

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Bangladesh

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Dhaka and Bangkok agree to fight together against human trafficking; Myanmar releases Nayek Abdur Razzak.**

Dhaka and Bangkok have agreed to fight together against human trafficking, money laundering, and drug smuggling and plans to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for joint investigations. The MoU will be signed between the Department of Special Investigations (DSI) of Thailand and the Special Branch (SB) of police of Bangladesh to combat transnational crimes. It is likely to be signed during the 7th Joint Commission meeting at the foreign minister level in Dhaka later this year. The two countries also agreed to establish a bilateral forum to address issues related to trans-national crimes. The decision to ink the deal was made the first-ever Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) at foreign secretary level in Dhaka on June 25.<sup>1</sup>

Myanmar's Border Guard Police (BGP) handed BGB Nayek Abdur Razzak over to the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on June 25. He was abducted on June 17. During a flag meeting between the BGP and the BGB, the Myanmar side claimed that Nayek Razzak and his team were on duty without any uniform and the BGB team crossed the zero point and entered their territory. The Bangladesh border force outright rejected the BGP claims.<sup>2</sup>

### Sri Lanka

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka's Parliament has been dissolved; Commander of Sri Lanka Navy meets Chinese Defence Minister; Sri Lanka pledges US\$ 1.5 million aid for the recovery of Nepal; Sri Lanka signs two new loan agreements with OFID.**

Sri Lanka's Parliament has been dissolved on June 26. It has been reported that nominations for parliamentary elections will be called from July 6-15 and elections will be held on August 17. Next Parliament is expected to be convened on September 1.<sup>3</sup> Sri Lanka's local election monitors, the

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<sup>1</sup> "Dhaka, Bangkok to Work Together", *The Daily Star*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/dhaka-bangkok-work-together-103180>.

<sup>2</sup> "Razzak Back Home, Finally", *The Daily Star*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/razzak-back-home-finally-103111>.

<sup>3</sup> "Sri Lanka Parliament Dissolved, Elections on August 17", *ColomboPage*, June 26, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Jun26\\_1435331386CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jun26_1435331386CH.php).

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) said they are going to invite at least 50 foreign observers to monitor the general elections.<sup>4</sup>

Sri Lanka, China navies pledged to strengthen military cooperation when Commander of Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Jayantha Perera met Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan during his visit to china from June 8-13, 2015.<sup>5</sup>

The Sri-Lankan Minister of Disaster Management, A.H.M Fowzie accompanied by the Secretary for Resettlement and Reconstruction Affairs went to Kathmandu on June 23 to represent the Sri Lankan Government at the international conference titled 'Toward a Resilient Nepal' organized by the Government of Nepal. At the Conference, Sri Lanka pledged US\$ 1.5 million in aid for the recovery of Nepal after the deadly April 25 earthquake and undertook to reconstruct two heritage temples that were damaged by the earthquake - the 'Anandakuti Vihar' and the 'Rato Macchindranath Hindu Temple'.<sup>6</sup>

The Government of Sri Lanka has signed two new loan agreements with OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) on June 26 to obtain a part financing for rehabilitation of a major highway and upgrade several road segments in Western Province. The funds will be utilised to rehabilitate A5 Road corridor from Badulla to Chenkaladi which is one of the major highways linking parts of the Central Province to Eastern Province geopolitical zones of the country which carries the bulk of the traffic between Batticaloa and Peradeniya via Badulla and to finance for upgrading the conditions of selected road segments and highways in the Western Province. Sri Lankan Minister of Finance Ravi Karunanayake and Director General of OFID Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish inked both loan agreements in Vienna, Austria.<sup>7</sup>

## Maldives

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **MDP decides to participate in the government's discussions with opposition parties, without Mohamed Nasheed; Abu Dhabi Fund for Development grants a loan worth \$6 million to the Maldives'; Ban Ki-moon discusses the Maldivian political state with President Yamin over the phone.**

The National Council of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) has passed to participate in the government's discussions with opposition parties, without its leader former President Mohamed Nasheed. MDP said earlier that it would not engage in dialogue with the government without

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<sup>4</sup> "Sri Lanka Election Monitors to Invite Foreign Observers for Upcoming General Elections", *ColomboPage*, June 28, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Jun28\\_1435464256CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jun28_1435464256CH.php).

