

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(June 8-21, 2015)

- **Wolesi Jirga fate to be decided as per constitution; Interior Ministry under scrutiny over arms licenses; No truce in Ramazan; Qatar mediated in releasing Tajik soldiers; Control of Chardara district in Kunduz fall to Taliban; Senators warn against expansion of Daesh; ANSF casualties rise in 2015; Doubts after meeting Taliban; Alliance forged in bid to fight insurgency.**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on June 14 said fate of Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament would be decided as per constitution and developing national consensus. Article 83 of the constitution states: "The constitutionally mandated tenure of the house of people shall terminate after the disclosure of the results of the election, on the 1st of Saratan (June 22), and the new parliament shall commence work." Based on article, the elections should have taken place by now, but was postponed by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) due to lack of funds. Some lawmakers vehemently criticized the delay, urging president to specify a date for parliamentary elections. Some parliamentarians were of the opinion that after June 22, the lower house work would have no legal basis, while others insisted without elections they could continue work. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has held 12 separate meetings with several groups, discussing the future of Afghan parliament, a statement from the Presidential Palace said on June 14.¹

A number of MPs and residents of Kabul have complained about what they call an increase in the numbers of armed citizens, criticizing the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Moi) for issuing arms licenses to ordinary people. They have linked the high crime rate to the wide presence of armed civilians and illegal armed groups across the country, especially in Kabul." Most of the crimes are done by those who have obtained arms license from the interior ministry," MP Abbas Ibrahimzada said. "A number of MPs have also received licenses from the interior ministry which is a big matter of concern." Expressing deep concerns over the extensive movement of illegal armed groups in the capital city, the inhabitants of Kabul called on the interior ministry to stop the process of issuing gun licenses to irresponsible people. "When we see these people in unofficial dresses holding guns, it scares us and creates more panic in society," a resident of Kabul Ahmad Fawad complained. However, the interior minister while presenting his 100-day plan to Parliament admitted the problem but blamed it on the previous government. Promising to strictly monitor the process, Minister Noorolhaq Olomi blamed corruption in the previous government for the

¹ "WJ Fate to be Decided as Per Constitution: President", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 15, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12339

high number of licenses. According to the minister, in the past about \$10,000 dollars was paid to the ministry for obtaining a gun license. "We had such a problem in the past. Even one licensed gun was being issued for \$10,000. But now we have stopped it and also dismissed several officials of that department," Olomi said.²

Taliban militant group has rejected a truce appeal made by the Ulema council of Afghanistan to halt its bloody campaign for the month of Ramazan, to pay respect to "The month of forgiveness". Taliban spokesman Mujahid says that they are not only rejecting the truce offer but will increase their attacks during the month. Taliban announce their stance after religious clerics in Afghanistan appeal to the insurgent group to halt their attacks in Afghanistan and allow people worship to god during the holy month of Ramazan. Ramazan the holy month for Muslims will began on June 18. A true Muslim is fasting throughout the day during the month of Ramazan. He/She does not eat, drink, smoke, listen to music, participate in musical parties or any other activity that is considered Haram in Islam. Also during the holy month there is more spiritual reward on forgiveness's. Anyone taking the first step in forgiveness or making truce with his enemy or person/people he/she does not like gets more spiritual rewards (Sawab).³

At least four Tajikistani soldiers were freed by Taliban militants group in Afghanistan after Qatari authorities mediated for their release. "Under the directives of HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Qatari mediation succeeded in the release of four soldiers from Tajikstan who were captured by Taliban in December on the Northern borders of Afghanistan," a statement by Qatar's Foreign Affairs Ministry said. The statement further added that Qatar's efforts were out of the state's commitment to humanitarian values. "Qatar is using all its resources and diplomacy to save lives," the statement said, adding that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar praises all parties involved in the process. This comes as the parents of one of the abducted Tajik soldiers made a desperate plea to Taliban militants group in Afghanistan to free their abducted son. The 21-year-old Tajik soldier Merajuddin Shadegov was abducted from the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan at the same the other soldiers were kidnapped. According to reports the Taliban militants demanded to free their comrades in exchange for the freedom of the abducted soldiers.⁴

The Taliban militants have taken control of Chardara district in northern Kunduz province of Afghanistan amid reports that the militants are getting closer towards the centre of the province. The district fall to Taliban control earlier tonight following hours of gun battle between the militants and the security forces. A member of the provincial council confirmed that the Taliban militants managed to capture the district centre. The source further added that both the Taliban militants and the security forces have suffered casualties during the clashes but the exact number has not been ascertained so far. The local government officials had earlier confirmed that the district was

² "Interior Ministry under Fire over Issuing of Arms Licenses", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 15, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12336

³ "Taliban Reject Truce Appeal for Ramazan 'The Month Of Forgiveness'", *Khaama Press*, June 15, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-reject-truce-appeal-for-ramazan-the-month-of-forgiveness-3492>

⁴ "Qatar Secures Release Of 4 Tajikistani Soldiers Abducted by Afghan Taliban", *Khaama Press*, June 15, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/qatar-secures-release-of-4-tajikistani-soldiers-abducted-by-afghan-taliban-1202>

cordoned off by the militants and heavy clashes were under way.⁵

A number of Afghan senators on June 21 voiced concerns over the deteriorating security situation involving Daesh insurgents in some districts of eastern Nangarhar province. According to the senators, Daesh fighters are operating in 15 districts in Nangarhar but they say the entire eastern section of the country is vulnerable. Senators warned that the security scenario of the province is deteriorating and government must act fast to overcome the fragile situation. They say that Daesh has beheaded two people in Nangarhar recently. They also called on government to take steps to prevent Daesh from recruiting new soldiers in the province. "Daesh associated fighters practically operate in 15 districts of Nangarhar province," senator Lotuflah Baba said. "Expansion of Daesh fighters must be curbed, otherwise the consequences will be catastrophic," another senator Farhad Sakhi warned. On the issue of the government's anti-terror strategy, the senators asked leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) to also tackle the security issues posed by Daesh on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway.⁶

Taliban have captured Dasht-i-Arche District of northern Kunduz province, Taliban claimed and officials confirmed on 22 June. Nasiruddin Saidi, governor of Dasht-i-Arche District and head of the provincial council of Kunduz province confirmed the report. Head of the provincial council said that the District fall to Taliban insurgents this morning. He warned the central government that the situation in Kunduz is concerning. This is second District falling to Taliban hands in Kunduz province. The first district that is controlled by Taliban is Chahardara.⁷

A report published by the Azadi Radio suggests that the casualties of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have risen by 75 percent in first six months of 2015. Based on the report 60 per cent rise has been recorded due to the lack of lethal items and logistics, they have not been delivered on time to the security forces while in combat, as a result security forces lost lives or wounded in ambushes and landmine explosions. The data received by *Azadi Radio* states that the remaining five percent have died or sustained injuries in fighting with militants, some clashes erupted after their check posts were attacked by insurgents. The Ministry of Defence confirms the rise but claims that rebels have suffered way more casualties than security forces. "Enemy carried out more attacks in North, South, East and West. To compare this year with the past, unfortunately, we had more casualties," General Afzal Aman, Chief of Operations at the Defence Ministry has told Azadi Radio. But General Aman says that security forces had more achievements this year in comparison with the past. The report further states that Afghan security forces suffered the most casualties in Badakhshan, Kunduz, Ghazni, Ghor and Urozgan provinces in coordinated attacks and ambushes.⁸

⁵ "Taliban Take Control Of Chardara District In Kunduz Province", *Khaama Press*, June, 20, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-take-control-of-chardara-district-in-kunduz-province-1230>

⁶ "Senators Warn Against Expansion of Daesh Fighters", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 22, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12393

⁷ "Dasht-i-Arche District of Kunduz Province Fall To Taliban Hands", *Khaapa Press*, June 22, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/breaking-news-dasht-i-arche-district-in-kunduz-province-fall-to-taliban-3524>

⁸ "ANSF Casualties Rise by 75 % in 2015", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 21, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12380

With no plans for peace talks on the horizon, Haji Muhammad Mohaqiq, the Second Deputy of Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, has expressed doubts that any progress has been made in the peace process after meeting with Taliban representatives in Norway last week. Upon the conclusion of the meeting in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, which was the source of considerable hope when it was first announced, Mohaqiq said the views expressed by the Taliban representatives were unchanged from the past. "There were five individuals from the Taliban, and there was no discussion or exchange of words," Mohaqiq said. "In this conference, only views were presented; there wasn't a major difference since the past, and I didn't feel a great development in the peace process." Nevertheless, it appears the Afghan government is willing to take the first goodwill step toward real peace talks - officials have indicated leaders in Kabul may soon agree to allow the Taliban to open an official office in Qatar. Taliban leaders have said the opening of an office in Doha is a critical first step toward peace negotiations. Although a Taliban office was established in Doha in 2013, after strong objections from former president Hamid Karzai over the office's brandishing of the "Islamic Emirates" name, it quickly closed.⁹

A deteriorating security situation in the northern parts of Afghanistan has resulted in two former rivals First Vice-President Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum and Governor of Balkh Province, Atta Mohammad Noor, setting aside their differences and forging a new coalition aimed at fighting insurgents. Noor, from Jamiat-e-Islami Party of Afghanistan, and Dostum, from Junbish-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan, reportedly held several meetings over the past week in which both sides pledged to put their differences aside and work together to tackle common issues, said Zabi Fitrat, deputy spokesman to Jamiat-e-Islami on June 22 "One of the key reasons for the union is the deteriorating security situation in the northern regions. Security threats are on the rise in the northern parts of the country, an issue which persuaded the two influential political forces to make an alliance and jointly fight the threats," Fitrat said. He said that the two leaders met in Faryab province and shook hands in an attempt to put aside their political differences and work for national peace and security.¹⁰

Pakistan

(June 8-21, 2015)

- **Zarb-i-Azb in a conclusive phase; CPEC, Gwadar port to be built; You are hurting yourself; First confirmed export order of JF-17; Support pledged for Afghan president; Zardari threatens to expose generals; Criticism of army inappropriate, will encourage enemy; Rangers overstepping mandate; Sharif refuses to meet Zardari; Decides to give 9,000 acres of its forest lands to army; Terrorists and their financiers to face justice; Hundreds banned from leaving Pakistan; Rangers arrest Sunni Thereek Outfits.**

The army is finalising plans to launch the final phase of Operation Zarb-i-Azb in mid-July to flush out Taliban terrorists from their remaining strongholds along the border with Afghanistan.

⁹ "Mohaqiq Voices Doubts after Meeting Taliban", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 23, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12405

¹⁰ "Dostum-Atta Alliance Forged in Bid to Fight Insurgency", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 23, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=12404

"Preliminary preparations for the final push have started, which will begin next month," a senior military official told *Dawn* during a background briefing on the eve of the first anniversary of the commencement of Zarb-i-Azb. The final drive will be in south of Dattakhel towards the border through the forested and mountainous Shawal Valley. A large number of militants fleeing the operation in other parts of North Waziristan are believed to have taken refuge in Shawal Valley, which is considered to be an Al Qaeda sanctuary and a stronghold of Gul Bahadur, a warlord once considered pro-government. "Operation ZeA moves to last few pockets close to Pak-Afghan border," military spokesman Maj Gen Asim Bajwa, said in a *twitter* posting.¹¹

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on June 14 said that Pakistan had shown its willingness to cooperate with other nations for peace but not at the expense of its national interests, sovereign rights and national pride. Addressing the Commissioning Parade as the chief guest at the Pakistan Naval Academy, the army chief said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with Gwadar port as its catalyst will be built and developed as one of the most strategic deep sea ports in the region at all costs, according to a Navy press release. He said that the CPEC held enormous potential for transforming the lives of the region's people. "We are acutely aware of our enemy's campaigns and will defeat their designs," he added. General Raheel said that the entire world endorsed Pakistan's security concerns. Ceasefire violations, bloodletting in Balochistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and Karachi manifest the enemy's hostile intent," he added.¹²

The United States on June 12 warned Pakistan it was only hurting itself after Save the Children was expelled for "working against the country," with Islamabad threatening to throw out more foreign aid groups. Pakistan has toughened its policies towards international aid groups in recent years, accusing them of being covers for spying operations, and has repeatedly warned them to restrict their activities, vowing stern action for any "suspicious" activity. Police and government officials sealed the Islamabad offices of Save the Children on June 11, but gave no specific details of what the group was alleged to have done. Washington expressed concern at the move and said several non-governmental organisations "have reported increasing difficulty doing business in Pakistan." "This has had a significant negative impact on international partner efforts to support government of Pakistan priorities," said State Department spokesman John Kirby.¹³

The Chengdu/Pakistan Aeronautical Complex JF-17 Thunder fighter has secured its first confirmed export deal. "A contract has been signed with an Asian country," said Air Commodore Khalid Mahmood, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) officer who leads the sales and marketing efforts for the type. Citing client sensitivities, he declined to specify the customer and the number of aircraft it will obtain. Deliveries will start in 2017. He said sales for the JF-17, which is targeted for developing nations, have been held up by political turmoil in several Middle Eastern countries. The aircraft

¹¹ "Conclusive Phase of Zarb-i-Azb Next Month", *Dawn*, June 14, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188058/conclusive-phase-of-zarb-i-azb-next-month>

¹² "CPEC, Gwadar Port To Be Built At All Costs: COAS", *The News*, June 14, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38027-CPEC-Gwadar-port-to-be-built-at-all-costs-COAS>

¹³ "You Are Hurting Yourself, US Warns Pakistan", *The News*, June 14, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38029-You-are-hurting-yourself-US-warns-Pakistan>

is making its flying debut at this year's air show. Pakistan Air Force has brought three examples this year. One will appear on the static display, one will appear in the flying display, and the third will serve as a backup. The JF-17 contingent at Paris this year is 80 strong, representing a significant marketing push. Khalid says the show is a good venue for meeting prospective customers from French speaking countries.¹⁴

