in Yangon, where he has held talks with Myanmar officials. Predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, also known as Burma, denies citizenship and many other basic human rights to the mainly Muslim Rohingya group. About 3,000 refugees and migrants, mostly Rohingya from Myanmar and Bangladesh, have been rescued or swam ashore in Southeast Asian countries over the past 10 days after being abandoned at sea by human traffickers. Thousands more are thought to be adrift, with dwindling supplies. Defence Department spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Pool told *The Associated Press* on May 21 that the Pentagon “is responding to this crisis and taking this seriously. We are preparing to stand up maritime aviation patrols throughout the region and working with local partners to help with this issue.”⁹¹

Iraqi security forces and coalition partners will retake the Iraqi city of Ramadi, now “largely under control” of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant extremists since May 17, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters on May 18. The colonel said it’s important to not over interpret ISIL’s gain in a single city when Iraqi forces are engaged in offensive operations across the “breadth and depth” of a large nation. “To read too much into this is a mistake,” Warren said. “This is one fight, one episode, in which Iraqi Security Forces were not able to prevail -- today.”⁹²

⁸⁹ “Officials: Airstrikes Kill 15 Militants in Northwest Pakistan”, *Reuters*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-air-strikes-kill-15-militants-in-northwest-pakistan-officials/2780948.html>

⁹⁰ Scott, Amanda, “US, Myanmar Officials Discuss Treatment of Rohingya”, *VOA News*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-to-push-myanmar-on-better-treatment-of-rohingya/2780600.html>

⁹¹ “US Envoy: Rohingya Deserve ‘Path to Citizenship’”, *VOA News*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/myanmar-navy-rescues-boat-people/2782778.html>

⁹² Cronk, Terri Moon, “Pentagon: Iraqi, Coalition Forces Will Retake Ramadi”, *DoD News*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128845>

On May 20, 2015, Centcom spokesman Air Force Col. Patrick Ryder said that the loss of Ramadi is a setback, but U.S. Central Command officials are confident Iraqi security forces will take back the city in the near term.⁹³ Meanwhile, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Martin E. Dempsey said that Iraqi security forces weren't "driven from" Ramadi, they "drove out of Ramadi". Dempsey told that the mission against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant would take years to accomplish. Time will tell, the general said, and time is also a factor because the key to victory is not just military success on the battlefield, but the ability of the Iraqi government to draw the various groups in the country back together.⁹⁴

Iraqi security forces and federal police, enabled by the coalition, have successfully cleared and established a ground route into the Beiji oil refinery, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on May 22. The Beiji oil refinery has been an ongoing target for Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists, and the area around the refinery has been contested for several months, officials said. Reinforcement and resupply of the Iraqi forces within the refinery is ongoing, officials said. Ground forces, supported by coalition airstrikes, reconnaissance, and advise and assist elements, maneuvered to clear through the area, establishing route security and reclaiming key terrain.⁹⁵

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) extremists took control of Ramadi last week when Iraqi forces failed to fight for the city and instead withdrew, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said in an interview broadcast on CNN's "State of the Union" programme on May 24. "What apparently happened is the Iraqi forces just showed no will to fight," Carter told Barbara Starr, CNN's Pentagon correspondent. Iraqi security forces must have the will to fight and defend themselves against ISIL extremists, he added. U.S. military forces can provide the Iraqis with equipment and training, but "we obviously can't give them the will to fight," Carter said. With equipment, training, coalition support and some time, the secretary added, he hopes the Iraqis will develop that will.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the U.S. and coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported.⁹⁷

The U.S. special operations forces raid that killed a senior leader of the extremist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Syria on May 15 was a highly successful operation, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters on May 18. Abu Sayyaf was killed, and his wife, Umm Sayyaf, believed to be complicit in ISIL operations, was captured, Defence Secretary Ash Carter

⁹³ Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Centcom Officials 'Confident' Iraqi Security Forces Will Recover Ramadi", *DoD News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128863>

⁹⁴ Garamone, Jim, "Dempsey: Iraqi Forces Not Driven From Ramadi, They Drove Out of Ramadi", *DoD News*, May 20, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128866>

⁹⁵ "Iraqi Forces Clear Pathway to Beiji Oil Refinery", *DoD News*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128878>

⁹⁶ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter: Iraqi Forces Failed to Fight for Ramadi", *DoD News*, May 24, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128896>

⁹⁷ "Inherent Resolve Airstrikes Continue in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, May 24, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128897>

announced on May 16. A young Yezidi woman, believed to have been enslaved by the couple, also was rescued.⁹⁸

On May 18, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry denounced North Korea for repressing Internet freedom for its citizens, and condemned the communist country for last year's hacking attack on Sony Pictures in Hollywood. Speaking at Korea University in Seoul, the top American diplomat praised South Korea and Japan for their Internet freedom, while attacking Pyongyang for limiting total Internet access in the reclusive country to a small, privileged elite. Korea and Japan "are among the world's leaders in Internet access, while North Korea is at the exact opposite end of that spectrum with the lowest rate of access in the world and the most rigid and centralized control," Kerry said. No other government is as extreme as the communist nation, he added.⁹⁹

During his visit to South Korea on May 18, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry indicated that China is considering supporting new sanctions against North Korea, but analysts are sceptical that Beijing will take any punitive measures that might cause instability on the Korean peninsula. After meeting with leaders in Beijing and Seoul, the U.S. Secretary of State harshly criticized Pyongyang for its continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un personally for allegedly executing a number of high ranking officials, including Defence Minister Hyon Yong Chol, who was allegedly killed with an anti-aircraft gun. While China and the U.S. agree on the need to persuade North Korea to end its nuclear ambitions, they remain far apart on measures needed to make that happen.¹⁰⁰

The U.S. Pacific Command Amphibious Leaders Symposium, which includes more than 20 nations, will enhance stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, Defence Department spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren said on May 19. Speaking to Pentagon reporters, the colonel said the inaugural symposium in Hawaii this week "brought together senior leaders of allied and partner Marine Corps, naval infantries and militaries spanning the Indo-Asia-Pacific region who have an interest in military amphibious capability development." Marine Corps Lt. Gen. John A. Toolan, commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, is hosting the symposium, which kicked off on 18. Warren said the event is meant to develop a meaningful dialogue on key aspects of maritime and amphibious operations, capability development and interoperability. The U.S. and 22 other nations are participating in PALS'15 — a total of approximately 110 foreign and U.S. participants, the colonel said.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Syria Operation Was Highly Successful, Official Says", *DoD News*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128847>