<sup>5</sup> "Sri Lanka, China Navies Pledge To Strengthen Military Cooperation", *ColomboPage*, Jun 23, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Jun23\\_1435031150CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jun23_1435031150CH.php).

<sup>6</sup> "Sri Lanka Pledges US\$1.5million In Aid for the Recovery of Nepal", *ColomboPage*, June 25, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Jun25\\_1435244906CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jun25_1435244906CH.php).

<sup>7</sup> "Sri Lanka Signs Loan Agreements with OPEC Fund to Renovate Highways", *ColomboPage*, June 26, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Jun26\\_1435325640CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jun26_1435325640CH.php).

Nasheed. This followed the government's rejection of MDP's request to include Nasheed in the discussions. Meanwhile, discussions are ongoing between the government and Jumhooree Party (JP). Adhaalath Party (AP), similar to MDP, has demanded to include its leader Sheikh Imran Abdulla in the talks - which has been rejected by the government. Nasheed is serving a 13-year prison sentence, and Imran is in police custody awaiting trial. MDP has decided to bring up three issues during the meetings: 1) Working together, within the boundaries of the law; 2) Working together to strengthen the constitutional and judicial systems; 3) Ensuring cooperation by all political parties in developmental efforts. The government representatives attending the meetings are Minister of Tourism Ahmed Adeeb, Minister at the President's Office Mohamed Hussain Shareef, and Minister of Environment Thorig Ibrahim. The discussions follow a request by President Abdulla Yameen from opposition parties in May 2015, to engage in dialogue with the government to ensure peace and development. The topics of discussion announced by the government are finding lawful solutions to the ongoing political unrest, consolidating democracy and strengthening the constitutional and judicial systems, and ensuring development and progress for the country.<sup>8</sup>

President Abdulla Yamin and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon discussed the Maldivian political state over the phone on June 23. According to the spokesperson of the President's Office Ibrahim Muaz Ali, President Yamin told Ban Ki moon that there aren't any political prisoners but there are political figures among criminal prisoners.<sup>9</sup>

Abu Dhabi Fund for Development has granted a loan worth \$6 million to the Maldives, for projects to incinerate waste to generate energy. The loan agreement was signed at a ceremony at the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development Headquarters in Abu Dhabi, by Minister of Finance of Maldives, Abdulla Jihad, and Director General for Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, Mohamed Saif Al Suwaidi. The repayment period for the 2-percent-interest loan is 20 years. It also carries administrative fee of 0.5 percent.<sup>10</sup>

## B. East Asia

### China

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Li Keqiang attends the China-EU leaders' meeting; Chinese development also benefits Japan; China committed to defend the Nansha Islands; China upset with the UK visit of Dalai Lama; China includes space and polar in draft law; Chinese President meets the King of Belgium.**

On June 28 Chinese Premier Li Keqiang left for the 17<sup>th</sup> China-EU leaders meeting in Brussels.

<sup>8</sup> "MDP to Participate without Nasheed, in Discussions Led by Government", *SunOnline*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30603>.

<sup>9</sup> "President Yamin Tells Ban Ki-Moon That There Are No Political Prisoners in Maldives", *SunOnline*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30568>.

<sup>10</sup> "Abu Dhabi Fund Grants \$6 Million Loan for Waste-To-Energy Projects", *SunOnline*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/30587>.