The Prime Minister's Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi has defended an intelligence cooperation accord struck recently with Afghanistan and pledged strong support for embattled Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. "The MoU between the NDS and ISI is a proof of the distance we have covered," he said in a speech on foreign policy at the Institute of Strategic Studies on June 15. The speech dwelt on the successes and challenges in external relations during the two years of the PML-N government. Mr Fatemi said Pakistan-Afghan cooperation was not just about counter-terrorism and security. A number of economic, infrastructure and connectivity projects were also taking shape, which would bear "visible and tangible" fruits. In reply to a question about perceived political isolation of President Ghani because of Islamabad's alleged failure to meet its commitments with regard to the Taliban, he clarified that Pakistan had only promised to help with reconciliation.¹⁵

The National Assembly interrupted its budget debate on June 15 to extend the life, for another 120 days, of a presidential decree that amends the Pakistan Army Act to augment its existing provisions introduced early this year for speedy military trial of civilian terrorism suspects. But the extension, by a resolution of the house, of the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Ordinance, 2015, necessitated by the parliament's failure to adopt the decree as a bill within its original 120-day life, came amid a noisy furore and a protest walkout by the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). The MQM protested only on a procedural question, which found little favour from the rest of the house and was dismissed by both Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Deputy Speaker Murtaza Javed Abbasi. It was also marked by angry exchanges between the party's deputy parliamentary leader Abdul Rashid Godail and Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif before all party lawmakers walked out of the house for the rest of the day.¹⁶

In an uncharacteristically aggressive speech, Pakistan People's Party Co-Chairperson Asif Ali Zardari on June 23 lashed out against what he called "the character assassination of his party" and warned the military leadership that if they did not stop, he would expose the misdeeds of many generals. The confrontational tone of Mr Zardari's outburst was quite unprecedented, as was his open declaration of "dire consequences" if any action was taken against the PPP. Reacting to the PPP chief's statement; however, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan dismissed the criticism, saying that the Peoples Party was merely paying the price for its own ineptitude. "Beware, beware, beware, if I hear this again, I will make public a list (of generals) starting from

¹⁴ "JF-17 Wins First Confirmed Export Order", *The News*, June 15, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38044-JF-17-wins-first-confirmed-export-order>

¹⁵ "Support Pledged For Afghan President", *Dawn*, June 16, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188429/support-pledged-for-afghan-president>

¹⁶ "NA Extends Decree On Terror Trials By 120 Days", *Dawn*, June 16, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188428/na-extends-decree-on-terror-trials-by-120-days>

the creation of Pakistan and you will be giving explanations for quite a long time," the PPP chief said while addressing an oath-taking ceremony of newly-elected PPP office-bearers from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). "Stop the character assassination of our party; I do not want to see our institutions becoming weak. I know your colleagues are accused in different cases, which are being tried in court. If I make a list of these generals public in a press conference, you will be destroyed," he said, in no unclear terms.¹⁷

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on June 17 that it was inappropriate to criticise the army as it would encourage the country's enemies, which were out to destabilise Pakistan. He expressed these views while chairing a high-level political consultative emergency meeting, which decided to throw its full weight behind the armed forces in the wake of the outburst of former president and co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) against the military leadership. The meeting condemned the PPP leader for his tirade against the armed forces and said that it was unacceptable given the armed forces were engaged in a crucial war against terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif later made a phone call to the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif, who is on an exceptionally significant visit to Russia. The premier expressed his solidarity with the armed forces during his conversation with the COAS.¹⁸

Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah wrote a letter to the Director General (DG) Sindh Rangers on June 17 expressing annoyance over the recent raids on the offices of two civic agencies in Karachi and saying that the Rangers were overstepping their mandate of fighting terrorism and crime in the province. The dispatch of the letter is unprecedented and reflects mounting tension between the provincial government and the paramilitary force.¹⁹

On June 18 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif refused to meet former president and PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. After his June 17 evening's hard-hitting speech against the military establishment, Mr Zardari conveyed his desire to the prime minister for a meeting. According to a source in PML-N, the prime minister initially agreed to meet the former president, but later changed his mind on the advice of members of his cabinet. Information Minister Pervaiz Rasheed told media that "time is not right for such an interaction. The cabinet colleagues suggested to the prime minister to delay the meeting for the time being". A PPP leader told the scribe that the prime minister formally conveyed his unavailability as a reason for not meeting the former president. Additional secretary of the prime minister's office, Fawad Hassan Fawad, drove to Zardari House to convey the message, he said.²⁰

In an apparent move to defuse tension between the PPP and the security establishment, the Sindh government on June 19 decided 'in principle' to allot 9,000 acres of its forest lands to Pakistan

¹⁷ "Zardari Threatens To Expose Generals' 'Misdeeds'", *Dawn*, June 18, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188653/zardari-threatens-to-expose-generals-misdeeds>

¹⁸ "Criticism of Army Inappropriate, Will Encourage Enemy, Says PM", *The News*, June 18, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38092-Criticism-of-army-inappropriate-will-encourage-enemy-says-PM>

¹⁹ "Rangers Overstepping Mandate: Sindh CM", *The News*, June 18, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38093-Rangers-overstepping-mandate-Sindh-CM>

²⁰ "Sharif Refuses To Meet Zardari" *Dawn*, June 18, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1188837/sharif-refuses-to-meet-zardari>

Army against its 14-year-old 'application' for 35,521 acres which it wants to distribute among the heirs of martyred soldiers and wounded military personnel. The decision to allot 9,000 acres of lands in Garhi Yasin of Shikarpur district to Pakistan Army was taken during a meeting presided over by Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah at the CM House. The meeting was called to discuss this matter exclusively. The Sindh government's move came days after PPP leader Senator Farhatullah Babar hinted in a speech in Senate that the rejection of demand for thousands of acres of lands had led to the present situation which had brought the Rangers and the provincial government at loggerheads. "Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah has decided to allot 9,000 acres of forest lands to Pakistan Army for onward distribution among the heirs of martyred and war wounded military personnel," said a statement issued by the CM House.²¹

Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif has said that all terrorists and their facilitators, abettors and financiers will soon be apprehended and brought to justice. During a visit to the front positions of security forces in Tirah valley on June 19, he said terrorists' strongholds in the agency had been reduced and now the fight was in progress in the remaining few pockets, close to the Pakistan-Afghan border. The noose, he added, had been tightened around terrorists and they would not be allowed to regroup. The army chief said the area where the operation was being carried out was heavily infested with IEDs, mostly of foreign make. After the North Waziristan Agency, terrorists in Khyber Agency are also using the most rugged terrain as their strongholds. Gen Raheel Sharif spent the entire day with troops and met tribal elders before visiting Jawaro, an area near the Afghan border, to review the progress of operation in its concluding phase.²²

The federal government has banned the exit of many ministers, ex-ministers, MPs and scores of bureaucrats from the country, placing them on a watch list at all exit points of the country. According to the sources that the federal government had directed the FIA Immigration Wing not to allow seven provincial ministers, four former ministers, 20 MPAs and 8 MNAs of the PPP and over 100 officers of the Sindh government to leave the country and seek clearance from the law enforcement agencies in this regard. These persons have been placed on the 'Stop Person Watch List' for their alleged involvement in corruption, land grabbing, patronage of criminals and other charges. Sources said all those on the watch list were yet to be placed on the Exit Control List (ECL); however, if any of them tried to escape, he would be arrested and charged as enough incriminating evidence had been collected against them.²³

Rangers personnel have arrested Sunni Tehreek chief Sarwat Aijaz Qadri and another leader Shahid Ghauri late on June 21 night. Sources said that Sarwat Aijaz Qadri and Shahid Ghauri were present at Rangers office for a meeting when they were arrested. However, the drivers and the gunmen of Sunni Tehreek leaders were allowed to leave the premises. INP adds: The Rangers personnel raided the Karachi office of the Sunni Tehreek in the wee hours of June 21 and took

²¹ "Sindh Decides To Give 9,000 Acres Of Its Forest Lands To Army", *Dawn*, June 20, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1189264/sindh-decides-to-give-9000-acres-of-its-forest-lands-to-army>

²² "Terrorists and Their Financiers To Face Justice: Army Chief", *Dawn*, June 20, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1189266/terrorists-and-their-financiers-to-face-justice-army-chief>

²³ "Hundreds Banned From Leaving Pakistan", *The News*, 21, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38150-Hundreds-banned-from-leaving-Pakistan>

away important papers. The Rangers personnel stayed for at least 10 minutes at the Sunni Tehreek office and took away office documents, the ST spokesman said. According to Rangers sources, the raid was conducted on the basis of information provided during interrogations from the ST workers already in custody. The Rangers sources said the confiscated documents pertain to funding in connection with fitrana and zakat.²⁴

Bangladesh

(June 15-21, 2015)

● Indian Army Chief visits Bangladesh; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal signed a deal allowing cross-border movement of vehicles.

Indian Army chief General Dalbir Singh went to Bangladesh on a two-day visit on June 15 to attend as chief guest the passing out parade of Bangladesh Military Academy.²⁵

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal signed a deal allowing cross-border movement of vehicles on June 15, 2015 in Bhutan. The four countries have also mapped out a six-month action plan starting in July to establish a seamless movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across their territories. The infrastructures for the four-nation road connectivity would require an estimated \$8 billion. Each government will be responsible for completing the infrastructures in its territory by its own fund with support from donor agencies.²⁶

Both ruling Awami League and BNP hoped for stronger ties with China, after leaders of the two parties met with a visiting delegation of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Dhaka on June 15. The six-member team, headed by CPC Vice-minister Guo Yezhou, came to Bangladesh the invitation of Awami League.²⁷

Bangladesh has expressed concern over the USA's planned international trade agreement with 11 Pacific Rim countries, as least developed countries like Bangladesh may lose market shares in the US if the pact is passed. Mohammad Ziauddin, Bangladesh's ambassador to the US, expressed Dhaka's worry over the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP while meeting separately with US Congressmen Brad Sherman and Tom Marino at the Capitol Hill on June 15 and 16 respectively.²⁸

²⁴ "Rangers Arrest Sarwat Aijaz Qadri, Shahid Ghauri", *The News*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38169-Rangers-arrest-Sarwat-Aijaz-Qadri-Shahid-Ghauri>

²⁵ "Indian Army Chief Gen Dalbir Singh arrives today", *The Daily Star*, June 15, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/indian-army-chief-gen-dalbir-singh-arrives-today-97381>.

²⁶ Azad, M Abul Kalam, "Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal to get linked by road", *The Daily Star*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/4-nations-get-linked-road-97684>.

²⁷ "AL, BNP Hope For Stronger Ties with China", *The Daily Star*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/al-bnp-hope-stronger-ties-china-97894>.

²⁸ "Bangladesh Expresses Worry over US Trade Bill", *The Daily Star*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/global-business/bangladesh-expresses-worry-over-us-trade-bill-98710>.

Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) opened fire on a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) patrol team near the Naf river of Cox's Bazar on June 17. The government of Bangladesh summoned the Myanmar ambassador in Dhaka Myo Myint and lodged a protest over the BGP's firing on Bangladesh paramilitary force and abduction of a BGB man. Additional Foreign Secretary Mizanur Rahman handed over a strongly worded note verbale to Ambassador Myint Than and asked him to immediately send Nayek Abdur Razzak back. The foreign ministry officials also said the incident was most unfortunate and totally unwarranted.²⁹

A Dhaka court placed a suspected Islamic State (IS) member on a five-day remand after he was arrested on June 19. The arrestee, Faiyaz Ishmam Khan, 22, is studying at a Qatar-based university under an online programme.³⁰

Bangladesh has demonstrated strong political will and firm commitment to combating domestic and transnational terrorist groups, said the United States in a new report on June 19. "Bangladesh made counterterrorism progress in 2014, with the government demonstrating a commitment to counter both domestic and transnational terrorist groups," said the US Department of State in its annual Congressionally mandated Country Reports on Terrorism 2014.³¹

India's National Investigation Agency arrested Noor-ul-Haque, suspected financial brain behind the banned militant outfit Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), on June 18 in connection with the Burdwan blast in West Bengal last year.³²

Sri Lanka

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **LTTE network active, says US State Department report; Foreign minister visits Japan; The US offers funds for reconciliation project in Sri Lanka; TFO Canada will provide capacity building assistance to the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka; Chinese military delegation visits Sri Lanka.**

Despite its military defeat at the hands of the Sri Lankan government in 2009, the LTTE's international network of sympathisers and financial support still persists, according to the annual Country Report on Terrorism for 2014, released on June 19 by the US State Department. The report noted that there have been no known attacks in Sri Lanka that could verifiably be attributed to the LTTE since the end of the war, but a total of 13 LTTE supporters, several of which had

²⁹ "Border Shooting: Myanmar Ambassador Summoned", *The Daily Star*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/myanmar-ambassador-summoned-99385>.

³⁰ "IS Suspect Arrested", *The Daily Star*, June 21, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/suspect-arrested-100474>.

³¹ "US Lauds Progress in Anti-Terrorism", *The Daily Star*, June 20, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/us-lauds-progress-anti-terrorism-100162>.