⁹⁹ "Kerry Decries N. Korea's Internet Repression", *VOA News*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-decries-north-koreas-internet-repression/2775956.html>

¹⁰⁰ Padden, Brian, "Analysts: China, US Split on N. Korea Sanctions", *VOA News*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/analysts-china-us-remain-divided-over-north-korea-sanctions/2777017.html>

¹⁰¹ Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "U.S. Pacific Command Symposium Enhances Regional Stability", *DoD News*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128853>

U.S. federal prosecutors have charged the chairman of Temple University's physics department in connection with an alleged scheme to provide sensitive technology to China. Xi Xiaoxing, a naturalized U.S. citizen who was born in China, is facing charges of wire fraud. Prosecutors have accused the 47-year-old of seeking prestigious appointments in China in exchange for providing data on electronics technology invented by a U.S. company. Xi faces up to 80 years in prison and a \$1 million fine if convicted. Earlier this week, the U.S. Department of Justice charged six Chinese nationals with economic espionage and theft of trade secrets for allegedly accessing secret U.S. technologies and sharing them with universities and companies controlled by the Chinese government.¹⁰²

China's navy is reported to have issued eight warning messages to a U.S. military surveillance plane that passed over a group of man-made islands Beijing is using to secure its sweeping territorial claims in the disputed South China Sea. "This is the Chinese navy, this is the Chinese navy, please go away quickly," said a voice in English, according to a report by CNN, whose reporters were allowed to fly on the U.S. P8-A Poseidon spy plane on May 20. CNN said the U.S. Navy's most advanced spy aircraft passed as low as 4,500 meters over the disputed reefs and shoals in the Spratly Islands, which are nearly 1,000 kilometres from the shores of mainland China. U.S. officials have expressed increasing concern about China's land-reclamation efforts at seven sites in the Spratlys, parts of which are also claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.¹⁰³

China and Russia conducted joint naval exercises this week in the Mediterranean Sea — a sign, some security experts say, that the two countries are stepping up defence cooperation to offset U.S. military primacy. The Russian Defence Ministry said a total of 10 warships from the Russian Navy and China's People's Liberation Army Navy took part in the week-long exercises. The Chinese Defence Ministry said the joint exercises focused on navigation safety, at-sea replenishment, escort missions and live fire exercises. The goal of such exercises "is to strengthen mutual understanding between the navies... regarding boosting stability, countering new challenges and threats at sea," Vice-Admiral Alexander Fedotenkov, a deputy commander of the Russian Navy, said before the exercises began. Experts say Russia has increased cooperation with the Chinese in both economic and military spheres while relations between Moscow and the U.S. have deteriorated amidst the standoff over Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping recently signed large economic deals after Putin gave Xi a warm welcome at the Victory Parade earlier in May. Chinese troops marched on Red Square during that event. China has also invited Russian troops to march in a parade in Beijing in September to commemorate the end of World War II.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² "US Professor Charged With Providing Sensitive Technology to China", *VOA News*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-professor-charged-with-providing-sensitive-technology-to-china/2783144.html>

¹⁰³ "Report: China Warns US Spy Plane", *VOA News*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/report-china-issues-warnings-to-us-spy-plane/2780587.html>

¹⁰⁴ Bo, Li, "Are Chinese/Russian Military Exercises an Effort to Offset US Primacy?", *VOA News*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/are-chinese-russian-military-exercises-effort-to-offset-us-primacy/2782818.html>

India-US Relations

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **US-India ties are 'unprecedented' and will benefit the world: US Ambassador Verma; India-friendly lawmaker Brad Sherman heads US Congressional panel on Asia;**

If India and the US work together, it will not only benefit both the nations but will also deliver significantly for rest of the world, US Ambassador to India Richard R Verma said in Amritsar, Punjab, India. Verma was interacting with scholars and faculty of Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) in Amritsar. During his visit to Punjab under US Embassy's Outreach Programme, Verma shared his diplomatic experiences with the staff of the university. Verma said the current times in which he is steering the US policies in India are the conducive times where the connect between two largest democracies at government levels now is coupled with the people to people connect that was always there in the yesteryears.¹⁰⁵ On May 21, Ambassador Verma said that the relationship between New Delhi and Washington is 'unprecedented'. "A very positive trajectory as the way we are going. I am really optimistic about where we are going in key areas, in trade and economics, in climate and clean energy, in science, space and health and so many different areas. So, we are now cooperating not only in South Asia, but our doctors and health experts are now working in African countries. We are talking about maritime cooperation not just in South Asia, but in the Asia Pacific," said Verma. He further said the relationship between the two sides is 'strategic plus'. Verma also made it clear that New Delhi's increasing ties with Beijing would not affect the relationship between India and the United States.¹⁰⁶

Brad Sherman, an active member of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans and played a key role in the passage of civil nuclear deal, has become the top Democrat of a US Congressional panel on Asia. "It is a great privilege to become the Ranking Member on Asia," said Sherman, now Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "In this post I can continue working with the Indian- American community on important public policy issues, as well as help strengthen cooperation between Washington and New Delhi," Sherman said. He is also the second ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The Asia Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction on foreign relations with over half of the world's population, has become increasingly important as Congress and the Obama administration have shifted focus to the region. Sherman will also continue to serve as Chairman Emeritus on the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation and Trade, where he can help shape beneficial trade relationships with India, a media release said. He was the Chair of the panel when he helped pass the resolution approving the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ "US India Ties Will Benefit The World: US Envoy", *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, May 20, 2015 at http://www.ptinews.com/news/6051690_US-India-ties-will-benefit-the-world-US-Envoy.html

¹⁰⁶ "India-US Relationship 'Unprecedented': Richard Verma", *ANI News*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail2/story216634/india-us-relationship-039-unprecedented-039-richard-verma.html>

¹⁰⁷ "India-Friendly Lawmaker Heads US Congressional Panel On Asia", *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, January 23, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/printer-friendly-version?article_id=115012301003_1

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **India to take proactive steps to thwart terror: Manohar Parrikar; J&K government imposes curbs in Srinagar to foil Hurriyat rally; Centre approves aid hike for migrant Kashmiri Pandits.**