After this he will be visiting France on the invitation of the French Prime Minister. He will be also delivering a speech at the headquarters of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>11</sup>

While giving a speech at the Fourth World Peace Forum (WPF) in Beijing at Tsinghua University, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that, "China and Japan are close neighbours, and we hope the two countries can live in peace and engage in mutually beneficial cooperation".<sup>12</sup>

On June 27<sup>th</sup> the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi asserted the fact of Chinese rights over Nansha Islands. He said that, "On the Nansha Islands issues, we have resolute determination and enough capabilities. We will continue to take reasonable and legitimate approaches to safeguard our justified rights and interests of the Nansha Islands".<sup>13</sup>

The Chinese government expressed its discontent with respect to the Dalai Lama's appearance at Britain's Glastonbury music festival and Aldershot army base. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Lu Kang said that, "We oppose any organization using any means to offer occasion for the Dalai Lama to conduct anti-China secessionist moves".<sup>14</sup>

During the third reading of the draft law which China presented before the national People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, it included security "of its activities in outer space, on the international sea bed and in polar regions". According to the draft China will safeguard its activity and asset security on those "new strategic frontiers".<sup>15</sup>

Chinese President Xi Jinping met the King of Belgium on June 23. During the meeting Xi said that, "The China-Belgium relationship is at its height after years of smooth development". Both sides discussed areas like biomedicine, environmental technology and sustainable development and high end manufacturing.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Premier Leaves Beijing for China-EU Leaders' Meeting, France Visit", *China Daily*, June 28, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content\\_21125074.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content_21125074.htm), accessed on June 29, 2015

<sup>12</sup> "China's Development Benefits Japan: Foreign Minister", *China Daily*, June 28, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content\\_21124806.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content_21124806.htm), accessed on June 29, 2015

<sup>13</sup> "China Determined, Able To Safeguard Its Justified Rights over Nansha Islands: FM", *China Daily*, June 28, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content\\_21123333.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/28/content_21123333.htm), accessed on June 29, 2015

<sup>14</sup> "China Opposes Dalai Lama UK Appearances", *China Daily*, June 26, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/26/content\\_21115821.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/26/content_21115821.htm), accessed on June 29, 2015

<sup>15</sup> "China Set to Bolster Space, Polar Security: Draft Law", *China Daily*, June 24, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/24/content\\_21093124.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/24/content_21093124.htm), accessed on June 26, 2015

<sup>16</sup> "Xi Eyes 'Even Better' China-Belgium Relationship", *China Daily*, June 24, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/24/content\\_21084047.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-06/24/content_21084047.htm), accessed on June 26, 2015

## Japan

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Seventh US-India-Japan trilateral dialogue held in Honolulu; Japan and Philippines held military exercise in Antonio Bautista Air Base; Prime Minister attends memorial ceremony commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the End of the 1945 Battle of Okinawa; Maritime Self-Defence Force performed minesweeping exercise near Iwoto Island; Japan and Thailand strengthen military technology cooperation.**

The seventh US-India-Japan trilateral dialogue was held on June 26 in Honolulu where officials discussed several issues such as multilateral institutions in Asia-Pacific, maritime security challenges, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. India was represented by Vinay Kwatra, Pradeep Rawat, and Amandeep Gill from the Ministry of External Affairs. Takio Yamada, Director-General of Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan attended the meeting. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal together with Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel joined the talks.<sup>17</sup>

From June 22-24, Japan and Philippines held military exercise at the Antonio Bautista Air Base in the Palawan Island. Palawan is situated nearby the contested Spratlys Island. Earlier, Japan and Philippines held naval drills in May in West Philippine Sea near the Panatag and in September 2014 in Palawan. Japan reportedly dispatched a P3 surveillance aircraft for the exercises<sup>18</sup>. The drill focused on maritime search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster response<sup>19</sup>. Earlier this month, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III's went to Japan and both countries agreed to deepen security cooperation and strengthen strategic partnership.