³² Bhattacharya, Pallab, "Burdwan Blast: JMB Man Arrested in Kolkata", *The Daily Star*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/jmb-man-arrested-kolkata-99355>.

allegedly planned attacks against U.S. and Israeli diplomatic facilities in India were arrested in Malaysia in 2014.³³

Japan has reiterated the continued support of the Japanese Government to the ongoing process of peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. This was mentioned to Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera who concluded a visit to Japan on June 20 on the invitation of his Japanese counterpart, Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida. The visit, which was the first official visit undertaken by an emissary of the new Government to Japan, focussed on further consolidating the close and friendly relations between the two countries for mutual benefit.³⁴

The United States has offered funds to organisations to conduct programmes which will support promoting reconciliation and advancing transparency and accountability in Sri Lanka. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (DRL) at the US State Department said that approximately \$750,000 will be made available for the project.³⁵

The Canadian Government says Sri Lanka has an opportunity to reap the economic benefits of a peace dividend by fostering a transparent, responsive and pluralistic government. The Canadian High Commission in Sri Lanka said that Sri Lanka is actively seeking to strengthen exports, and the Government of Canada has called for increased efforts to conduct bilateral trade between the two countries. The High Commission of Canada in Sri Lanka Shelley Whiting said it was pleased to announce the partnership between Trade Facilitation Office Canada (TFO Canada) and the Export Development Board (EDB) of Sri Lanka aimed at enhancing EDB's capacity to assist small and medium sized Sri Lankan exporters to make further inroads into the lucrative Canadian market. TFO Canada's activities under this agreement are financed by the government of Canada through Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada and falls within TFO Canada's 2014 – 18 Canadian Market Access and Capacity Building Services Programme.³⁶

A Chinese military delegation visited Sri Lanka to review the construction of a Chinese funded auditorium complex at the Sri Lanka Military Academy. The 6 member delegation, headed by Major General Cheng Jiang, Political Commissar of Department of Military Training of General Staff Headquarters of People's Liberation Army (PLA) visited the Sri Lanka Military Academy at Diyatalawa on June 17. The delegation had talks with Major General Mano Perera, Commander of the Army Training Command (ARTRAC) and Brigadier R.W.W.A.D.B. Rajaguru, the Commandant of the Sri Lanka Military Academy.³⁷

³³ "US Report Confirms LTTE Network Active", *Colombo Gazette*, June 20, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/20/us-report-confirms-ltte-network-active/>.

³⁴ "Japan To Support Lanka's Reconciliation Process", *Colombo Gazette*, June 20, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/20/japan-to-support-lankas-reconciliation-process-2/>.

³⁵ "US Offers Funding to Promote Accountability", *Colombo Gazette*, June 19, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/19/us-offers-funding-to-promote-accountability/>.

³⁶ "Canada Says Lanka Fostering Pluralistic Government", *Colombo Gazette*, June 18, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/18/canada-says-lanka-fostering-pluralistic-government/>.

³⁷ "Chinese Military Delegation in Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, June 17, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/06/17/chinese-military-delegation-in-sri-lanka/>.

Maldives

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **The UN urges the Maldives Supreme Court to reconsider its verdict against the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives; President said Mohamed Nasheed's sentence cannot be lightened without completing the appeal process; Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon criticises Canada.**

The United Nations (UN) has urged the Maldives Supreme Court to reconsider its verdict issued on June 18 against the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM). Human rights experts, UN Special Rapporteurs on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, and on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, said in a statement dated June 19, 2015, "The Supreme Court's decision is purely and simply an act of reprisal against the Human Rights Commission for its legitimate cooperation with the UN human rights system and its mechanisms." Knaul and Forst further said that the verdict was an undue interference into the independent work of the commission and their right to share information freely with the UN. The Supreme Court verdict, which included an 11-point guideline for HRCM, came in relation to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submitted by HRCM to the UN.³⁸

President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayoom has told the former President, Mohamed Nasheed that his sentence cannot be lightened without completing the appeal process. Spokesperson of the President's Office, Ibrahim Muaz Ali told media on June 18 that President Nasheed sent a letter addressed to President Yamin from Maafushi Prison. The Spokesperson said that President Nasheed asked President Yamin to reduce his 13 year sentence. And President Yamin has asked the former President to complete his appeal process in his response according to Spokesperson Muaz.³⁹

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon has said that "selective application" of democratic principles is a "highly hypocritical approach to adopt", in response to a statement by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. The statement by Canadian Foreign Minister Rob Nicholson issued on June 15 called upon Maldivian government to release all political prisoners, including former President Mohamed Nasheed. Canada also called upon the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group to "urgently put the deteriorating situation in the Maldives on its formal agenda." Minister Maumoon, in her response dated June 16, referred to a report issued last month by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which declared that the Canadian government had committed "cultural genocide" against its own people, and said: "All States have a duty to uphold democratic principles and Canada is no exception to that rule. Selective application of such principles is a highly hypocritical approach to adopt, particularly in light of its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission which declared that the Canadian

³⁸ "UN Calls on Supreme Court to Reconsider Verdict against HRCM", *SunOnline*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30485>.

³⁹ "President Nasheed has been Told His Sentence Cannot Be Lightened without Completing the Appeal Process", *SunOnline*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30468>.

Government had committed 'cultural genocide' against its own people. "Canada should address the cultural genocide it is alleged to have committed against native Canadians before trying to teach other nations about values of democratic principles and human rights".⁴⁰

B. East Asia

China

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Chinese President supports the development goals of Cameroon; China extends help to drought affected DPRK; China and Russia discuss bilateral ties; China announces the plan to construct lighthouses on the Nansha Islands; China wants civilian ships to be adaptive to military use; Chinese Vice President meets a delegation from Poland; China and Australia sign FTA; Chinese Premier calls for increase in nuclear energy.**

The Chinese President Xi Jinping met with the Prime Minister of Cameroon Philemon Yang on June 19. During the meeting Xi asserted for increased cooperation between the two countries. He mentioned areas like industry, agriculture, regional aviation, infrastructure, energy and human resources. Xi further added that, "China supports them [African countries] to upgrade their own capability for development".⁴¹

On June 18th China announced that it is willing to extend aid to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) which is facing a major drought. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang, "Our sympathy goes to the DPRK that is suffering from extremely serious drought, and it is our hope that the government and people of DPRK will overcome the disaster as soon as possible".⁴²

The Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli attended the second meeting of the China-Russia Investment Cooperation Committee on June 18. The meeting was also attended by the Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov. Chinese investments in Russia have been increasing steadily over the last few years. And new financial investments and cooperation is providing new momentum to the China-Russia economic and trade relations.⁴³

⁴⁰ "Dunya Slams Canada For "Hypocritical Approach" To Democracy", *SunOnline*, June 17, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30431>.

⁴¹ "Xi Gives Support To Cameroon's Development Goals", By Zhao Shengnan, *China Daily*, June 19, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/19/content_21056137.htm, accessed on June 22, 2015

⁴² "China Willing to Help DPRK with Drought", *China Daily*, June 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/18/content_21045172.htm, accessed on June 22, 2015

⁴³ "China, Russia Boost Investment, Financial Cooperation", *China Daily*, June 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/18/content_21045285.htm, accessed on June 22, 2015

China has recently announced that it is planning to construct new civil facilities like lighthouse and radio navigation stations on the Nansha Islands. According to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), "these facilities are meant to ensure local civil needs, provide the international community with public services like assistance and salvage at sea, and promote international cooperation on maritime and scientific research".⁴⁴

According to the China Classification Society, "the country has approved a set of technical guidelines that require all civilian shipbuilders to ensure that their new vessels are suitable for military use in emergency".⁴⁵

The Foreign Minister of Poland, Grzegorz Schetyna met with the Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao on June 17. The Polish Foreign Minister also met the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and during the meeting they inaugurated the China-Poland Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee. Wang further added that the, "establishment of the committee injected new vigour into the strategic partnership between the two countries".⁴⁶

China and Australia signed a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on June 17, 2015. Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated the Prime Minister of Australia Tony Abbott on this occasion. Xi Jinping said that, "signing of the FTA will also set an example for high-level economic and trade arrangements in the Asia-Pacific and help promote regional economic integration".⁴⁷

On June 15, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said that, "China will promote nuclear power on a large scale at home and abroad as it steps up the upgrading of manufacturing and seeks more global deals". Li also supported the Hualong One Reactor which is a domestically developed third generation reactor design. He made these comments while visiting the China Nuclear Power Engineering Company Limited in Beijing.⁴⁸

Japan

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Japan and South Korean Foreign Ministers held talks; Japan and China defence minister's working-level talks held in Beijing; Japan commits \$3.5 million (¥430 million) aid for Rohingya migrants; Okinawa anti-base Governor held his first meeting with US Ambassador**

⁴⁴ "China Plans Civil Facilities in Nansha Islands", *China Daily*, June 18, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/18/content_21041502.htm, accessed on June 18, 2015

⁴⁵ "New Rules Mean Ships Can Be Used by Military", By Zhao Lei, *China Daily*, June 18, 2015, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/18/content_21036944.htm, accessed on June 18, 2015

⁴⁶ "Vice-President Meets Polish Delegation", By Wang Xu, *China Daily*, June 17, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/17/content_21033953.htm, accessed on June 18, 2015

⁴⁷ "Chinese, Australian Leaders Exchange Congratulations on Landmark FTA", *China Daily*, June 17, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/17/content_21033607.htm, accessed on June 18, 2015

⁴⁸ "Premier Li Keqiang Pledges Nuclear Boost", By Zhao Yinan, *China Daily*, June 16, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/16/content_21013012.htm, accessed on June 18, 2015

in Tokyo; Japan and Croatia agrees to deepen cooperation facilitating investment and tourism.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se visited Tokyo and discussed several bilateral issues with his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida. Foreign Minister Yun was in Japan to participate in the celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the normalization of bilateral relations. This South Korean foreign minister's visit to Japan is the first in four years. The ministers reportedly discussed the sensitive issue of comfort women, Japanese efforts in getting the World Heritage status for a group of industrial sites, import ban on Fukushima marine products by South Korean administration and the prospects of an Abe-Park summit meeting⁴⁹. Besides, several Japanese and South Korean experts including members of parliament, academics and former ambassadors participated in a conference aimed at strengthening Japan-South Korea relations⁵⁰.

On June 19, Japan and China decided to accelerate the course of instituting the maritime communication mechanism which is aimed at preventing accidental clashes in surrounding waters. At the working-level talks hosted in Beijing, Japanese and Chinese defence ministries reportedly have arrived at a shared understanding on technical difficulties of the scheduled mechanism. Moreover, other issues including agreement on communicating in English in case of an emergency and establishing hotlines connecting the chiefs of their naval and air forces⁵¹ were discussed.

On June 20, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida committed \$3.5 million (¥430 million) aid through international organizations for Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Japanese government's objective is to commence humanitarian activities including establishing evacuation shelters and providing food to Rohingya migrants via the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Additionally, Japan intends to gradually implement financial support of equal to ¥10 billion in five years aimed at supporting peace by way of nurturing relations between Myanmar's government and the minorities⁵².

On June 19, Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga held a meeting with US Ambassador Caroline Kennedy in Tokyo to communicate his displeasure of US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Governor Onaga reportedly told Ambassador Kennedy that his appointment signifies the resolve of the public and represents the extensive resistance in Okinawa regarding shifting the base within the prefecture. The local population favours reducing the US military footprint from Okinawa. Governor Onaga's latest meeting happened following his visit earlier in May-June to Hawaii and Washington and meetings with American bureaucrats and policymakers to convey the Okinawan opposition. During the recent meeting Ambassador Kennedy appreciated the critical contribution

⁴⁹ "Kishida, Yun Start Talks in Tokyo", *NHK*, June 21, 2015 at http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150621_17.html

⁵⁰ "Japanese, S. Korean Experts Hold Dialogue", *NHK*, June 21, 2015 at http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150621_18.html

⁵¹ "Japan, China Agree On Early Setup Of Maritime Communication System", *Kyodo News*, June 19, 2015 <http://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2015/06/359266.html>

⁵² "Government Unveils ¥430 Million Aid for Rohingya", *The Japan News*, June 20, 2015 at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002234668>

on Okinawa in sustaining the US-Japan alliance and restated the US position underscoring that relocation is the only solution to address the apprehensions⁵³.

On June 17, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held a summit meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanović and discussed several issues including the prospects in the bilateral relationship, Japan-EU Cooperation and Japanese policy of *Proactive Contribution to Peace*. Abe stressed on subjects such as the expanding Japanese business interest and tourism in Croatia. Besides, Abe and Milanović agreed to cooperate to help reach an agreement on the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) by the end 2015 and the timely conclusion of Strategic Partnership Agreement.⁵⁴

The Korean Peninsula

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **North Korea reportedly names new defence chief; Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and the US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz signed the “Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States of America Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy” in Washington; The National Assembly endorsed Hwang Kyo-ahn as the Prime Minister; President Park Geun-hye’s approval rating stands at record low of 29 per cent; North Korea’s supreme leader Kim Jong-un observed the firing of new type of anti-ship rockets.**

Reports on June 15 indicate that North Korea’s supreme leader Kim Jong-un have chosen Pak Yong-sik, a four-star general, as the new defence chief after the execution of Hyon Yong-chol in April. North Korean media Rodong Sinmun printed a picture showing Pak Yong-sik seated on the right of the leader indicating that Pak Yong-sik is now named as Hyon Yong-chol’s replacement. However, this development is not officially announced by North Korea. Once officially confirmed by North Korea, Pak Yong-sik will be the sixth defense minister from the time when Kim Jong-un came to power.⁵⁵

On June 15, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz met in Washington and signed the agreement on civilian nuclear energy cooperation following four years of difficult discussion process which focused on South Korea’s request for the right of reprocessing spent fuel and enriching uranium. The leaders agreed to the 1974 nuclear cooperation pact revision which specifies South Korean duties in return for receiving technical support and additional cooperation from America. While the new agreement continues to ban South Korea from reprocessing and enrichment, it permits research into “pyroprocessing” and to produce low-level enriched uranium with American permission. Following the initialling of the agreement

⁵³ “Masaaki Kameda, Onaga Spells Out Anti-Base Stance In First Talks With Kennedy”, *The Japan Times*, June 19 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/19/national/politics-diplomacy/onaga-spells-anti-base-stance-first-talks-kennedy/#.VZEb51K6a1t>

⁵⁴ Japan-Croatia Summit Meeting, Joint Press Occasion, and Dinner, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, June 17, 2015 http://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/c_see/hr/page4e_000284.html

⁵⁵ “Pyongyang May Have Named New Defence Chief”, *The Korea Times*, June 15, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/116_180904.html

in April, both parties performed legal and supplementary internal assessments and President Park Geun-hye endorsed the agreement on June 9 Cabinet meeting and President Obama endorsed it soon after. The signing ceremony was scheduled during the President Park Geun-hye visit to the US which got postponed following the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome crisis⁵⁶.