Asserting that terrorists have to be neutralised only through terrorists, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on May 21 said that India will take “pro-active” steps to prevent a 26/11 type attacks hatched from foreign soil. “There are certain things that I obviously cannot discuss here. But if there is any country, why only Pakistan, planning something against my country, we will definitely take some pro-active steps,” he said at an event in New Delhi. Speaking candidly, the Minister used the Hindi phrase “kante se kanta nikalna” (removing a thorn with a thorn) and wondered why Indian soldiers should be used to neutralise terrorists. He said the pro-active steps could include pressure tactics. “We have to neutralise terrorists through terrorists only. Why can’t we do it? We should do it. Why does my soldier have to do it?” he said. Defence Minister Parrikar was speaking at a conclave organised by a news channel and was replying to a question on what would be government’s reaction if a repeat of Mumbai attack or a Parliament attack takes place.¹⁰⁸

J&K government on May 21 imposed restrictions in six police station areas of Srinagar to foil plans of moderate Hurriyat Conference to hold a rally on the death anniversary of its two leaders. Restrictions on the movement of people were imposed in Khanyar, Safakadal, Maharaj Gunj, Nowhatta, Rainawari and Maisuma police station areas as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order during the Hurriyat rally at Eidgah in the old city area, a police official said. Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was placed under house arrest on May 20, a day ahead of the rally to commemorate the death anniversary of his father, who was assassinated by gunmen in 1990. Meanwhile, normal life in the Valley was affected due to the strike call given by Hurriyat for marking the death anniversary of its slain leaders.¹⁰⁹

Monthly cash assistance to Migrant Kashmiri Pandit (KP) families has been hiked from Rs 6,600 to Rs 10,000 per family per month. The Centre has cleared the proposal of the state government in this regard. According to sources the hike will benefit 63,000 registered migrant families, and will cost the central government Rs 120 crores annually.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ “India To Take Pro-Active Steps To Thwart Terror: Parrikar”, *The Hindu*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/modi365-india-to-take-proactive-steps-to-thwart-terror-says-parrikar/article7231953.ece>

¹⁰⁹ “J&K Government Imposes Curbs In Srinagar To Foil Hurriyat Rally”, *The Hindu*, May 21, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jk-government-imposes-curbs-in-srinagar-to-foil-hurriyat-rally/article7230925.ece>

¹¹⁰ “Each Migrant Pandit Family To Get Rs 10,000 Per Month”, *Rising Kashmir*, May 22, 2015 at <http://risingkashmir.in/news/each-migrant-pandit-family-to-get-rs-10000-per-month/>

Northeast India

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **Govt. seeks to squeeze funds flow to NE ultras; Assam: Centre contemplates ST status to 6 State communities; AGP and KMSS oppose environment clearance to Dibang project; DoNER ministry plans new security initiative for NE projects.**

As the Government of Myanmar is yet to take effective steps to drive out the militants taking shelter in that country, the Government of India has decided to take strong steps to squeeze the fund flow to the camps of the ultras to make life miserable for them. Highly placed security sources told *The Assam Tribune* that the ultras would be crippled if the flow of funds can be squeezed and the police and security forces have managed to do that to a large extent. The worst hit is the National Democratic Front of Boroland (S), while the other militant groups of the State, including the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent), have also been affected as most people are not ready to pay the demanded amounts. Sources pointed out that the movement of the militants with weapons has been restricted to a large extent following the massive crackdown launched after the killing of more than 70 persons by militants belonging to NDFB (S) on December 23, which, in turn, reduced the flow of funds to the coffers of the militants. The security agencies recently received an input that the debt burden of the NDFB(S) has gone up to Rs 60 lakh and the leaders of the outfit staying in Myanmar called up the commander-in-chief G Bidai to urgently send money. But Bidai himself is on the run and is not in a position to launch any extortion drive.¹¹¹

Worried over the possible demographic changes in Assam due to illegal immigration, the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre is contemplating to turn the State into a tribal majority by according Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities. The move came after the pro-talk faction of the ULFA, which is having peace talks with the Centre, made it clear that it would give up the demand for Assam's sovereignty only if the Koch-Rajbongshi, Moran, Muttok, Chutia, Tai Ahom and tea tribe communities are given ST status, a Home Ministry official told PTI. The group, led by ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa, voiced strong concern over the alleged unabated illegal immigration from Bangladesh and conveyed to the government that granting ST status to the six communities was the only way out to protect the interests of the indigenous people of Assam. All these six communities are currently listed as Other Backward Classes and are willing to be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes as the new status would give them more benefits.¹¹²

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), on May 21, vehemently opposed the decision of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to accord environment clearance to the 2880-MW Dibang Multipurpose Project. Also, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) and the Gana Mukti Sangram, Assam said in a joint statement that they would soon move the

¹¹¹ Choudhury, R Dutta, "Govt Trying To Squeeze Fund Flow of NE Ultras", *The Assam Tribune*, May 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1815/at050>

¹¹² "Centre Mulls ST Status To 6 State Communities", *The Assam Tribune*, May 19, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1915/at050>

Central Government to cancel the environment clearance order issued by the MoEFCC to the project. Resistance struggle would be built to prevent movement of the construction materials, vehicles and engineers and other staff and officers of the project, they said.¹¹³

Union Minister of State (Independent charge) for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Dr Jitendra Singh, on May 22, convened a meeting in New Delhi of senior intelligence officers of the Government of India and security experts to discuss new innovative security initiatives which could be undertaken in the North-east with a view to successfully accomplishing the developmental plans and projects in the region. The meeting was attended by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval; Chairman Joint Intelligence Committee RN Ravi; Director Intelligence Bureau Dineshwar Sharma; ex-DG BSF EN Rammohan; ex-DG ITBP and CRPF Vikram Srivastava; Dr Satyapal Singh, IPS (retd) Member of Parliament and Vishnu Dayal Sharma, IPS (retd) Member of Parliament. The meeting decided that very soon an exercise would be begun by identifying the most sensitive districts of the region from the security point of view and deliberating on the roadmap ahead through presentations by security officials working on the ground as well as by experts and security scholars who specialised in dealing with the North-east.¹¹⁴

Left-Wing Extremism

(May 18-24, 2015)

- **3 policemen, 2 Maoists killed in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur encounter; Chhattisgarh to outsource doctors, teachers for Naxal-affected divisions; Tamil Nadu seeks to thwart Maoist incursion in tribal settlements; 'Being a Maoist is not a crime', says Kerala High Court.**

Three policemen and two Maoists were killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on May 17. The encounter took place near Ponjed at Mirjur in Gangalur police station area where a team of STF and district police force was conducting an anti-Maoist operation. STF constable Sitaram Kunjam and assistant constable of the district force Moti Ram were killed on the spot. Another constable Payku Ram Poyam succumbed to his injuries while he was being taken to Jagdalpur. Among the Maoist killed was a senior guerrilla fighter Hemla Masa alias Vijay, commander of Company 2 of West Bastar Division of CPI (Maoist). R K Vij, ADG (Naxal Ops), said: "Fifteen rounds of AK-47, nine shells of Under Barrel Grenade Launcher, a 12 bore rifle and a wireless set were recovered from him."¹¹⁵