On 23 June, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe joined the memorial ceremony at the Peace Memorial Park in Okinawa to honour the 70th anniversary of the end of the 1945 battle of Okinawa. While interacting with the media, Abe addressed the base relocation issue and said that he will work with Governor Onaga and the people of Okinawa to ease the problem of the bases in Island<sup>20</sup>. Meanwhile, during the ceremony Governor Onaga underscored that the enormous burden of American bases imposed on Okinawa must be eased<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> "7th U.S.-India-Japan Trilateral Dialogue", US Department of State, June 27 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/06/244441.htm>

<sup>18</sup> "Phl starts war games with US, Japan today", *The Philippine Star*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/06/22/1468599/phl-starts-war-games-us-japan-today>

<sup>19</sup> "Philippines to Hold Military Exercises with US, Japan", *The Diplomat*, June 19, 2015 at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/philippines-to-hold-military-exercises-with-us-japan/>

<sup>20</sup> "Memorial Ceremony to Commemorate the Fallen on the 70th Anniversary of the End of the Battle of Okinawa", The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, June 23, 2015 at [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/actions/201506/23article1.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/actions/201506/23article1.html)

<sup>21</sup> "Memorial Day: Governor Onaga demands end to Henoko relocation at Battle of Okinawa ceremony", *The Asahi Shimbun*, June 23, 2015 at [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201506230081](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201506230081)

Minesweeping exercises are held four times a year in Japan, but real mines are only used in the exercise held off Iwoto Island. In the ongoing security policy debate, the Abe administration stresses that in case the Strait of Hormuz is obstructed by sea mines which in turn may affect Japanese people life, then Japan must be able to send the MSDF to carryout minesweeping<sup>22</sup>.

On 24 June, Defence Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan and Japanese ambassador to Thailand, Shiro Sadoshima met in Bangkok where Thailand and Japan agreed to strengthen defence cooperation with particular emphasis on military technology. They reportedly discussed the prospects of cooperation on military training, educational exchanges, and collaboration on defence equipment, R&D, and technologies.<sup>23</sup>

## The Korean Peninsula

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Japan and South Korea started sharing military intelligence on North Korea; Nuclear-powered submarine USS Michigan visits Busan; South Korea urged DPRK to return to nuclear talks; DPRK's foreign ministry threatens "tougher countermeasures" against the US; South Korea to rebuild inter-Korean railway by 2017.**

On June 24, US confirmed that Japan and South Korea started sharing military intelligence on North Korea within the framework of trilateral agreement with the US. The December 2014 US-Japan-South Korea memorandum of understanding paved the way for voluntary exchange of military intelligence on DPRK's nuclear developments. This enabled Japan and South Korea to share intelligence through the US following the two nation's unsuccessful attempts to conclude an intelligence sharing agreement in 2012.<sup>24</sup>

The USS Michigan, a nuclear-powered submarine, made a port call to Busan on June 23 and displayed its newest capabilities as DPRK attempts to strengthen its underwater capabilities. The US submarine is equipped with around 154 tactical missiles and sophisticated communication know-hows. It is able to launch missile strikes and support special operation forces' missions<sup>25</sup>.

On June 25, while meeting with a Group of Eminent Persons for CTBT, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se urged DPRK to return to stalled talks related to the dismantling of nuclear

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<sup>22</sup> "MSDF Minesweeping Exercise Held off Iwoto / Participants Conscious Of Security Debate", *The Japan News*, June 25, 2015 at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002245270>

<sup>23</sup> "Jon Grevatt, Thailand, Japan Agree To Enhance Defence Relations And Technology Trade", *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 24 June 2015 at <http://www.janes.com/article/52549/thailand-japan-agree-to-enhance-defence-relations-and-technology-trade>

<sup>24</sup> "S. Korea, Japan Launch Military Intelligence Sharing Under Trilateral Deal with U.S.", *The Korea Herald*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150625000249>

<sup>25</sup> "U.S. Nuke Submarine Visits S. Korea", *The Korea Herald*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150623001094>

programme. Moreover, Yun Byung suggested DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT and stressed that North Korea should follow the lead of the Iranians and come back to the negotiation process.<sup>26</sup>