The National Assembly authorized the nomination of Hwang Kyo-ahn as Prime Minister of South Korea. As the previous Prime Minister Lee Wan-koo resigned following charges of receiving 30 million won from Sung Wan-jong, the office was vacant for over a month. This speedy appointment is to enable the Prime Minister to lead and facilitate the government initiatives against the MERS crisis which reportedly claimed 25 lives. Since a three-day confirmation hearing last week, the opposition bloc has objected to the nominee, whom they labelled "unfit" citing influence-peddling and draft-dodging allegations. Hwang Kyo-ahn served as the justice minister since 2013⁵⁷.

The Gallup weekly poll, conducted from June 16-18, indicated that South Korean President Park Geun-hye's approval rating stands at 29 per cent, representing the lowest ever since she assumed office in February 2013. While 61 per cent of the respondents were unfavourable regarding President Park's performance, 33 percent thought the administration was unsuccessful in controlling the spread of MERS. President Park's leadership and communication skills were questioned. While only ten per cent of the respondent in the age bracket of 20s-30s-40s supported President Park, 60 per cent respondent in and above the age group of 60 favoured her⁵⁸.

Korean Central News Agency on June 15 reported that supreme leader Kim Jong Un along with the first secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and first chairman of the National Defence Commission observed the firing of new type of anti-ship rockets. The report marked this development as a "fresh milestone in bolstering up the Juche-based naval force and the KPA navy's operational capability has been remarkably increased with the drill"⁵⁹.

C. Russia

National

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Over 1,000 Russians fighting for the Islamic State; Central Bank reduces key rate to 11.5 per cent; Central Bank upgrades trade balance surplus forecast for 2015 by 32 per cent to US\$ 187 billion; Capital outflow sees a sharp reduction in the 1st quarter of 2015; Russia's oil**

⁵⁶ "S. Korea, U.S. Formally Sign Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Pact", *The Korea Herald*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150616000215>

⁵⁷ "Assembly Confirms New Prime Minister," *Yonhap News Agency*, June 18, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/116_181108.html

⁵⁸ "Park's Rating Hits Lowest", *The Korea Times*, June 19, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/116_181201.html

⁵⁹ "Kim Jong Un Watches New Type Anti-ship Rocket Launching Drill", *KCNA*, June 15, 2015 at <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>

reserves sufficient for 30-40 years of production; Russian companies to repay around US\$ 60-70 billion worth of foreign debt in 2015; Russia's taxation rates to be locked in for the next 4 years; Rosneft and BP sign cooperation agreement; Irkutsk plans a 50 per cent increase in Sukhoi plane production; Russian nuclear forces to get 40 new intercontinental missiles in 2015; Putin's decree on classifying troop losses in peacetime challenged; Russian official says An-188 propfan plane can't be labelled fully Ukrainian.

Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev has said that more than 1,000 Russians are fighting for the Islamic State and the government has been unable to stem the tide. He added that the problem is rooted in the double standards of West – 'the thing is that the same Islamic State, when it is fighting against Assad, is supported by the United States. And at the same time, they are bombing it. It will go on and on unless they stop these games'.⁶⁰

The Russian Central Bank Board of Directors has, on June 15, for the fourth consecutive time reduced the weekly repo rate by 1 percentage point - from 12.5 per cent to 11.5 per cent. This is the rate which determines interest rates for all loans in the economy. The Bank stated that the annual inflation rate dropped from 16.4 per cent in April to 15.8 per cent in May. The Bank noted that the dynamics of main macroeconomic indicators in Russia point to further cooling of economic activity.⁶¹

Russia's Central Bank has, on June 15, upgraded its forecast on trade balance surplus forecast for 2015 from US\$ 141 billion to US\$187 billion. The previous forecast implied an average Urals crude oil price at US\$ 50-55 per barrel in 2015 while the new forecast is based on average annual oil price at US\$ 60 per barrel in 2015.⁶²

Presidential Aide Andrey Belousov has said, on June 19, that the net capital outflow from Russia in the first quarter of 2015 was US\$ 37 billion. This comprises of US\$ 24 billion as a repayment of banks' foreign loans. Therefore, the net outflow of US\$ 13 billion in a quarter is one of the lowest that Russia has seen in the last 5-6 years.⁶³

Minister of Natural Resource and Ecology Sergey Donskoi has said, on June 17, that oil reserves in conventional fields of Russia are sufficient to meet demand for the next 30-40 years. However, when the reserves of non-traditional oil – like the Bazhenov Formation in West Siberia, or Domanic Shale (unconventional shale of the Volga-Urals oil province group) and others like the Arctic are added, the time span is much more.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ "Over 1,000 Russians Fighting For Islamic State — Russian Security Council Secretary", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/802869>

⁶¹ "Russian Central Bank Reduces Key Rate to 11.5%", *Itar-Tass*, June 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/800718>

⁶² "Russia's Central Bank Upgrades Trade Balance Surplus Forecast for 2015 by 32% to \$187 bln", *Itar-Tass*, June 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/800899>

⁶³ "Record Low Capital Outflow From Russia Recorded in Q1 of 2015", *Itar-Tass*, June 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/802274>

⁶⁴ "Russia's Oil Reserves Sufficient For 30-40 Years Production — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, June 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801207>

Deputy Finance Minister Maxim Oreshkin has said, on June 19, that Russian companies and banks will repay around US\$ 60-70 billion of foreign debt in 2015. He added that debt redemption will 'potentially trigger the trend of decreasing negative impact of sanctions' extension on the Russian economy'. Russia reduced its state debt by a third in 2014. Currently it stands at around US\$ 52 billion which amounts to approximately 5 per cent of GDP.⁶⁵

President Vladimir Putin has said that the taxation rates in Russia will be locked in for the next 4 years. He added that 'capital and assets that return to Russia from abroad will be exempted from paying taxes. Their owners will be provided with guarantees on protection of any type of prosecution. Simultaneously Russia will be taking steps to raise transparency of Russian companies and their subsidiaries abroad. Moreover, small business that has not violated regulations will be freed from inspections for 3 years starting from 2016'.⁶⁶

Rosneft has, on June 20, signed an agreement with BP in order to establish a joint venture on the Taas-Yuryakh field in East Siberia. The UK company will acquire the 20 per cent participation stake in the project in line with the sealed deal amounting to US\$ 750 million. The joint venture will develop the Srednebotuobinskoe oil and gas condensate field part of Taas-Yuryakh Project, one of the largest in East Siberia, where about 20,000 barrels are produced daily. Along with this, the joint venture will set up infrastructure for further prospecting and developing the region's resources and both companies will explore an area of 115,000 square kilometres within the zone of mutual interests.⁶⁷

The director general of Russia's Irkutsk Aviation Plant has talked about increasing the production of Sukhoi aircraft by fifty per cent in the coming months. He said, 'we took all necessary measures in 2014, increasing the volume of core operations and employing 700 new personnel'. Military products will continue to constitute most of the plant's current production.⁶⁸

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, on June 16, that Russia's nuclear forces will get more than 40 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in 2015.⁶⁹

A group of bloggers, journalists and public figures have approached Russia's Supreme Court to challenge President Vladimir Putin's decree on making Russian troops' peacetime losses a secret. Putin made amendments, on May 28, to the list of information referred to state secrets. Specifically, the clause in the list of information referred to state secrets, which read: "information disclosing the losses of troops in wartime" was supplemented by the words "in peacetime during the period

⁶⁵ "Russian Companies To Repay Around \$60-70 Bln Worth Of Foreign Debt In 2015 — Official", *Itar-Tass*, June 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/802333>

⁶⁶ "Russia's Taxation Rates To Be Locked In For 4 Years in Russia — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, June 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/802437>

⁶⁷ "Rosneft Inks 57 Out Of 58 Planned Deals at SPIEF", *Itar-Tass*, June 20, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/802796>

⁶⁸ "Irkutsk Plant Plans 50% Increase In Sukhoi Plane Production", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801059>

⁶⁹ "Russian Nuclear Forces To Get 40 New Intercontinental Missiles This Year — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/801022>

of special operations.” Russia’s Supreme Court has three days to register the complaint and another five days either to schedule judicial hearings or reject it.⁷⁰

Senior official Russia’s state arms exporter Rosoboronexport Sergey Kornev has said that Ukraine’s Antonov aircraft manufacturing company does not have the right to position the Antonov-188 propfan plane as a fully Ukrainian one, since it is an extension of the Antonov-70 propfan project designed in close cooperation with Russia. Russia and Ukraine had jointly started the Antonov-70 project in 2010. However, all military cooperation between the two countries has been suspended due to the Ukrainian crisis.⁷¹

International

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Chinese investor to lease 115,000 hectares of land in Russia’s Eastern Siberia; Russia and China sign a preliminary agreement on construction of Moscow-Kazan high speed railway link; Russia-China commission approves 29 new investment projects worth US\$ 20 billion; Russia and China explore deal on the supply of SU-35 fighter jet planes; Putin says Russia and China not aiming to create a military bloc; Pakistan Army Chief arrives in Russia for an official visit while Russian media reports suggest increased Russian investments in Pakistan; Russia and Saudi Arabia sign nuclear energy deal; Putin sees greater threat in US missile defence system than weapons deployment in Europe; Russian and Finnish Presidents meet in Russia; Russian and Turkish Foreign Ministers discuss the strategy against Islamic State.**

The Trans-Baikal Territory in East Siberia has signed a letter of intent with China’s Huae Sinban, under which the Chinese company plans to invest about 24 billion roubles (US\$ 440 million) in local agribusiness development. Under the letter of intent, the sides will start studying the prospects of the project implementation, assess the expediency, risks and terms of cooperation. However, letter has no legal force and is needed by the investors as confirmation of the Russian side’s desire for cooperation. The Chinese company is expected to take over uncultivated agricultural lands, unused pastures and hayfields to the tune of 115,000 hectares on a long-term lease of 49 years. As a mandatory condition of the agreements, newly-established enterprises will be required to register for tax purposes at the places of their activity and also it is required to create modern, competitive crop-growing, livestock breeding and processing facilities based on environmentally friendly technologies. The share of local workforce is expected to be no less than 75 per cent of new jobs.⁷²

A consortium of China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group (CREEC) and two Russian firms have agreed a contract worth 20.8 billion roubles (around US\$ 380 million) with Russian Railways on

⁷⁰ “Putin’s Decree On Classifying Troop Losses In Peacetime Challenged”, *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/801004>

⁷¹ “Russian Official Says An-188 Propfan Plane Can’t Be Called Fully Ukrainian”, *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801944>

⁷² “Chinese Investor To Lease 115,000 Hectares Of Land in Russia”, *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/800974>

pre-construction surveys and design for 770 km of track linking Moscow and Kazan. The cost of the total railway link is estimated at US\$ 21.4 billion. The railway is scheduled to be completed by 2018. With a maximum design speed of 400 km per hour, it will reduce travel time from the current 14 hours to three and a half hours. The railway is expected to become part of the planned Beijing-Moscow high-speed transport corridor and of the 'Silk Road' project which is expected to link China with the markets of Europe and the Middle East. Beijing has already expressed its interest in funding the ambitious project, saying it will invest a total of US\$ 5.6 billion (300 billion roubles) in the project. US\$ 4.6 billion at current exchange rates (250 billion roubles) will come in the form of 20-year loans from Chinese banks, and the other US\$ 970 million (52 billion roubles) will come as an equity payment from the Chinese company in charge of the project. Russia has not ruled out the possibility of a rouble denominated loan.⁷³

The Russian-Chinese intergovernmental commission has, on June 18, approved 29 new investment projects. The Commission monitors in total 58 projects in particular in such sectors as construction of high-speed rail links, production of industrial equipment, innovation materials, car industry, chemical industry, agriculture, forest industry. The Russian government has also approved a draft bill that will simplify and harmonize the SCO countries' national procedures regarding cross-border road transit. In particular, it will lift the existing ban on the entry of Russian vehicles to China through border check points from Kazakhstan, and as a result, boost the trade turnover between Russian and China.⁷⁴ Chinese investments in Russia measured US\$ 33 billion in 2014 while bilateral trade stood at US\$ 95.3 billion.⁷⁵

Deputy Head of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Konstantin Biryulin has said, on June 15, that Moscow expects to conclude a contract with China on supply of Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets. He said 'effort is now underway on promoting Su-35 fighter jets on the global combat aviation market. The Russian side hopes to sign in the near future contracts on supplies of these aircraft to China'.⁷⁶

President Vladimir Putin has said, on June 19, that 'Russia and China are by no means creating a military blocs against any country'. He added that the two countries are in the process of building an alliance for safeguarding their national interests.⁷⁷

Pakistani Army chief General Raheel Sharif has arrived in Moscow, on June 15, on a three-day official visit to Russia. This is the first visit by General Raheel as the army chief to Russia, and is seen as sign of warming of ties between the two countries. A press release stated that 'discussions

⁷³ "Moscow Wants Ruble Settlements With Beijing On Russian High-Speed Railway – RZD Official", *RT*, June 18, 2015 at <http://rt.com/business/268048-russia-china-ruble-railway/>

⁷⁴ "Russian Gov't Approves Draft Bill To Boost Trade with China", *Shanghai Daily*, June 16, 2015 at http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=287865

⁷⁵ "Russian-Chinese Commission Approves 29 New Investment Projects Worth Over \$20 Bln", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801979>

⁷⁶ "Russia Hopes To Sign Deal With China On Su-35 Fighter Jet Supplies", *Itar-Tass*, June 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/800618>

⁷⁷ "Russia, China Do Not Create Military Blocs — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, June 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/802428>

were held on the regional security, bilateral defence cooperation and high level military exchanges' while *Itar-Tass* has stated that 'Russia has sent Pakistan a draft contract on the delivery of four Mil Mi-35M combat helicopters'.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, *Itar-Tass* has also quoted the Vice President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Muhammad Waseem Vohra stating that Russian investments in Pakistan's energy, coal mining and metal sector is likely to reach US\$ 5 billion within the next five years. He said 'the real prospects of this rapprochement (Russia-Pakistan) are linked to the implementation of the Pakistan-China economic corridor (CPEC) project. The project will connect China's Kashgar city with Gwadar Port in southwestern Pakistan. Russia may join the project and the legal basis is ready for this. There are no restrictions on the number of countries that will use Gwadar Port and the participation will allow Russia's companies to carry out the transit of cargos to the Persian Gulf via the port'.⁷⁹