Chhattisgarh government has decided to outsource doctors, teachers and para-medical staff to work in the pockets that are infested with the activities of the Naxalites. Being located in the

¹¹³ "AGP Opposes Clearance of Dibang Project", *The Assam Tribune*, May 22, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2215/city055>

¹¹⁴ "DoNER Ministry's Security Initiative for NE Projects", *The Assam Tribune*, May 23, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2315/at052>

¹¹⁵ Bhardwaj, Ashutosh, "Chhattisgarh: 3 Cops, 2 Maoists Killed In Gunbattle", *The Indian Express*, May 18, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/chhattisgarh-2-cops-2-maoists-killed-in-gunbattle/>

inaccessible terrains coupled with the terror of the red army, most of the state-run health centres and schools located in the interior areas of Bastar and Sarguja, both Naxal-affected divisions, had been facing the dearth of staff. Due to which, the state government had been failing to provide proper health care and education to the people in both the regions. The officials said the new system of outsourcing would help to get specialised doctors and subject teachers that were required for the interior areas.¹¹⁶

In an attempt to thwart Maoist incursion in under-developed tribal settlements across Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu Q branch has identified and forwarded a list of 71 tribal villages to the district administration, seeking their immediate intervention. The police have asked the revenue and other related departments to speed up the implementation of government schemes mainly pertaining to basic amenities like issuing ration cards, health and rural connectivity. The recent arrest of suspected Maoist commander Roopesh, his wife Shyna and their accomplices from Karumathampatti, has further strengthened the police suspicions that Maoist elements are trying to setup base among tribals in the region. Meanwhile the Q branch police used to visit the 71 tribal settlements and started to maintain cordial relationship with the tribal people. "If their basic amenities are fulfilled by the government, then there is no job for Maoist in the tribal settlements," said an officer from Q branch.¹¹⁷

Kerala High Court on May 22 said being a Maoist was "no crime" and police could not detain a person "merely because he is a Maoist". "Being a Maoist is no crime, though the political ideology of Maoists would not synchronise with our constitutional polity. It is a basic human right to think in terms of human aspirations," it said. "... if the individual or organisation abhors and resorts to physical violence, a law agency can prevent or take action against individuals or organisations," Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque said in his judgment in a case relating to the arrest of Syam Balakrishnan on the suspicion of being a Maoist. The court added: "Police cannot detain a person merely because he is a Maoist, unless police form a reasonable opinion that his activities are unlawful." Disposing of the case, the court directed the government to pay Rs 1 lakh as compensation to Balakrishnan within two months. It also asked the state to pay the litigation cost of Rs 10,000. The court said the police had violated Balakrishnan's liberty by arresting him merely on suspicion and without satisfying that he was involved in any cognisable offence punishable under the law.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ "Chhattisgarh To Outsource Doctors, Teachers For Naxal-Infested Regions", *Business Standard*, May 19, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/chhattisgarh-to-outsource-doctors-teachers-for-naxal-infested-regions-115051901472_1.html

¹¹⁷ Subburaj, A, "71 Villages Identified Which Could Become Maoist Base", *The Times of India*, May 20, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/coimbatore/71-villages-identified-which-could-become-Maoist-base/articleshow/47351909.cms>

¹¹⁸ "Being Maoist No Crime: HC", *The Telegraph*, May 23, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150523/jsp/nation/story_21693.jsp#.VWhjtKqpHw

III. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

United Nations

(May 11-25, 2015)

Middle East

- **Fighting resumes after five-day truce, UN proposed talks postponed indefinitely; Syria talks continue as Palmyra sees destruction; UN attempts to revive the Middle East peace process as Israel build settlements in West Bank; Iraq reels under ISIL onslaught; Cyprus peace process on the roll again.**

The death toll in the Yemen mounted to 828 civilians as of May 10, 2015.¹¹⁹ Violence from both sides continued as the five-day humanitarian truce commenced on the midnight of May 13, 2015. Iranian cargo ships headed towards to Yemen were requested by the US to route the cargo via a UN base in Djibouti.¹²⁰ Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen arrived in Sana'a to meet the warring parties and explore possibilities for prolonging the ceasefire.¹²¹ Meanwhile, supplies were being airlifted from Dubai to Sana'a and the UNHCR was working with local partners to distribute the aid.¹²² Hours after the truce ended at 4pm on May 17, the Saudi led alliance resumed airstrikes.¹²³ The Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences has requested the UN Secretary General to halt the Saudi-led genocide in Yemen.¹²⁴ The Secretary General also warned that the situation in Yemen may attract jihadis from Somalia to move into Yemen.¹²⁵ The UN announced that it will attempt to hold inclusive consultation with the parties in the conflict on May 28, 2015 in Geneva.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ "Ahead of Humanitarian Pause, Yemen Sees 'Deadliest' Week Of Fighting – UN", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50833#.VWLtytKqqko>

¹²⁰ "Yemen Truce Starts After Shelling, Iran Sends Cargo Ship", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/12/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0NX0K520150512>

¹²¹ Yemen: UN Welcomes Ceasefire as 'Lifesaving' Humanitarian Relief Begins to Arrive", May 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50843#.VWLxgdKqqko>

¹²² "As Humanitarian Pause Holds in Yemen, UN Aid Airlift Arrives with Critical Supplies", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50870#.VWRUa9Kqqko>

¹²³ "Saudi-Led Alliance Resumes Air Strikes on Yemen", May 17, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/17/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0O20GM20150517>

¹²⁴ "Iran Medics Urge UN Action on Saudi Crimes against Yemen", May 19, 2015, at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/05/19/411805/Iran-Marandi-UN-Ban-Yemen-Saudi-Aggression>

¹²⁵ "Yemen Crisis Could Open Jihadist Paths, U.N. Warns", May 19, 2015, at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/05/19/UN-Yemen-crisis-could-open-jihadist-paths.html>

¹²⁶ "UN To Hold Yemen Peace Talks In Geneva", May 21, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/un-to-hold-yemen-peace/1861394.html>

The Houthi leader Abdul-Malek al-Houthi welcomed the UN initiative.¹²⁷ However, on May 24, 2015, the talks were indefinitely postponed.¹²⁸