On June 27, DPRK's foreign ministry threatened "tougher countermeasures" targeting the US following the State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 which underscored that human rights record of DPRK is worst in the world. The DPRK foreign ministry responded by calling it US's "sinister attempt" to change the government citing the excuse of defending human rights. Moreover, on June 24, DPRK registered strong protest with regard to setting up of a human rights office in Seoul, a move that it believes to be politically motivated to hurt the dignity of the communist regime.<sup>27</sup>

South Korean Unification Ministry confirmed that it intends to reinstate a part of the disconnected inter-Korean railroad in 2015. While the total cost will amount to 151 billion won, this is a part of the larger project of President Park Geun-hye's dream for a united Eurasia. Around 3.3 billion won will be spent by South Korea in 2015 to restore the 11.7 km railroad by 2017. The larger idea is to connect South Korean railway network with Russian Trans-Siberian Railway through North Korea<sup>28</sup>.

## C. Russia

### National

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Islamic State declares foothold in Russia's North Caucasus; State Duma faction against leasing of land in west Siberia's Zabaikalye to China; President Putin's approval rating touches 89 per cent; Roscosmos centralizes rocket engine production; Balancing Russia's budget is likely to cost pensioners US\$ 46 billion; Russian military to order major research to counter 'colour revolutions'; Defence ministry starts ecological clean-up in Arctic region; Russia cuts 2018 FIFA World Cup preparations budget by US\$ 560 million; Finance Ministry proposes to cut military spending in Russia's 2016 budget; FSB detains Crimea's industrial policies minister.**

The Islamic State terrorist group, on June 24, has announced the creation of a new "governorate" that it says will span several regions of Russia's North Caucasus. A report by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War cited Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a spokesman for the fundamentalist group, as naming Abu Mohammad al-Qadari the leader of the newly created entity and congratulating "the soldiers of the Islamic State" in the Caucasus. The announcement

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<sup>26</sup> "FM Yun Urges N. Korea to Return To Nuclear Talks", *Yonhap News agency*, June 25 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2015/06/25/0301000000AEN20150625005500315.html>

<sup>27</sup> "N. Korea Threatens 'Tougher' Actions Against U.S. Human Rights Report", *Yonhap News agency*, June 27, 2015 at [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/485\\_181726.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/06/485_181726.html)

<sup>28</sup> "S. Korea To Reconstruct Disconnected Inter-Korean Railway by 2017", *Yonhap News agency*, June 25 2015 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2015/06/25/0401000000AEN20150625008600315.html>

came two days after an audio statement was circulated on *Twitter* in which Islamic State supporters from the Russian regions of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachayev-Cherkessia — which all have large Muslim populations — pledged allegiance to the group. These areas are also claimed by the al-Qaida-affiliated Caucasus Emirate group, which was first declared in 2007 and whose aim is to establish a state there based on sharia law. In recent months several militant commanders from the Caucasus Emirate have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State. Earlier, the Deputy Secretary of Russia's Security Council had stated that around 2,000 Russians are fighting for the Islamic State abroad.<sup>29</sup>

The LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) faction in State Duma has criticised the move to lease out 115,000 hectares in western Siberia's Zabaikalye to China. LDPR faction's deputy head Yaroslav Nilov has said that the draft address to the prime minister has already been developed and will be submitted for the lower house's consideration. He said that 'we will ask the prime minister to suspend leasing Russian land to China and sit down at the negotiations table one more time, as not all risks for national security were carefully considered, along with geopolitical consequences. This is a great geopolitical mistake and can lead to a situation when there will be more Chinese nationals in Zabaikalye than Russians, and they will be elected next and in 20-30 years will state that Zabaikalye is part of China'.<sup>30</sup>