President Putin has met with Saudi Prince Mohammed during the side-lines of the international economic forum in St. Petersburg on June 18. A total of six cooperation agreements including those on nuclear energy, space exploration, pharma and infrastructure were signed. According to Rosatom, the document is the first in the history of Russia-Saudi relations to create a legal framework for cooperation between the nations in the field of nuclear energy. Future joint projects might include construction of nuclear power reactors, provision of services in nuclear fuel cycling, including those for nuclear power stations and research reactor facilities. The two countries have also agreed on the creation of a working group to develop joint energy projects with Saudi Arabia showing an interest to invest in energy projects in Russia.⁸⁰

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, on June 16, that he sees no real threat in the West's statements about possible deployment of weapons in Europe, since the missile defence system deployment is a much bigger threat. He said, 'I would refrain from whipping up emotions. Of course, we will analyse everything but so far I see nothing that might prompt us to do that. It's rather all about political signals to Russia, in its relations with the European Union.' He added that Russia has all the grounds to take response measures and stressed that it did not pose a threat to any country including Finland. He said that the best guarantee of Finland's security is its neutral status.⁸¹

The Presidents of Russia and Finland, Vladimir Putin and Sauli Niinisto, have met in Moscow's Novo-Ogaryovo region on June 16 wherein they called for the strict implementation of the Minsk agreements for Ukraine.⁸²

⁷⁸ "Russia Ready To Sell Four Mi-35m Combat Helicopters To Pakistan — Source", *Itar-Tass*, June 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/801226>

⁷⁹ "Russia May Invest \$5 Bln In Pakistan In Next Five Years", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801916>

⁸⁰ "Russia and Saudi Arabia Ink Nuclear Energy Deal, Exchange Invites", *RT*, June 18, 2015 at <http://rt.com/news/268198-russia-saudi-nuclear-agreements/>

⁸¹ "Putin Rather Sees Threat In Us Missile Defence System Than Weapons Deployment In Europe", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/801179>

⁸² "Putin and Finnish President Call For Strict Implementation Of Ukraine Peace Deals", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801156>

Russian and Turkish Foreign Ministers, Sergei Lavrov and Mevlut Cavusoglu, have, over the telephone on June 16, discussed the necessity of adopting a comprehensive strategy against the Islamic State and other terrorist structures. The two sides also stressed on the importance of more vigorous efforts to promote political settlement of the Syrian crisis on the basis of the Geneva communique of June 30, 2012.⁸³

International

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Russia accuses Kiev of fuelling crises for maintaining anti-Russian sanctions; NATO hands over emergency contact numbers to Russia; Russia cuts down on investments in US government securities; Russia and American Foreign Ministers discuss global issues; Rosneft in talks to lend US\$ 5 billion to Venezuelan oil major; Future Russia-EU-Ukraine gas deal to include filling of underground storage facilities; Belarusian multiple launch rocket system tested in China; Dnepropetrovsk region completes construction of fortifications on border with Donbass; Russian lawmaker criticises UN Security Council draft resolution on Srebrenica; US to end training of Ukraine's National Guard battalions in October 2015; UN says Russia receives the maximum applications for asylum; Putin says Iranian nuclear deal looks likely to be signed.**

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov has said, on June 16, that the Ukrainian authorities have a stake in the deterioration of the situation in the east of the country in order to preserve the sanctions regime on Russia.⁸⁴

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov has, on June 16, said that NATO has handed over to Russia a list of telephone numbers to be used in emergency situations. However, no other contacts have taken place so far. Last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had noted that all military communication channels between Moscow and Washington, including those within the NATO-Russia Council, had been frozen.⁸⁵

Russia has reduced its free cash investments into US government securities. The figure dropped by US\$ 3.4 billion in April, 2015. Moscow currently holds securities worth US\$ 66.5 billion.⁸⁶

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry have, on June 15 over telephone, discussed the crisis in Ukraine well as the developments in the Middle East and

⁸³ "Russian, Turkish Foreign Ministers Discuss Efforts Towards Strategy against Islamic State", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801128>

⁸⁴ "Russian Diplomat Accuses Kiev Of Fuelling Crises For Maintaining Anti-Russian Sanctions", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801077>

⁸⁵ "NATO Hands Over Emergency Contact Numbers To Russian Side — Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801085>

⁸⁶ "Russia Slashes Investments into US Government Securities — US Department of Treasury", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/800945>

North Africa and prospects for resolving Iran's nuclear problem. On Ukraine, they stressed on the need for all sides to implement ceasefire agreements signed in Minsk and supported plans to convene a meeting between representatives of working subgroups formed as part of the Contact Group on the Ukraine crisis.⁸⁷

Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA and Rosneft are negotiating a financing deal under which the Russian oil major can lend its South American counterpart US\$ 5 billion. In return, Rosneft is interested in increasing its participation in the Petromonagas joint venture, invest in and export gas instead of selling it at a major discount on the price-controlled local market, gain more control of operations and oil sales, and increase security at operations. The potential US\$ 5 billion would be disbursed gradually, with some used to shore up Rosneft's joint ventures and some going to PDVSA itself. Venezuela relies on oil for 96 per cent of its foreign income.⁸⁸

A trilateral gas agreement being negotiated by Russia, the European Union and Ukraine includes the contracting parties' liabilities regarding the filling of Ukraine's underground gas holders. The stake holders will consider the prices for supply of Russian gas to Ukraine and its transit to Europe in both summer and autumn period. The will also explore extending the agreement to the winter of 2015-2016.⁸⁹

A Belarusian multiple launch rocket system has been successfully tested in China on June 16. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has stated that the global situation is not getting calmer, and NATO's activities in the vicinity of Belarusian and Russian borders are alarming.⁹⁰

Ukraine's Dnepropetrovsk Region has completed the construction of fortification structures on the border with Donbass (the Donetsk and Lugansk regions). The fortification of 100 kilometres consist of 27 facilities with strongholds and reinforcing obstacles, trenches and special entrenchments for hardware. Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko had, on March 9, said that Ukraine would construct a deeply layered defence system in the country's east. The press centre of the headquarters of Kiev's military operation against eastern regions had specified that there are plans to create two defensive lines "to prevent the enemy from penetrating Ukrainian territory."⁹¹

Chairman of the Russian State Duma foreign affairs committee Alexey Pushkov has said, on June 18, that the draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council initiated by Britain to mark the

⁸⁷ "Russia's Lavrov, US Kerry Discuss Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Libya in Phone Call", *Itar-Tass*, June 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/800900>

⁸⁸ "Russia's Rosneft in Talks to Lend \$5 Billion to Venezuelan Oil Major – Source", *The Moscow Times*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-rosneft-in-talks-to-lend-5-billion-to-venezuelan-oil-major—source/523934.html>

⁸⁹ "Future Russia-EU-Ukraine Gas Deal Includes Filling Of Underground Storage Facilities", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/800969>

⁹⁰ "Belarusian Multiple Launch Rocket System Tested in China — Official", *Itar-Tass*, June 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801091>

⁹¹ "Dnepropetrovsk Region Completes Construction Of Fortifications On Border with Donbass", *Itar-Tass*, June 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/802095>

20th anniversary of the Srebrenica events aims to legalize the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia. It is also designed to punish Serbia for its current foreign policy that includes building ties with Russia.⁹²

The Pentagon expects the training of three battalions of Ukraine's National Guard to be completed in October. Instructors of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade have been working with Ukraine's National Guard since April. The training program involves drills in rear area security, route security, protection of critical infrastructure, improving combat life-saving, operation in a very heavily contested electronic warfare environment, and providing assistance in surviving the intensive artillery and rocket fire.⁹³

The UN refugee agency, in its annual Global Trends Report: World at War report released on June 18, has said that around 275,000 foreign citizens had asked Russia for asylum in 2014. This makes Russia the largest recipient of new individual asylum claims worldwide in 2014. This figure includes about 7,000 applications for refugee status and some 267,800 applications for temporary asylum in Russia. In previous years, the combined figure had never exceeded the 5,000 mark. Around 99 per cent of these claims were lodged by Ukrainians.⁹⁴

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said, on June 19, that the Iranian nuclear program is likely to be signed in the near future.⁹⁵

India-Russia Relations

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **India signs a framework cooperation agreement with Eurasian Economic Commission; Russia and India discuss the comprehensive modernization of Su-30MKI fighter jets; Russia to explore construction of a high speed railway project in India.**

India's Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman has signed a framework agreement with Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Trade Minister Andrey Slepnev. The signing ceremony was held during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF 2015) on June 18. Ms. Sitharaman said that 'the study group should be giving its report, hopefully it would be in seven months, the moment we get this report we can start negotiating the free trade agreement further'.⁹⁶

⁹² "Russian Lawmaker Slams UN Security Council Draft Resolution on Srebrenica", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/802046>

⁹³ "US to End Training Of Three Ukraine's National Guard Battalions In October — US Commander", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/801211>

⁹⁴ "Russia Becomes World's Largest Recipient Of Asylum Applications, UN Says", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/801531>

⁹⁵ "Putin Believes That Agreement Will Be Reached On Iran's Nuclear Programme", *Itar-Tass*, June 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/802456>

⁹⁶ "India Signs Free Trade Agreement with Eurasian Economic Commission at SPIEF 2015", *Itar-Tass*, June 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/801867>

Deputy Head of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Konstantin Biryulin has said, on June 15, that Russia and India are holding talks on comprehensive modernization of Su-30MKI fighter jets. The modernization package includes on-board communication and data transfer systems as well as radar equipment.⁹⁷

The President of Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin has said, on June 18 during the side-lines of the St. Petersburg Economic Forum that Russian officials are in talks with their Indian counterparts to help the country set up high-speed railways projects.⁹⁸

D. The United State of America

National

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **US Senate votes to ban torture in war on terrorism; US lawmakers slam government officials over massive cyber-attack; Ending Obamacare would boost deficit \$137b over decade; House rescues Obama's free-trade agenda, but bill's fate uncertain; World reacts to racial tensions, gun violence in US; In alleged 'Manifesto,' accused church shooter details hate; Dylann Roof photos, racist manifesto surface on website; Jeb Bush enters US republican presidential contest.**

The U.S. Senate has voted 78-21 to ban the use of torture in the interrogation of terror suspects and other detainees held by the United States. The measure codifies into federal law President Barack Obama's executive order banning the use of what U.S. officials once described as "enhanced interrogation techniques". The top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Feinstein wrote last year's bombshell report detailing years of abject abuse – from waterboarding to rectal feeding – inflicted on detainees captured by the United States after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The legislation approved on June 16 would limit all U.S. agencies, from the Pentagon to the CIA, to interrogation techniques authorized by the Army Field Manual. It passed as an amendment to a mammoth bill before the Senate authorizing all U.S. military activity and spending for the next fiscal year.⁹⁹

U.S. lawmakers sharply attacked government hiring and technology officials on June 16 for not preventing a cybersecurity attack that compromised personal information for millions of U.S. federal workers. "You failed, utterly and totally," Congressman Jason Chaffetz told Katherine Archuleta, chief of the government's employment agency, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Chaffetz demanded to know why the personal information of government workers and

⁹⁷ "Russia, India in Talks On Comprehensive Modernization of Su-30MKI Fighter Jets", *Itar-Tass*, June 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/800630>

⁹⁸ "Russia To Help India Set Up High-Speed Railway Projects", *Firstpost*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/russia-to-help-india-set-up-high-speed-railway-projects-2301564.html>

⁹⁹ Bowman, Michael, "US Senate Votes to Ban Torture in War on Terrorism", *VOA News*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-senate-votes-to-ban-torture-in-war-on-terrorism/2824826.html>

retirees was not encrypted after the employment agency's watchdog warned last year that it was vulnerable to cyberattack. At least 4.2 million current and former federal workers, and likely millions more, are affected.¹⁰⁰

A new report says repealing the controversial Obamacare law expanding access to health insurance in the United States would add \$137 billion to the federal deficit, leave 19 million people uninsured and slightly increase economic growth over 10 years. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which has the job of analysing the economic and budget impact of proposed laws, released the report on June 19. Obamacare, which is officially known as the Affordable Care Act, was signed into law in 2010 after a major political squabble. Republicans have made many efforts to repeal the law.¹⁰¹

The U.S. House of Representatives has rescued President Barack Obama's ambitious Asia-Pacific trade agenda for the time being, but its future remains uncertain. After the president's free-trade agenda suffered a stunning defeat last week, the House voted 218-208 on June 18 to pass legislation to give presidents the power to submit trade deals to Congress for an up-or-down vote without amendments. Most Republicans joined with pro-trade Democrats to pass a stand-alone Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA, bill. The path forward for so-called "fast-track" authority for the president to wrap up trade agreements is uncertain. The TPA bill just passed by the House goes back to the Senate, where all eyes will be on pro-trade Senate Democrats. Some of them have said they will not vote for it without assurances that the workers relief bill will pass in both chambers – a difficult undertaking.¹⁰²

Often the target of U.S. human rights accusations, China wasted little time returning such charges following the shooting at a historic black church in South Carolina that left nine people dead. Elsewhere, the attack renewed perceptions that Americans have too many guns and have yet to overcome racial tensions. Some said the attack reinforced their reservations about personal security in the U.S. – particularly as a non-white foreigner – while others said they'd still feel safe if they were to visit. "We don't understand America's need for guns," said Philip Alpers, director of the University of Sydney's GunPolicy.org project that compares gun laws across the world. "It is very puzzling for non-Americans." Racially charged shootings in the U.S. have received widespread global attention. Prominent Malaysian social commentator Marina Mahathir said many in her country find it puzzling why the U.S. government won't restrict gun ownership laws. The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the right to keep and bear arms. In China, the official Xinhua News Agency said the violence in South Carolina "mirrors the U.S. government's inaction on rampant gun violence as well as the growing racial hatred in the country." In Japan, discrimination tends to be based less on skin colour than on national origin, resulting in biases against Chinese and Koreans, said Hiroko Takimoto, 41, a patent attorney in Tokyo. Racially