The UNESCO appealed warring parties in Syria to avoid destruction of the relics of the ancient city of Palmyra, which was an important cultural centre during the 1st and 2nd century AD.¹²⁹ A week later the Chief of UNESCO Irina Bokova again called for immediate cessation of hostilities.¹³⁰ Meanwhile the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura continues to hold consultations for the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué, which was adopted on 30 June 2012, and later endorsed by the UN Security Council. The Communiqué calls for the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers, to be made of members of the Government, the opposition and other groups, for a Syrian-led political transition.¹³¹

Since Palestine officially joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) on April 01, 2015, the ICC urged Israel to submit to it information regarding its Gaza offensive in 2014.¹³² The Secretary General took serious note of the Israeli attempts to make settlements in Occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem.¹³³ Area C in West Bank is home to 60 per cent of Palestinians, including the nomadic Bedouin communities, who will be relocated to other areas.¹³⁴ As the Security Council is reportedly working on a resolution to outline the parameters of a final deal, the recently appointed UN Special Middle East Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, has said that he would approach the re-elected Benjamin Netanyahu government to agree for a peace deal based on the two-state solution within a limited timeframe.¹³⁵

UN Special Representative for Iraq Ján Kubiš informed the Security Council that Iraq is suffering a severe humanitarian crisis due to the conflict between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Government forces. 20 per cent of its population is unable to access essential health services, water and sanitation services. Food insecurity has increased by 60 per cent in six months

¹²⁷ "Yemeni Rebel Leader Backs New UN Peace Talks In Geneva", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.sunherald.com/2015/05/20/6236338/un-sets-may-28-as-date-for-yemen.html>

¹²⁸ "U.N. Peace Talks on Yemen Postponed", May 24, 2015 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/05/25/U-N-peace-talks-on-Yemen-postponed-.html>

¹²⁹ "UNESCO Chief Urges International Action As Fighting Threatens Syria's Iconic Palmyra Archaeological Site", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50864#.VWL0n9Kqqko>

¹³⁰ "UNESCO Chief Urges 'Immediate' Cessation Of Hostilities At Palmyra World Heritage Site", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50915#.VWgxlNKqqko>

¹³¹ "In Geneva, UN Envoy on Syria Meets with International Stakeholders amid Ongoing Consultations", May 18, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50891#.VWqtMnKqqko>

¹³² "ICC Urges Israel To Give Material For Preliminary Gaza Probe", May 12, 2015, at http://www.thenewstribune.com/2015/05/12/3788704_icc-urges-israel-to-give-material.html?rh=1

¹³³ "Ban Deplores Israel's Advancement Of Settlement Activities In Occupied Palestinian Territories", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50877#.VWRVatKqqko>

¹³⁴ "UN Officials Urge Israel to Halt Plans to Transfer Palestinian Bedouins, Expand Settlements", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50917#.VWgxtDKqqko>

¹³⁵ "UN to Explore New Mideast Peace Efforts With Israel", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-to-explore-new-mideast-peace-efforts-with-israel/>

with 4.4 million people now requiring food assistance. Over a million of the 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) need shelter.¹³⁶ In a second exodus within a month, 25,000 people have fled Ramadi due to fierce attacks by the ISIL.¹³⁷ Nearly 55,000 people have fled Ramadi.¹³⁸

With the good offices of UN Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide, full-fledged negotiations resumed on the basis of the Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014 and in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot Leader Mustafa Akinci. It is hoped that these will lead to an acceptable solution regarding the division of the Island.¹³⁹

South and Southeast Asia

- **Nepal relief effort short of funds; Rohingyas stranded at sea, UN urges ASEAN for a humane response.**

A second earthquake of a magnitude of 7.3 on Richter scale hit Nepal on May 12, 2015.¹⁴⁰ In the light of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for more aid to help Nepal, the Secretary General stated that only 14 per cent of the \$423 million that is required for relief and rehabilitation has been generated thus far.¹⁴¹

Several Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals were stranded at sea as smugglers who were taking them to Thailand their boats for fear of arrest from Thai authorities.¹⁴² As the countries in the region, mainly Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand refused to give refuge to these people, the UNHCR appealed to them to allow the people to disembark. Malaysia and Indonesia had indeed rescued nearly 1000 and 600 people respectively, and had since refused others. The Secretary General also joined in a similar appeal invoking the states responsibilities under international law.¹⁴³ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the ASEAN to address the issue at a regional level, which the UNICEF invoked the countries obligations under the Child Rights

¹³⁶ "At Security Council, UN Officials Warn Against 'Waning' Global Attention To Plight Of Civilians in Iraq", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50858#.VWL0OdKqqko>

¹³⁷ "Nearly 25,000 Flee Ramadi amid ISIL Attacks and Heavy Fighting, Says UN Relief Wing", May 18, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50894#.VWqtdKqqko>

¹³⁸ "Close to 55,000 People Flee Ramadi, U.N. Says", May 25, 2015, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/25/middleeast/ramadi-refugees/>

¹³⁹ "UN Chief Applauds Resumption Of 'Full-Fledged' Talks On Cyprus", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50871#.VWRUetKqqko>

¹⁴⁰ "As Powerful New Quake Hits Nepal, UN Races To Deliver Aid To Those Affected", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50829#.VWLqB9Kqqko>

¹⁴¹ "'Emergency Relief Is Never Enough,' Says Ban, Urging UN to Help Nepal Build Back Better", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50872#.VWRaF9Kqqkp>

¹⁴² "UN Agency Urges Southeast Asian Countries to Strengthen Efforts to Combat People Smuggling", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50841#.VWLwVnKqqko>

¹⁴³ "Ban urges Borders and Ports Be Kept Open to Thousands Stranded At Sea in Southeast Asia", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50861#.VWL0eNKqqko>

Convention to give shelter to the refugees.¹⁴⁴ A few days later, the Philippines also said that it will not give refuge to migrants without valid documents.¹⁴⁵

Africa

- **Burundi on the boil; FAO seeks to revive economy amidst rising conflict in South Sudan; Tripartite talks on discuss repatriation of refugees from Dabaab; France targets Islamists in Mali; UNSC considers EU proposal of military action against people-smugglers in Libyan waters; to Ebola prompts setting up of emergency fund.**

Burundi remained on the boil. As President Pierre Nkurunziza left for Tanzania to attend the Summit of East African Community that was convened to help resolve the crisis, the UN received reports of a coup in the country.¹⁴⁶ The coup was led by General Niyombare, who was Burundi's intelligence chief until February 2015.¹⁴⁷ According to the UNHCR that over 105,000 people have fled the country, 70,187 to Tanzania, 26,300 to Rwanda and 9,183 to the province of South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that there had been alarming reports of reprisals in the aftermath of the attempted coup.¹⁴⁸ On May 23, Burundi's opposition leader, Zedi Feruzi, was shot dead by assailants.¹⁴⁹ Burundian refugees in Tanzania are faced with an outbreak of cholera¹⁵⁰; nearly 3000 people have been affected.¹⁵¹

The Food and Agriculture Organisation is attempting to provide seeds, tools and fishing kits to enable food insecure families in the conflict-affected Upper Nile and Jonglei states of South Sudan to plant the cereals ahead of the rainy season. Nearly 18 flights are being flown into these areas from Juba every day.¹⁵² Meanwhile condemning the violence in Unity state by the government

¹⁴⁴ "UN Rights Chief Urges Southeast Asia States To Protect Migrants Stranded At Sea", May 15, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50873#.VWRU59Kqqko>

¹⁴⁵ "PH To Push Boat People Back To Sea", May 18, 2015, at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/123062/ph-to-push-boat-people-back-to-sea>

¹⁴⁶ "Burundi: UN Chief Urges Calm amid Country's Political Crisis", May 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50846#.VWLyH9Kqqko>

¹⁴⁷ "Official: President Returns to Burundi after Attempted Coup", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/burundi-situation-uncertain-un-calls-for-calm/2767026.html>

¹⁴⁸ "Amid 'Extremely Tense Situation' in Burundi, UN Rights Chief Warns Against Reprisals In Wake Of Failed Coup", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50869#.VWRT-tKqqko>

¹⁴⁹ "Burundi Opposition Leader Reportedly Shot Dead Amid Ongoing Unrest", May 23, 2015, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/23/burundi-opposition-leader-shot-dead-amid-ongoing-unrest>

¹⁵⁰ "In Tanzania, UNICEF Working To Halt Cholera Outbreak Among Burundian Refugees", May 21, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50925#.VWg5O9Kqqko>

¹⁵¹ "Cholera Epidemic Hits 3,000 Burundi Refugees In Tanzania: UN", May 22, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/health/cholera-strikes-3-000-bur/1865926.html>

¹⁵² "South Sudan: UN Ramps Up Airlifts To Reach Conflict-Hit Farmers Ahead Of Planting Season", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50855#.VWLzutKqqko>

forces and the Upper Nile by Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition, the Security Council has threatened sanctions against those who are threatening peace in the country.¹⁵³ The UNMISS compound in South Sudan's Melut region was damaged in a mortar fire during the face-off between the government and SPLM-in-Opposition forces.¹⁵⁴ The joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) raised serious concerns about the situation in Darfur due to fighting between the Rezeigat and Ma'alia tribes.¹⁵⁵

The UN has held talks with the Kenyan and Somali governments to reach and understand over how to repatriate the refugees from the Dabaab camp. After the April 02 attack on the Garissa University by the al-Shabaab members in the camp, Kenya had requested that the Dabaab refugee camp supporting Somali refugees be wound up.¹⁵⁶

An independent panel of experts set up by the UN has taken a serious view of the delayed response to the fight against Ebola in Africa in 2014. They have said that early warning signals from May-July 2014 were ignored and concerted attention only came since September.¹⁵⁷ The Director General of the WHO, Dr Margaret Chan, announced that the agency is planning to set up a \$100 million emergency fund and a global health crisis workforce in order to be better prepared to deal with the breakout of epidemics like the Ebola Virus Disease.¹⁵⁸ The fund was approved on May 23, 2015.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Guinea and Sierra Leone suffered another spike in Ebola cases. A WHO response team was positioned on the Guinea's border with Guinea-Bissau to prevent contagion.¹⁶⁰

French forces inflicted a loss on the Al-Qaeda related Islamists in Northern Mali by neutralising four terrorists.¹⁶¹

¹⁵³ "South Sudan: UN Says 650,000 at Risk Due To Renewed Violence, As Security Council Threatens Sanctions", May 18, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50887#.VWqs6tKqqko>

¹⁵⁴ "Four Civilians Killed In Shelling of UN Compound In Melut: UNMISS", May 20, 2015 at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article55046>

¹⁵⁵ "UN Mission 'Strongly Deplores' Deteriorating Tensions in Sudan's Darfur Region", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50842#.VWLwWNKqqko>

¹⁵⁶ "UN Refugee Chief Visits Kenya And Somalia To Discuss Future Of Dadaab Camp", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50857#.VWL0EdKqqko>

¹⁵⁷ "United Nations Experts Denounce WHO's Slow Response to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa", May 12, 2015, at <http://www.medindia.net/news/united-nations-experts-denounce-whos-slow-response-to-ebola-outbreak-149023-1.htm>

¹⁵⁸ "Citing 'Defining Moment' Sparked By Ebola Outbreak, UN Health Agency Chief Pledges Key Reforms, May 18, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50889#.VWqtydKqqko>

¹⁵⁹ "Emergency Fund Created for World Health Agency", May 24, 2015, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/world/emergency-fund-created-for-world-health-agency.html>

¹⁶⁰ "UN Health Agency Responds To Ebola Spike By Deploying Team On Border Of Guinea And Guinea-Bissau", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50918#.VWgxzNKqqko>

¹⁶¹ "French Govt: Forces Killed Al-Qaida-Linked Leader in Mali", May 20, 2015, at <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/05/20/french-govt-forces-killed-al-qaida-linked-leader-in-mali/27654083/>

Britain is currently in the process of drafting a Security Council resolution that will allow EU navies to use force against smugglers of people in Libya's territorial waters.¹⁶² Libya would be sending a special envoy to discuss the issue with the EU, while at the same time conveying its inability to control such immigration at the current juncture.¹⁶³

UN Acts

- **ATT debates continue; IMO approves polar code**

As the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) entered into force, the Secretary General called on more countries to sign the treaty. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini urged the Security Council to further strengthen its working and mandating UN operations to build national and regional capacities for implementation of the ATT.¹⁶⁴ A Security Council resolution to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty was adopted with 9 votes and 6 abstentions¹⁶⁵, with several African nations raising the issue of leaving out the issue of supply of small arms to non-state actors from the resolution.¹⁶⁶

After nearly a decade of negotiations, the UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) approved a polar code to govern the rules for passing through the waters of the Arctic and Antarctic regions. While attempting to make it safe for mariners to traverse through polar waters and some ways of protecting the marine ecosystem. According to Kevin Harun, Arctic Program Director for Pacific Environment, much more however needs to be done to prevent release of black carbon by passing ships as it hastens the melting of ice and preventing heavy oil spills that can damage the delicate ecosystem of the poles.¹⁶⁷