¹⁰⁰ Bredemeier, Ken, "US Lawmakers Slam Government Officials Over Massive Cyber Attack", *VOA News*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/opm-admits-history-of-security-failures-/2824719.html>

¹⁰¹ "Report: Ending Obamacare Would Boost Deficit \$137B Over Decade", *VOA News*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ending-obamacare-boost-federal-deficit/2829542.html>

¹⁰² Saine, Cindy, "House Rescues Obama's Free-Trade Agenda, but Bill's Fate Uncertain", *VOA News*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/house-revives-obama-trade-agenda/2827914.html>

motivated killings are “simply something Japanese as a people cannot understand,” she said.¹⁰³

He called himself the “Last Rhodesian,” a self-declared “white nationalist” who sympathized with apartheid-era southern Africa, and the antebellum period in the United States, when slavery thrived. In dozens of photos posted to a now-defunct website believed to belong to Dylann Roof, the accused killer of nine people in a South Carolina church stares at the camera intently, smiling slightly only while posing for a picture in front of the Museum and Library of Confederate History. In one image, the 21-year-old holds up a U.S. flag, flames licking at the red, white and blue. In another, he carries a Confederate flag, the symbol of the southern states during the country’s civil war. Roof is alone in every frame. Sometimes, he holds a gun. “Segregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure,” reads a nearly 2,500-word manifesto on the site.¹⁰⁴ The hatred in the essay is largely directed at one group - the black community. The writer laments a perceived inaction by white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁰⁴ U.S. media became aware of the online manifesto on June 20, although it appears to have existed before the massacre at the Emanuel AME Church stunned the nation.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the shooting in a Charleston has revived a controversy ... over a flag. The flag of the short-lived Confederate States of America – the group of southern states that seceded during the U.S. Civil War – is still flying in front of the South Carolina Capitol building. To those who think the flag should come down permanently, it is symbol of slavery and connotes racism. To proponents, the flag symbolizes the Southern way of life. On June 19, “Confederate” was trending on *Twitter* as lots of people weighed in on the flag issue sparked by reports that the suspect in the Charleston shootings, who wore emblems of white supremacy, had a Confederate flag on his license plate. President Barack Obama said on June 19 on Air Force One that the flag belongs “in a museum.” NAACP president and CEO Cornell William Brooks called for the removal of the Confederate flag flying on the South Carolina Capitol grounds, saying it is an “emblem of hate.”¹⁰⁶

Former Florida governor Jeb Bush, the son and brother of U.S. presidents, officially entered the 2016 presidential contest on June 15, the 11th Republican in the race, with more candidates likely in the coming weeks. Bush told cheering supporters at his announcement rally in Miami that the U.S. is on a “very bad course.” He blamed Democrats for “the relentless build-up of the regulatory state” and slow U.S. economic growth. “We need a president willing to disrupt the whole culture in Washington,” he said. “I will be that president.” In a Republican Party field dominated by conservatives appealing to the party’s base of like-minded voters, Bush cast himself in a campaign video as a candidate appealing to a broader group of voters.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ “World Reacts to Racial Tensions, Gun Violence in US”, *Associated Press*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/world-reacts-to-racial-tensions-gun-violence-in-us/2829481.html>

¹⁰⁴ Macchi, Victoria, “In Alleged ‘Manifesto,’ Accused Church Shooter Details Hate”, *VOA News*, June 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/in-alleged-online-manifesto-accused-church-killer-details-hate/2831366.html>;

¹⁰⁵ “Dylann Roof Photos, Racist Manifesto Surface on Website”, *VOA News*, June 20, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/dylann-roof-photos-racist-manifesto-website/2830755.html>

¹⁰⁶ “McKitterick, Molly, Charleston Shooting Reignites Flag Controversy”, *VOA News*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/charleston-shooting-reignites-flag-controversy/2830378.html>

¹⁰⁷ “Jeb Bush Enters US Republican Presidential Contest”, *VOA News*, June 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/jeb-bush-set-to-join-us-republican-presidential-contest/2822306.html>

International: Asia

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Kerry emerges, comments on Iran, China, South Asia; Success against ISIL requires time, partners, Dempsey says; Carter vows lasting defeat of ISIL forces; Anti-ISIL airstrikes continue in Syria, Iraq; Singapore warns US faces 'stark choice' over TPP fate; US-Philippine military deal could face further delays; US, China to meet on 7th strategic and economic dialogue; China to finish South China Sea island-building 'soon'.**

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on June 16 that the United States and other world powers involved in nuclear talks with Iran are not “fixated” on prior military aspects of Tehran’s nuclear programme as a deadline for a deal approaches. “It is critical for us to know going forward that those activities have been stopped,” said Kerry, “and that we can account for that.” Kerry commented during a video news conference from Boston, where he is recovering from injuries sustained in a May bicycling accident in France. He said the United States and the other world powers negotiating with Iran would not “rush to an agreement for the sake of an agreement.” Kerry said he would focus on China for the next few days, ahead of the seventh meeting of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. Vice Premier Wang Yang is among Chinese officials who will attend the three-day session in Washington. The talks come amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over China’s alleged cybersecurity hacks as well as its controversial land reclamation efforts in the South China Sea. Washington has voiced opposition to China’s construction in the region. Parts of the region are also claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Kerry also expressed concern over a recent rise in tensions between Pakistan and India. “It is of enormous concern to all of us for all the obvious reasons,” he said, regarding tensions between the two nuclear neighbours.¹⁰⁸

Time and regional partners are required for long-term success in defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the House Armed Services Committee on June 17. The always-dangerous Middle East has become even more unpredictable, unstable and complex, Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said, testifying alongside Defence Secretary Ash Carter at a hearing on U.S. policy in the region. The situation on the ground in Iraq and Syria is the result of three converging issues, Dempsey told the panel. The first, he said, is that “several governments are struggling for political legitimacy, because they are not sufficiently pluralistic or they are not sufficiently accountable to their citizens.” The Iraqi government has pledged to create a unity government, he added, but has been unable to do so yet. “Second, the centuries old Shia-Sunni rivalry has come to the fore,” the chairman said. “Weak states are less able to assert independence amid the tug-of-war between sectarian regional powers.” Third, there is increasing competition between religiously moderate Muslims and more radical elements, Dempsey said. Dempsey stressed that the military is only one component of a much broader strategy against ISIL. “Military power alone will not solve this,” he said.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile,

¹⁰⁸ Dockins, Pamela, “Kerry Emerges, Comments on Iran, China, South Asia”, VOA News, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-emerges-iran-china-south-asia/2825134.html>

¹⁰⁹ Garamone, Jim, “Success Against ISIL Requires Time, Partners, Dempsey Says”, DoD News, June 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129064>

vowing to achieve a lasting defeat of ISIL forces, Defence Secretary Ash Carter outlined the Defence Department's counterterrorism strategy on June 17 in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. The United States will not let up until it has destroyed ISIL and al-Qaida affiliated terrorists that pose dangers to the homeland, friends and allies in the region, the secretary said. President Barack Obama's counter-ISIL strategy draws from all U.S. national security agencies to degrade and defeat ISIL, Carter said. The strategy and military campaign make up a global coalition that reflects a worldwide consensus to counter the ISIL threat, he added.¹¹⁰ On June 21, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported that U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq.¹¹¹

Singapore's Foreign Minister, K. Shanmugam, has warned that in light of last week's congressional setback in granting presidential Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), the United States faces a "stark choice" over its future in the Asia-Pacific region. TPA approval is seen as crucial to eventual agreement on a new Asia free-trade accord. The Singaporean diplomat's warning comes as Republican leaders in the House of Representatives move to delay another vote on TPA to late July. Speaking on June 15 to the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the Shanmugam said it is vital to complete the years-long negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free-trade agreement. Shanmugam said most of this century's economic growth will come from Asia.¹¹²

A U.S.-Philippine defence agreement that would help counter China's growing naval power in the disputed South China Sea has yet to be implemented more than a year after it was signed, and could now face a fresh political hurdle in Manila. The deal gives U.S. troops wide access to local military bases and approval to build facilities to store fuel and equipment for maritime security, but it was effectively frozen after left-wing politicians and other opponents challenged its constitutionality in the Philippine Supreme Court last year. The court is expected to issue a ruling before President Barack Obama visits Manila for an Asia-Pacific summit in November. The deal, called an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), was signed just days before Obama last travelled to Manila in April 2014.¹¹³

U.S. officials are expected to raise concerns on issues including human rights, cybersecurity and China's controversial construction project in the South China Sea, when the two countries launch the seventh Strategic and Economic Dialogue on June 22. The three-day session in Washington will provide both countries an opportunity to focus on shared challenges and opportunities. The meeting, between the world's two largest economies, will also help set the stage for Chinese

¹¹⁰ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Carter Vows Lasting Defeat of ISIL Forces", *DoD News*, June 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129066>

¹¹¹ "Anti-ISIL Airstrikes Continue in Syria, Iraq", *DOD News*, June 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129090>

¹¹² Beattie, Victor, "Singapore Warns US Faces 'Stark Choice' Over TPP Fate", *VOA News*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/singapore-fm-warns-us-faces-stark-choice-over-fate-of-tp/2824287.html>

¹¹³ "US-Philippine Military Deal Could Face Further Delays", *Reuters*, June 17, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-philippine-military-deal-could-face-further-delays/2826979.html>

President Xi Jinping's September visit to Washington.¹¹⁴ Earlier U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel said that the U.S. is troubled by China's island-building actions in the South China Sea. "China's guidelines on reclaimed areas is troubling, not only to us, but others in the region," Russel said. Russel said China's proposals will be a part of talks at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue to be held next week in Washington, D.C. Neither China's recent statement regarding land reclamation nor its behaviour is reducing regional tensions "[and] that is what we would all want," he said. "Frankly, it's an issue between China and international law," he said.¹¹⁵

On June 16, China said it will soon finish its controversial land reclamation efforts in some disputed areas of the South China Sea, but also vowed to continue building on the man-made islands that have provoked tension from rival claimants. "The land reclamation project of China's construction on some stationed islands and reefs of Nansha Islands will be completed in the upcoming days," China's foreign ministry said in a statement, using the Chinese name for the Spratly Islands. The ministry's brief statement, which did not provide an estimated finish date, defended the land reclamation project as being "beyond reproach" and mainly meant for civilian, not military, purposes. The United States has become increasingly outspoken in its opposition to the island-building project, which it now says takes up more than 2,000 acres on once uninhabited atolls and reefs in the strategic waterway. Much of the island construction appears to have military purposes, including an early warning radar system, military barracks, and runway.¹¹⁶

India-US Relations

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **US urges India and Pakistan to ease the tension and resume talks; Kerry says he spoke with Pakistani leader on India tensions; India improved relationship with neighbours under PM Modi; New parameters in India's engagement with US under Modi; Congressman Royce addresses the Indian-American community regarding the future of India-U.S. relations; US visa shutdown to impact business travellers, students will be unaffected.**

Alarmed by a recent spate of threats and counter-threats exchanged between India and Pakistan, the United States has reportedly urged the two countries to ease tension and resume talks. US State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke told the two neighbours that the relationship between them was 'critical' to maintaining peace and stability in the South Asian region and added that Washington welcomed any measure that could reduce tension between India and Pakistan, reported *the Dawn*. Rathke also said that the two countries had a mutual interest in addressing

¹¹⁴ Dockins, Pamela, "US, China to Meet on Strategic Dialogue", *VOA News*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-china-officials-to-meet-for-strategic-and-economic-dialogue/2828820.html>

¹¹⁵ "US Official: China's Island-Building 'Troubling'", *VOA News*, June 18, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-finds-china-island-building-troubling/2827831.html>

¹¹⁶ "China to Finish S. China Sea Island-Building 'Soon'", *VOA News*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-to-finish-south-china-sea-island-building-soon/2824222.html>

the threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism.¹¹⁷

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said he expressed his concerns to Pakistan's prime minister on June 16 about the recent increase in public tensions between his country and nuclear-armed rival India. "It's of enormous concern to all of us for all the obvious reasons," Kerry told reporters. "These are two very, very important countries, playing a critical role with respect to regional interests." Kerry said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was "extremely forthcoming" and said he had just spoken with his Indian counterpart. The Indian army, which killed 59 militants near the line separating Indian- and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir last year, says it has seen a rise in infiltration attempts in recent weeks. On June 6, it killed three militants along the disputed border, foiling the third infiltration attempt in two weeks. "It's very, very important that there be no misinterpretation or miscalculation with respect to any of the back-and-forth and the empowerment some entities might feel as a result of that," Kerry said.¹¹⁸

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who is on a 10-day visit to the US had said on June 18, the onus of creating an environment for improving Indo-Pak ties and normalising the bilateral relationship is more on Pakistan and depends on the kind of "provocation" that comes from that country. "There was a time not so long ago when India was in the midst of a disturbed neighbourhood. A number of problems with that disturbed neighbourhood were spilling into India," he told Timothy Geithner, former US Treasury Secretary, during an interaction at the Council on Foreign Relations, a top American think-tank. "When the new government was formed, the PM took an initiative even before his oath...and the initiative was that we invited all the heads of government of the south nations, and this turned out to be a very correct and a very positive move," he said. "And since then, we haven't looked back," Mr Jaitley said.¹¹⁹

India's ties with the US have been "completely transformed" with setting of new parameters in bilateral engagement during the first year under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian envoy to the US has said. "As we mark one year of India's current government, it is difficult not to see the changes in the way of doing business and not to see in them cause for optimism and satisfaction," Indian Ambassador to the US Arun K Singh said. In his keynote address on 'India Under Modi: One Year In' at think-tank Asia Society yesterday, Singh said Modi government's first year has

¹¹⁷ "US Urges India And Pakistan To Ease The Tension And Resume Talks", *DNA News*, June 15, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-us-urges-india-and-pakistan-to-ease-the-tension-and-resume-talks-2095706>; "US Stresses Need For Improvement In India-Pakistan Ties On All Issues", by Anwar Iqbal, *Dawn*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1189050>