UN Reports

- **World Bank focuses on climate change and sustainable energy; UNESCAP aspires to inclusive growth in Asia-Pacific; WHO assesses achievement of MDG health targets; ILO raises concern over 'temporary' employment.**

The World Bank's latest climate report *Decarbonizing Development: Three Steps to a Zero Carbon Future*

¹⁶² "UN Could Give The Green Light To EU Plans For Libya Military Action", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/11609210/UN-could-give-the-green-light-to-EU-plans-for-Libya-military-action.html>

¹⁶³ "Libya Sends Special Envoy To Talk With EU About Migrant Plan", May 19, 2015, at http://www.sunherald.com/2015/05/19/6235506_libya-sends-special-envoy-to-talk.html?rh=1

¹⁶⁴ "Arms Trade Treaty Vital To Halting Flow Of 'Portable, Casual Instruments Of Death', Security Council Told", May 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50845#.VWLyDdKqqko>

¹⁶⁵ "Adopting Resolution, Security Council Urges Broader Global Cooperation To Tackle Illicit Transfer Of Small Arms", May 22, 2015, at http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50946#.VWg_fNKqqko.

¹⁶⁶ "African Nations Balk At UN Small Arms Measure", May 22, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/05/22/african-nations-balk-at-un-small-arms-measure/27781429/>

¹⁶⁷ "United Nations OKs New Shipping Code To Protect Arctic Waters", May 15, 2015, at http://www.thearcticsounder.com/article/1520united_nations_oks_new_shipping_code_to

has suggested the introduction of carbon pricing to increase profits as well as reduce emissions.¹⁶⁸ Yet another World Bank report titled *Progress Toward Sustainable Energy: Global Tracking Framework 2015*, was released at the of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) Forum in New York. The report urges nations to increase investments in energy generation.¹⁶⁹

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Survey titled *Making Growth More Inclusive for Sustainable Development* has forecasted that the region will continue to grow at 5.9 per cent, higher than other regions of the world. However, as the world is moving from the MDGs to the SDGs, the region must “integrate and mainstream” inclusiveness in policy making.¹⁷⁰

The World Health Statistics released by WHO point out that while the Millennium Development Goals have helped in dealing with epidemics like HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, but have not been successful with child and maternal health and public sanitation issues. The WHO has highlighted ten facts: Life expectancy at birth has increased six years for both men and women since 1990; two-thirds of deaths worldwide are due to non-communicable diseases; in some countries, more than one-third of births are delivered by caesarean section; in low- and middle-income countries, only two-thirds of pregnant women with HIV receive antiretroviral to prevent transmission to their baby; over one-third of adult men smoke tobacco; only one in three African children with suspected pneumonia receives antibiotics; 15 per cent of women worldwide are obese; the median age of people living in low-income countries is 20 years, while it is 40 years in high-income countries; one quarter of men have raised blood pressure; and in some countries, less than five per cent of total government expenditure is on health.¹⁷¹

The ILOs Annual Report *World Employment and Social Outlook 2015* has said that nearly 75 per cent of workers the world over are employed temporarily, with/without contracts, under own-account arrangements and in unpaid family jobs. A large proportion of this work force also happens to be female.¹⁷²

Miscellaneous

- **SG disappointed with outcome of NPT Review Conference; SDG implementation receives attention; World Education Forum 2015 concludes in Incheon, ROK with focus on SDGs; ITU turns 150; Cholera outbreak in Haiti.**

Despite concerns raised by Israel, the NPT Review Conference had serious discussion over holding

¹⁶⁸ “Carbon Pricing Is Crucial To Achieve United Nation’s Climate Target”, May 13, 2015, at <http://mainenewsonline.com/content/15053997-carbon-pricing-crucial-achieve-united-nation-s-climate-target>

¹⁶⁹ “Sustainable Energy for All 2015 – ‘Converting Commitments To Kilowatts’”, May 22, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50933#.VWg-eNKqqko>

¹⁷⁰ “New UN Report Calls for Economic Inclusivity to Drive Growth in Asia-Pacific Region”, May 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50853#.VWLzdtKqqko>

¹⁷¹ “New UN Report Shows Mixed Results for Reaching MDG Health Targets by End of 2015”, May 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50847#.VWLyz9Kqqko>

¹⁷² “Most Workers Now Employed In Part-Time Or Temporary Jobs – UN Labour Agency”, May 18, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50895#.VWqtd9Kqqko>

a Middle East Conference for a proposed nuclear weapon free zone in the region in March 2016. Such a conference has been proposed by Egypt, and would bring into focus Israel's undeclared nuclear programme.¹⁷³ However, the final outcome document of the conference could not be adopted due to lack of support from US and Britain for an arbitrary deadline to host a conference on the Middle East and Canadian opposition to adopting a document without the participation of Israel.¹⁷⁴ The Secretary General expressed disappointment that there was no tangible outcome to lead to nuclear disarmament due to lack of consensus.¹⁷⁵

China has called for a robust Means of Implementation (MOI) for the post-2015 development agenda.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile the UNESCAP and UN Environment Programme have signed a MoU for coordination in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁷⁷

The World Education Forum 2015 was inaugurated in Incheon, Republic of Korea on May 19, 2015. Organised by the UNESCO and the Korean Ministry of Education it brought together more than 130 government ministers, high-level government officials, Nobel Prize Laureates, heads of international and non-governmental organizations, academics, representatives of the private sector, researchers and other key stakeholders. Inaugurating the forum, the Secretary General emphasised on the need to focus on education of girls, women, minorities, the disabled and those affected by conflict.¹⁷⁸ The Incheon Declaration adopted hopes to fill the gaps in the Education for All (EFA) and MDG initiatives by including these targets in the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁷⁹

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the International Telecommunications Union, the ITU 150 awards were launched to recognise those who have contributed to revolutionising telecommunications.¹⁸⁰

An alert has been raised over the outbreak of cholera in Haiti. The epidemic has claimed 9,000 lives and affected more than 735,000 people since October 2010 when the outbreak began in the

¹⁷³ "UN Chief To Convene Conference On Nuke-Free Mideast by March 2016", May 21 2015, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.657746>

¹⁷⁴ "U.N. Nuclear Conference Collapses Over WMD-Free Zone In The Middle East", May 22, 2015, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-nuclear-conference-collapses-over-wmd-free-zone-in-the-middle-east/2015/05/22/8c568380-fe39-11e4-8c77-bf274685e1df_story.html

¹⁷⁵ "UN Chief Disappointed As Member States Unable To Reach Agreement On Nuclear Non-Proliferation", May 23, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50951#.VWhEwNKqqko>

¹⁷⁶ "Effective MOI For Post-2015 Agenda Needed at UN: Chinese Envoy", May 21, 2015, at <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150521000100>

¹⁷⁷ "ESCAP and UNEP Reinforce Partnership with New Memorandum Of Understanding", May 22, 2015 <http://www.unescap.org/news/escap-and-unep-reinforce-partnership-new-memorandum-understanding>

¹⁷⁸ "At UN Forum, Ban Urges Leaders Aim To Set Global Education Roadmap Until 2030", May 19, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50902#.VWqyQNKqqko>

¹⁷⁹ "UN Hails Outcome Of Incheon Forum As 'Huge Step Forward' For Education", May 21, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50923#.VWg3eNKqqko>

¹⁸⁰ "As International Telecommunication Union Turns 150, Ban Hails 'Resilience' Of Oldest UN Agency", May 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50880#.VWqovNKqqko>

aftermath of the earthquake. A WHO forecast states that in 2015, it is likely to affect 28,000 more people. 113 people have succumbed to the disease from January-March 2015. The international community will be required to provide \$36 million to put in place a robust response mechanism.¹⁸¹

India and the UN

(May 11-25, 2015)

- **Indian contribution to peacekeeping rewarded; India pushes for curbs on exports of small arms; India-China commit to UNFCCC even as India acknowledges its coal-dependence; Inequality persists as India expected to surpass China's growth figures; Sub-continental issues in the UN.**

United Nations Association of the USA and the US-India Business Council jointly hosted a function to acknowledge India's contribution to UN peacekeeping. With participation in 44 of the 69 operations, a contribution of 180,000 troops and 158 lives sacrificed in the mission, India has distinguished itself in this realm.¹⁸²

At a debate in the UN Security Council on "The Human Cost of Illicit Transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons" held on May 13, the Indian Permanent Representative (PR), Asoke Mukerji, said that easy availability of small arms and the policy of some countries to make them so is a big impediment in the global fight against terrorism. Highlighting India's strong law on export of small arms, he reiterated the need for the Arms Trade Treaty to address this lacuna.¹⁸³

In the course of PM Narendra Modi's visit to China, the two countries issued a joint document urging the developed countries to increase their emission reduction targets to be met by 2020. Underlining their commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, they said their own intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) will be submitted to the UNFCCC soon.¹⁸⁴ At the First Global Energy Ministerial Sustainable Energy for All Forum Meeting held on May 20, Minister of State for Power, Coal and New and Renewable Energy Piyush Goyal said that while India hopes to generate and use renewable energy nearly five times of the present output over the next seven years, its

¹⁸¹ "Haiti: Senior UN Official Says Cholera Outbreak Needs 'Urgent Attention'", May 14, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50867#.VWL0stKqqko>

¹⁸² "India Honoured For Significant Contribution To United Nations Peacekeeping", May 14, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-14/news/62165667_1_indian-ambassador-peacekeeping-missions-un-peacekeeping-operations

¹⁸³ "India For Implementation of UN Arms Embargo To Check Terrorism", May 14, 2015, at <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/world/un-arms-embargo-990216.html>

¹⁸⁴ "Combating Climate Change: India, China Ask Developed Nations to Take the Lead", May 16, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/combating-climate-change-india-china-ask-developed-nations-to-take-the-lead/> and <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/combating-climate-change-india-china-ask-developed-nations-to-take-the-lead/2/>

dependence on coal is not likely to reduce soon. For this, India will require an investment of USD 100-150 billion and an additional USD 30 billion for its energy efficiency programmes.¹⁸⁵

India and China called for an early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.¹⁸⁶ Yet, while India is attempting to list the leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen as a terrorist under the Security Council's 1267 Committee, i.e., the Al Qaeda sanctions committee' China has sought more evidence of his links to the Al Qaeda, a pre-requisite for such listing.¹⁸⁷

A report of the United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) on performance on inclusive growth ranked India at 14 among the 16 countries of the Asia-Pacific for the period 2000-2012. The index comprises three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. This is despite India's improved record on reduction in extreme poverty.¹⁸⁸ The same study has also projected that India will grow at 8.1 per cent during the year 2015-16; higher than the estimates of the IMF and World Bank.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile a another study of the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) has projected that India will grow at 7.6 per cent this year and 7.7 per cent in 2016, thus surpassing China's rate of growth which will be 7 per cent and 6.8 percent respectively.¹⁹⁰

India has taken the lead in formulating a General Assembly resolution urging the international community to help in relief and rehabilitation of Nepal, which is emerging from a devastating earthquake.¹⁹¹ Meanwhile, the UNHCR has urged India to resume the ferry service to Sri Lanka to facilitate the return of Tamil refugees.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ "Not Correct To Expect India To Shift From Coal: India Tells UN", May 21, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/business/news/economy/not-correct-to-expect-india-to-shift-from-coal-india-tells-un_126844.html

¹⁸⁶ "India, China Pledge To Shape Regional, Global Agenda", May 15, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-china-pledge-to-shape-regional-global-agenda-115051500536_1.html

¹⁸⁷ "China Stalls India's Request for UN Security Council Ban on Hizbul Chief", May 21, 2015, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3090098/China-stalls-India-s-request-Security-Council-ban-Hizbul-chief.html>

¹⁸⁸ "India Slips in UN Inclusiveness Index", May 15, 2015, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/rYsL0IMpqq8lwzg357EiJO/India-slips-in-UN-inclusiveness-index.html>

¹⁸⁹ "India to Grow at 8.1% in 2015-16: UN Survey", May 15, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-to-grow-at-8-1-in-2015-16-115051500040_1.html

¹⁹⁰ "India's Economic Growth To Surpass China's in 2015-16: UN Report", May 19, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-19/news/62369100_1_economic-growth-higher-growth-trajectory-gdp

¹⁹¹ "India Takes Lead In Negotiating Draft UNGA Resolution On Nepal", May 13, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/India-takes-lead-in-negotiating-draft-UNGA-resolution-on-Nepal/2015/05/13/article2812205.ece>

¹⁹² "UNHCR Wants Sri Lanka, India Ferry Service to Resume", May 15, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/unhcr-wants-sri-lanka-india-ferry-service-to-resume-115051501332_1.html