¹¹⁸ "Kerry Says He Spoke With Pakistani Leader on India Tensions", *Reuters*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-kerry-says-he-spoke-with-pakistani-leader-on-india-tensions/2825048.html>; Craig, Tim and DeYoung, Karen, "Leaders of India and Pakistan Make Gestures To Calm Tensions", *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2015 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/leaders-of-india-and-pakistan-make-gestures-to-calm-tensions/2015/06/16/c35cf968-144b-11e5-8457-4b431bf7ed4c_story.html

¹¹⁹ "India Improved Relationship With Neighbours Under PM Modi: Arun Jaitley", *Press Trust of India*, June 19, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-improved-relationship-with-neighbours-under-pm-modi-arun-jaitley-773164>; "Relations With Neighbours Improved under Modi: Arun Jaitley", *PTI*, Jun 19, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Relations-with-neighbours-improved-under-Modi-Arun-Jaitley/articleshow/47730526.cms>

been used effectively to lay the foundation for India's rapid transformation and for robust and purposeful diplomacy. "The US was quick to offer to partner with India in realising the goals that our new government set for India's transformation and as a result the narrative in our relations have begun to reflect new found energy and optimism," he said. In defence, the two nations have made tremendous progress in ironing out differences. The civilian nuclear deal is moving beyond the buyer-seller relationship to a "technology partnership and co-development".¹²⁰

Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, congressman (R) Ed Royce, addressed more than 400 members, especially businessmen, of the Indian-American community regarding the future of India-U.S. relations at a meeting hosted by the National Indian-American Public Policy Institute (NIAPPI) in Chicago at the Rana Reagan Community Centre, on June 7. Consul General of India in Chicago Ausaf Sayeed also spoke on Indo-U.S. relations. NIAPPI chairman Shalabh Kumar, who is also chairman AVG Technologies, and Brij Sharma, chairman of Powervolt, were among the industrialists playing host, as was NIAPPI president Bhailal Patel, who is also executive vice president of Parikh Worldwide Media that owns Desi Talk Chicago. Royce, who is on the NIAPPI board of advisors, is a member of the India Caucus on Capitol Hill for over twenty years. The House Foreign Relations Committee plays a key role in the formulation of policies that affect U.S. relations with all other nations. This was the first meeting of its kind where Indian-American business leaders gathered in support for their peers. They candidly discussed ideas and issues relevant to their companies with Congressman Royce.¹²¹

Business travellers and Indians planning to go to the US are likely to be impacted due to a four-day suspension of visa interviews, travel agents and overseas education consultants say. But students are unlikely to face problems, according to them. The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has written to the US Embassy and all airlines to help affected passengers. On June 18, the US Embassy in New Delhi cancelled all scheduled non-immigrant visa interviews in India between June 22 and 26. The embassy said technical glitches were being faced globally and more than 100 computer experts from both the private and public sectors across the US were working on the problem. Applicants have been advised to reschedule appointments.¹²²

¹²⁰ "New Parameters In India's Engagement with US under Modi: Envoy", *DNA News*, June 17, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-new-parameters-in-india-s-engagement-with-us-under-modi-envoy-2096425>

¹²¹ "From the Community: Foreign Relations Committee Chair Ed Royce Addresses Indian-American Community", By Community Contributor Suresh Bodiwala, *The Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 2015 at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/skokie/community/chi-ugc-article-foreign-relations-committee-chair-ed-royce-ad-2015-06-17-story.html>

¹²² "US Visa Shutdown To Impact Business Travellers, Students Will Be Unaffected", by BS Reporters, June 20, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/us-visa-shutdown-to-impact-business-travellers-students-will-be-unaffected-115061900927_1.html

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Two French naval ships visit Visakhapatnam; Indian naval ships on a four day visit to Malaysia.**

Two French Naval Ships Dixmude (Landing Platform Dock) and Aconit (Frigate) are on a visit to Visakhapatnam from June 16 to June 22. During the visit, various operational and social interactions with Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy have been planned. These include amphibious demonstration, sharing of expertise on Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR), exchange of Non-Combatant Evacuation procedures, mutual ship visits, industry exhibition and sports fixtures.¹²³

As part of an operational deployment to South Indian Ocean and South China Sea, ships of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet arrived at Kuantan (Malaysia) on a four day visit on June 17. The Indian warships taking part in this deployment are INS Ranvir, a guided missile destroyer, INS Satpura, indigenously built guided missile stealth frigate, INS Shakti, a sophisticated Fleet tanker and support ship, and INS Kamorta, the latest and indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare corvette. India-Malaysia naval cooperation has largely been in the form of training interactions and exchange of goodwill visits by IN and RMN ships. This visit is aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing inter-operability between navies of the two friendly nations. In pursuit of India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy, the ships had also visited Singapore, Jakarta (Indonesia), Freemantle (Australia). Earlier during their deployment, these warships had also participated in IMDEX-15 at Singapore and the Indo-Singapore bilateral naval exercise SIMBEX.¹²⁴

International

(June 15-21, 2015)

- **Yemen peace talks end in Geneva with no agreement signed; Pakistan and Turkey sign an air force pilot training exchange agreement.**

Reports say that Yemen peace talks ended in Geneva on June 19 with no agreement signed. However, the United Nations is still optimistic that a ceasefire could be reached very soon. UN's special envoy for Yemen, Mauritanian diplomat Ismail Ould Cheikh has hailed certain positive signs in his negotiations with the warring factions. According to Ismail both sides seemed to

¹²³ "French Naval Ships Dixmude and Aconit Visit Visakhapatnam," *PIB*, June 16 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122545>

¹²⁴ "Indian Naval ships enter Kuantan, Malaysia," *PIB*, June 17 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122565>

agree on the need for a ceasefire. No date has yet been set for a fresh round of talks. Yemen has been wracked by conflict between Iran-backed Shiite rebels and troops loyal to exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who fled to Saudi Arabia in February. More than 2,600 people have been killed since then.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, according to reports, Pakistan and Turkey have signed an air force pilot training exchange agreement to help further improve their bilateral relations. According to a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) press release under the terms of the agreement both air forces will exchange two pilots every year. Though, currently largely a symbolic arrangement, bringing the countries closer in overall cooperation, the agreement does lay the groundwork for further co-operation.¹²⁶

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(June 8-21, 2015)

- **ISIS, Pak flags raised in Kashmir; Security Forces bust militant hideouts in Rajouri & Kathua; Hurriyat leader Geelani put under house arrest on eve of anti-India seminar; Sopore killings trigger panic among ex-militants in Kashmir.**

Flags of terror outfit ISIS along with those of Pakistan were raised in Kashmir on June 12 after which police promised a thorough probe and legal action against those involved. A group of youth, with faces covered, carried a black banner resembling Islamic State flag as they marched from Jamia Masjid towards Nowhatta chowk in downtown Srinagar soon after the Friday prayers, official sources said. Hurriyat Conference chief Syed Ali Shah Geelani had called for protests on June 12 after Friday prayers against the killing of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat activist Altaf Sheikh by unidentified gunmen on June 9.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, as many as 12 youths have been identified by security agencies for allegedly raising the flag of Middle-East terror group ISIS in J&K in the recent past. The youths were identified on the basis of intelligence inputs, footage of CCTV cameras, still and video photographs. There have been more than a dozen incidents of ISIS flag raising in Kashmir valley in recent months.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ "No Agreement As Yemen Peace Talks End In Geneva," *Defence News*, June 19, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/06/19/no-agreement-as-yemen-peace-talks-end-in-geneva/28995819/>

¹²⁶ "Pakistan And Turkey Sign Training Agreement," *Defence News*, June 19, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/training-simulation/2015/06/19/pakistan-and-turkey-sign-training-agreement/29001653/>

¹²⁷ "ISIS flags raised in Kashmir", *The Hindu*, June 12, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/isis-flags-raised-in-kashmir/article7310081.ece>

¹²⁸ "ISIS Flag Waving in J&K: 12 Men Identified", *The Times of India*, June 19, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ISIS-flag-waving-in-JK-12-men-identified/articleshow/47727280.cms>

Security Forces on June 13 claimed to have busted two militant hideouts and recovered huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosives in Nowshera and Billawar areas of Rajouri and Kathua districts respectively. PRO (Defence) Lt Col Manish Mehta said that a joint team of troops of Uniform Force and JKP busted a militant hideout at Nowshera on June 13. The cache included two Improvised Explosive Devices (4.5 Kg & 3.5 Kg), one fuse, two AK magazines (rusted), one hand grenade, (all destroyed in situ), fifty-two 7.62 mm cartridges, two mobile chargers, two batteries (cordless phone type), one mobile battery, six Duracell pencil cells, one RS antenna, one Pathani suit and one pouch. Achieving another success, PRO asserted that in a joint operation, Army's Rising Star Corps Intelligence Unit and J&K Police recovered a cache of locally made explosives, along with a number of other items which can be used in making Improvised Explosive Devices from the remote village of Jutha near Billawar in Kathua district.¹²⁹

Leader of the hardline faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, has been placed under house arrest. Local reports said that his incarceration has been done to prevent him from holding a seminar on June 14. Geelani had earlier this week announced that he would be holding a seminar of separatist leaders, including those from Sikhs groups and Christian community representatives. The seminar is expected to discuss the topic 'How to Resist the Indian State Fascism', a Hurriyat (G) spokesman was quoted by a prominent English daily, as saying earlier this week. "The personalities who have been invited for the proposed seminar include Akali Dal leader Simranjit Singh Mann, Dal Khalsa leader Kanwarpal Singh, noted human rights activist Gautam Navlakha and representatives of the Christian community," he was quoted, as saying. He said prominent scholars, intellectuals, writers and "pro-freedom leaders" of Kashmir would also participate.¹³⁰

Unidentified gunmen on June 14 shot at and killed a former militant at Sopore town in Jammu and Kashmir, police said. Police said unidentified gunmen shot at Mehraj-ud-Din Dar, a former militant of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) outside his home in Sopore town on June 14. This is the third mysterious killing of former militants and sympathisers of separatists in Sopore town in the last six days. On June 9, unidentified gunmen killed a former militant and activist of Geelani led Tehreek-e-Hurriyat party named Altaf Sheikh. On June 12, another activist of the same separatist party named Khurshid Ahmad Bhat was killed in Bomai area of Sopore town by unidentified gunmen. No guerrilla group has owned responsibility for these three killings. Geelani has blamed "Indian agents" for these murders.¹³¹ Meanwhile, the panic stricken former militants and sympathizers of separatists have started migrating out of Kashmir's Sopore town following the killings of former militants and active supporters of separatists by unidentified gunmen.¹³²

¹²⁹ "2 Militant Hideouts Busted in Rajouri, Kathua", *Kashmir Times*, June 13, 2015 at <http://www.kashmirtimes.com/newsdet.aspx?q=42016>

¹³⁰ "Syed Ali Shah Geelani Placed Under House Arrest", *The Times of India*, June 13, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Syed-Ali-Shah-Geelani-placed-under-house-arrest/articleshow/47652739.cms>

¹³¹ "Former Militant Killed in J&K", *Business Standard*, June 14, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/former-militant-killed-in-j-k-115061400145_1.html

¹³² "Sopore Killings Trigger Panic Among Ex-Militants in Kashmir", *Greater Kashmir*, June 15, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/sopore-killings-trigger-panic-among-ex-militants-in-kashmir/189355.html>

Northeast India

(June 8-21, 2015)

- **Suspected NSCN (K) militants fire at Assam Rifles camp in Arunachal Pradesh; Days after Manipur ambush, Army hits militants across the Myanmar Border; Bangladesh flushing out northeast militants from its soil : BSF; Talks with United People's Front (UPF) upgraded to political level: MNF chief Zoramthanga.**

Suspected NSCN (K) militants on June 7 fired at an Assam Rifles (AR) camp in remote Lazu area in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, three days after the group ambushed an Army convoy killing 18 soldiers, reports PTI. A group of 35 NSCN (Khaplang) rebels attacked the camp in the Indo-Myanmar border region at around 2.30 am, Tirap SP Ajit Kumar Singla said. However, there was no report of any casualty. Around 70 empty cartridges of AK-47 rifle along with unexploded bombs, were recovered from the site, he said. A massive search operation was under way in the area after the incident.¹³³

Days after militants killed 18 Army men in Manipur, the special forces of the Army on June 9 conducted military operations inside Myanmar inflicting what it called "significant casualties" on the groups behind that ambush, the NSCN (K) and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL). While the Army's statement said that the operations were at two locations along the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur and Nagaland, sources said Special Forces had gone across the border and were in "constant communication with Myanmar authorities". Later, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore said that it was a cross-border operation, "unprecedented and extremely bold." All Army men are said to have returned safe. Sources said the operations, which began at 7 am, were conducted by 21 Special Forces (Para) — a unit under Kolkata-based Eastern Command headquarters — along with troops of 27 Sector and 10 Sector of Assam Rifles.¹³⁴

However, the June 9 cross-border strikes on insurgents inside Myanmar may have had less impact on the rebel's military capacity than early assessments had indicated, official sources have told The Indian Express. According to assessments being conducted by the Army with Intelligence services, just seven bodies have been recovered so far and wireless intercepts suggest less than a dozen insurgents were injured. Moreover, the targets, one camp in Onzia and two adjacent camps in Ponyo, did not hit perpetrators of the June 4 ambush that killed 18 Army personnel, said a senior military intelligence official who is involved in collating these assessments. Special Forces went almost 11 km inside Myanmar, 5 km farther than what had been initially planned. One camp destroyed in Ponyo was being led by Niki Sumi, self-styled "Lt General" of the NSCN-K (on the Indian side). But Sumi and an estimated 40 cadres of the group are said to have left the

¹³³ "Militants Fire At Assam Rifles Camp", *The Assam Tribune*, June 8, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/mdetails.asp?id=jun0815/at055>

¹³⁴ Kulkarni, Pranav and Singh, Sushant, "Cross-border strike: Army Enters Myanmar To Hit Naga Militants", *The Indian Express*, June 10, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/army-hits-back-kills-militants-involved-in-manipur-ambush/2/>

camp before the strike, an official said. The latest assessments come even as intelligence services have reported that the 20-member squad responsible for the June 4 attack on the Army may have made its way across the Myanmar border back to its rear base at Tamu.¹³⁵

Following inputs provided by Border Security Force, authorities in Bangladesh have begun flushing out of Northeast militants hiding in that country, a senior BSF official said in Shillong on June 12. The BSF came to know about this during a Border Coordination meeting with BGB which concluded in Shillong on June 11. During the conference, the BSF handed over to BGB a list of 39 camps of various outfits in different parts of Bangladesh and sought their cooperation in raiding the camps and arrest the militants, the official said. The BSF delegation was led by BSF Meghalaya Frontier, Inspector General Sudesh Kumar, while the Bangladesh delegation was led by Additional Director General (Region Commander, Northeast Region) Md Latiful Haider.¹³⁶

Former Mizoram chief minister and Mizo National Front (MNF) chief Zoramthanga on June 16 said the Union home ministry has agreed to upgrade the ongoing official level talks with eight Manipur-based militants to the political level. These rebels belong to Kuki-Chin tribal groups. Giving reports on the signing of Suspension of Operations (SoO) between the ministry of home affairs (MHA) and the eight Manipur insurgent groups under an umbrella organization called the United People's Front (UPF) in New Delhi on June 9, he told party workers that the Congress-led government at the Centre neglected the problems of the northeast and stalled the peace process for seven years. "Now, the militant groups would go home and consult the NGOs, church leaders and political parties," he said. He added that they would return to Delhi to hold talks on their respective political demands.¹³⁷

Left-wing Extremism

(June 8-21, 2015)

- **Four children among 12 'Maoists' killed in an "encounter" in Jharkhand; CRPF may use new drones for anti-Maoist operations; Four Maoists killed, three arrested in encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh; Maoists planning to regain foothold in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; Chhattisgarh cops conducting 'small surgical' ops against Naxals, says senior officer; Bihar demands helicopter for anti-Maoist operations.**

Twelve alleged Maoists, including four minors, were killed in a joint operation by the police and the CRPF at Bhalwahi village in Palamau district of Jharkhand on June 9. Police said a top zonal commander, Anurag alias RKP alias Doctor, was among those killed in the "encounter". Anurag

¹³⁵ "Myanmar Strike: Seven Dead Bodies Recovered, Less Than A Dozen Injured, Say Official Sources", *The Indian Express*, June 12, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/myanmar-cross-border-strike-7-bodies-less-than-a-dozen-injured/>

¹³⁶ "Bangla Flushing Out NE Militants: BSF", *The Assam Tribune*, June 13, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jun1315/at054>

¹³⁷ "Manipur Tribal Rebels May Sit For Talks with Centre", *The Times of India*, June 17, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Manipur-tribal-rebels-may-sit-for-talks-with-Centre/articleshow/47695548.cms>

was the main suspect in the 2013 Latehar IED case where explosives were put inside the body of a slain CRPF man. Two other “Maoists” have been identified as Mohammed Izaz from Gwalior and Uday Yadav, a teacher from Latehar. Police, however, are not sure about the cases against them. While 11 persons were shot in the head, chest, neck or stomach, one was shot in the leg. Police reportedly recovered seven weapons, including an INSAS rifle, and over 300 live cartridges from the spot as well as several mobile phones and chargers. Defending the action in which minors were also killed, DGP Pandey said the “bullet does not differentiate”. He said if children were a part of the Maoist squad, they would be killed. “It was a great success,” he said. Local sources, however, said it was “hardly an encounter” as there were no signs of any resistance by the rebel group. “Not a single policeman received any injury. The injury marks show that they were shot from close range. There are no signs that they ran for safety as the bodies don’t have any bullet injuries in the back,” said a source. Sources said the police received information about Anurag’s movements from the Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad, set up by former Maoists with the help of police. The Maoists were reportedly on their way to collect levy from bidi contractors.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, the NHRC has sought a detailed report on the alleged encounter within four weeks.¹³⁹

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is planning to procure new type of drones for use in anti-Maoist operations, said Director General (DG) of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Prakash Mishra in Koraput district of Odisha on June 10. The DG of CRPF was in Koraput district to review the CRPF activity in Maoist-prone Koraput district and to inaugurate several infrastructural facilities of Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) stationed at Sunabeda in Koraput district for anti-Maoist operations. While speaking to newsmen, Mr Mishra said if needed drones would also be used in anti-Maoist operations in Odisha.¹⁴⁰

Four Maoists were killed and three arrested in two separate encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh on June 12. “Three Maoists were killed in a joint operation by Chhattisgarh police and Andhra Pradesh’s elite anti-Maoist unit Greyhounds in Bijapur district,” informed R.K. Vij, Additional Director General (ADG) of Police, Anti-Naxal Operation, Chhattisgarh. Five weapons were also recovered after the encounter, the ADG added. In a separate incident, one Maoist was killed and three were arrested after an encounter between Sukma DRG (District Reserve Guard) and the Maoists near Tumma Vaagu village of Sukma. One country-made gun, three detonators and other Maoist material were also recovered from the spot of Sukma encounter, said S.R.P. Kalluri, Inspector General (IG) of Police (Bastar range).¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Singh, Santosh, “Four Children Among 12 ‘Maoists’ Killed by CRPF, Jharkhand Police”, *The Indian Express*, June 10, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/four-children-among-12-maoists-killed-by-crpf-jharkhand-police/>

¹³⁹ “‘Maoist’ Killing: NHRC Issues Notice To Jharkhand Govt”, *Business Standard*, June 16, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/maoist-killing-nhrc-issues-notice-to-jharkhand-govt-115061601172_1.html

¹⁴⁰ “‘CRPF to Use New Drones For Anti-Maoist Operations’”, *The Hindu*, June 11, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/crpf-to-use-new-drones-for-antimaolist-operations/article7303464.ece>

¹⁴¹ Dahat, Pavan, “Four Maoists Killed, Three Arrested in Chhattisgarh”, *The Hindu*, June 13, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/four-maoists-killed-three-arrested-in-chhattisgarh/article7312792.ece>

Maoists have started chalking out plans to regain their foothold in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana following the recent visit of their Central Military wing Chief Namballa Kesava Rao. According to sources, the top Maoist leader visited some areas on the Visakhapatnam and East Godavari border last month. Basava Raju is learnt to have advised the CPI Maoist cadres in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam to orchestrate people's movements without being seen as getting directly involved. Sources said the Naxals are now focusing on strengthening the people's movements in the Andhra-Odisha and Andhra-Chhattisgarh border areas as well as in Telangana. As a result, they have been playing a key role in the anti-Bauxite movement in AP and anti-Polavaram agitations in Telangana.¹⁴²

Chhattisgarh police in collaboration with paramilitary forces are carrying out "small surgical" operations against Naxals in insurgency-hit Bastar region which is a prelude to a "major" exercise, a senior officer has said. The operation is based on specific intelligence inputs and police are planning to continue the same during monsoon too. As many as seven Naxals, including five women, were gunned down earlier this month in a number of skirmishes between security forces and ultras in districts of Bastar region. State's Special Task Force (STF) and Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) are involved in these actions in coordination with paramilitary forces as well as police of adjoining states of Telangana and Maharashtra. The state police also planned to recruit local youths from Bastar in state's armed forces in a large scale, keeping in view the major offensive against Naxals in near future, according to the officer.¹⁴³

Bihar has asked the central government for a helicopter and two battalions of paramilitary troopers for operations against the Maoists ahead of the upcoming assembly polls, an official said on June 19. Bihar Police has no helicopter of its own and borrows one from neighbouring Jharkhand during its combing operations against Maoists. According to a top police officer associated with anti-Maoist operations in the state, the Bihar government has requested the union home ministry to provide it with a M-17 helicopter of the Indian Air Force or a similar one for effective operations against the Maoists. At present, 24 battalions of the central paramilitary forces have been deployed in Bihar's Maoist-affected districts.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Siva G, "Maoist Military Chief's Visit Gives Cops The Jitters", *The Times of India*, June 17, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/visakhapatnam/Maoist-military-chiefs-visit-gives-cops-the-jitters/articleshow/47696978.cms>

¹⁴³ "Police Conducting 'Small Surgical' Operations Against Naxals: Officer", *The Economic Times*, June 19, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/police-conducting-small-surgical-operations-against-naxals-officer/articleshow/47732637.cms>

¹⁴⁴ "Bihar Demands Helicopter For Anti-Maoist Operations", *The Economic Times*, June 19, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/bihar-demands-helicopter-for-anti-maoist-operations/articleshow/47731525.cms>

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(June 8-22, 2015)

- **Affordable medicines key to ending AIDS; India moving to claim 350 miles of continental shelf; WFUNA organizes event to raise funds for Nepal Relief; Bill to prevent children from working soon; Indigenous land rights violation by Indo-Bangladesh Land Agreement may be taken to the UN; Indian peacekeepers in the list of sexual abusers; UN marks International Yoga Day: India leads the celebration.**

India raised the issue of requirement of affordable drugs to combat HIV/AIDS in developing countries at a discussion in the UN on the "Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS", especially if the goal of eradicating it by 2030 is to be realized. The Deputy Permanent Representative, Bhagwant Bishnoi said that Indian pharmaceutical firms are developing such drugs within the flexibility of the WTO on TRIPs.¹⁴⁵

India has completed a second survey to put forth its claim for extension of its continental shelf to upto 350 nautical miles which it will submit to the UNCLOS by 2017.¹⁴⁶

Proceeds from the sale of painting by students of Kolkata as part of an event organized by WFUNA Foundation, a wing of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), were presented to the Nepalese Consul General for use in relief and rehabilitation in Nepal. The Foundation was inaugurated in India on March 3, 2015.¹⁴⁷

India will adopt national legislation to ban the use of children under the age of 14 for any work. This was announced at the Plenary of the 104th Session of ILO 2015 in Geneva by Minister for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatraya. He also highlighted the new scheme for providing social security to workers in the unorganized sector.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile a report on India released by Child Relief and You (CRY) to mark the World Day against Child Labour on June 12, has stated

¹⁴⁵ "The nation Has Set For Itself An Ambitious Goal Of Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030", June 9, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ensuring-access-to-high-cost-aids-treatments-a-challenge-india-115060900407_1.html

¹⁴⁶ "India Completes Coastline Survey For Continental Shelf Claim at UN", June 9, 2015, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/NBesIPF0hiGGx3usmBNj2J/India-completes-coastline-survey-for-continental-shelf-claim.html>

¹⁴⁷ "WFUNA Foundation Takes Off In India, Reaches Out To Nepal Quake Victims", June 12, 2015, at http://www.indiablooms.com/ibns_new/life-details/L/955/wfuna-foundation-takes-off-in-india-reaches-out-to-nepal-quake-victims.html

¹⁴⁸ "Government Committed to Eliminate Child Labour: Dattatraya", *The New Indian Express*, June 12, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Government-Committed-to-Eliminate-Child-Labour-Dattatraya/2015/06/12/article2863192.ece>

that every 11th child in the age group 5-18 years is a child labourer. The highest numbers are to be found in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.¹⁴⁹

The recent agreement between India and Bangladesh for exchange of enclaves has been opposed by the tribes in Meghalaya. They have argued that "(E)xchanges of land, especially from international boundary pillar 1251 (Nongjri) upto IB Pillar 1299 (Hawai Sangkhat- Jaliakhola) and IB Pillar 1315 upto 1318 at Nunchera show a loss of 278 acres area to Khasi and Jaintia including others..." This is a derogation of their right to land recognized by the Indigenous People's Convention of the UN.¹⁵⁰

A report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has said that three Indian Peacekeepers were alleged to have been involved in sexual abuse cases from 2010-2013. The report states that there have been 66 such incidents reported in 2013 alone. Most cases are against military personnel, followed by civilian peacekeeping staff, and then the police.¹⁵¹

June 21, 2015 was celebrated as the first International Day of Yoga. Nearly a million people the world over participated in the event the world over. 47 Muslim countries, including some in the OIC co-sponsored the General Assembly resolution for this, which was adopted in December 2014.¹⁵² The celebration made two records- 35, 985 people participated in the event in New Delhi alone, and people of 84 nationalities participated the world over.¹⁵³ The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hoped that Yoga, which helps promote physical dexterity, will also promote diplomatic dexterity.¹⁵⁴ Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, who was present at the celebration in New York said, "Yoga literally means to join, to unite, and we see the International Day of Yoga as the perfect platform to bring the world together in a spirit of unity and harmony."¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ "Every 11th Kid In India A Part Of The Labour Force: Study", *The Times of India*, June 14, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/Every-11th-kid-in-India-a-part-of-the-labour-force-Study/articleshow/47659827.cms>

¹⁵⁰ "Meghalaya Tribals Threaten To Move UN Over Land Boundary Pact", *Hindustan Times*, June 16, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/meghalaya-tribals-threaten-to-move-un-over-land-boundary-pact/article1-1359245.aspx>

¹⁵¹ "Three Sexual Abuse Cases Against Indian Peacekeepers: UN Report", *Business Standard*, June 16, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/three-sexual-abuse-cases-against-indian-peacekeepers-un-report-115061600987_1.html

¹⁵² "47 Islamic Nations Join International Yoga Day", *The New Indian Express*, June 21, 2015, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/47-Islamic-Nations-Join-International-Yoga-Day/2015/06/21/article2878860.ece>

¹⁵³ "PM Modi Leads Yoga Session, India Sets Guinness Records: 10 Developments", *NDTV News*, June 21, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/cheat-sheet/sushma-swaraj-addresses-the-united-nations-in-new-york-on-international-yogaday-highlights-773899>

¹⁵⁴ "Celebrating First International Day, UN Says Yoga Can Boost Public Health And Promote Peaceful Relations", *UN News*, June 21, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51210#.VYUPlhuqqko>

¹⁵⁵ "Yoga is a Science Of Well-Being, Says Sushma Swaraj at UN", *India Today*, June 21, 2015 at, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/international-yoga-day-sushma-swaraj-united-nations-pm-modi/1/446073.html>