According to the results of a survey, published on June 24, by independent pollster the -Levada Center, Russian President Vladimir Putin's domestic approval ratings have risen to an all-time high of 89 per cent. Around 10 percent of respondents expressed disapproval of his actions. The president's approval ratings have not dropped below 85 per cent all year, despite rising inflation, continued criticism of the Kremlin by the international community and economic troubles exacerbated by Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis. The public's confidence in the Russian government was also found by Levada to have gone up by three percentage points to 62 per cent, the highest approval rating it has scored all year. The poll was carried out from June 19 to 22 among 1,600 people in 46 Russian regions. The margin of error did not exceed 3.4 per cent.<sup>31</sup>

As part of an ongoing industry-wide reform, Russian space companies specializing in the production of engines will be merged under one roof to create a consolidated rocket engine building company. Included in the new company will be Russia's famed NPO Energomash which is the maker of the powerful RD-180 rocket engine.<sup>32</sup>

The Russian Finance Ministry, has on June 24, floated a proposal to save more than 2.5 trillion roubles (US\$ 46 billion) over three years by raising pensions at less than the rate of inflation. A

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<sup>29</sup> "Islamic State Declares Foothold in Russia's North Caucasus", *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/islamic-state-declares-foothold-in-russias-north-caucasus/524380.html>

<sup>30</sup> "State Duma Faction Against Leasing Land In West Siberia's Zabaikalye to China", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/802885>

<sup>31</sup> "Putin's Approval Ratings Hit All-Time High of 89%", *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putins-approval-ratings-hit-all-time-high-of-89/524374.html>

<sup>32</sup> "Russia's Roscosmos Centralizes Rocket Engine Production", *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-roskosmos-centralizes-rocket-engine-production/524379.html>

step devaluation of the rouble has ensured that prices have grown much faster over the past year than salaries, and since payroll taxes are the main source of income for the pension system, the Finance Ministry has said that the continuation of inflation-linked pensions can threaten the country's state-run pension fund. In May 2015, average nominal incomes were 7.3 per cent higher than in May 2014, while prices were on average 15.8 per cent higher. The government has said that no decision has yet been taken. The changes may require amendments to state laws since Russian pensions are indexed twice a year in line with inflation. Russia's roughly 40 million pensioners receive on average 12,900 roubles (\$240) in state pension pay-outs. The Finance Ministry's proposal to abandon the link between pensions and inflation aroused sharp criticism from other ministries.<sup>33</sup>

Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has said, on June 22, that the military will sponsor a major research of coups conducted through mass protest – 'colour revolutions' – to prevent the situations that Russia faced in 1991 and 1993. The minister added that the consequences of colour revolutions can be now observed in many Arab nations and also in Serbia. He also said that the Ukrainian crisis that started in 2014 also was "a major tragedy in the row of colour revolutions." Earlier, the head of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev had promised that this body will develop a detailed plan of action aimed at preventing colour revolutions or any other attempts of forceful change of lawfully elected authorities through mass street protest. He also said that the Security Council had prepared a list of proposed measures that could negate the possible threat, including some steps against "network protest activities" and propaganda work against "romantic revolutionary stereotype."<sup>34</sup>

Servicemen of the Russian Defence Ministry have begun an ecological clean-up of Arctic territories where military formations are stationed. Clean-up operations are being carried out on a number of islands of Novaya Zemlya archipelago, the islands of Kotelnny and Wrangle. This includes dismantling shabby houses and constructions and will be followed by land reclamation. The servicemen have also been removing scrap metal including metallic containers for liquid substances pending their shipment away from the Arctic by auxiliary ships of the Russian Navy.<sup>35</sup>

Russia's expenses on the 2018 FIFA World Cup have been cut by about 30 billion roubles (US\$ 560 million). Under the government's resolution, expenses on the programme have been cut from 660.6 billion roubles (US\$ 12.3 billion) to 631.5 billion roubles (US\$ 11.78 billion). 335.2 billion roubles (US\$ 6.26 billion) will be allocated from the federal budget, 97.2 billion roubles (US\$ 1.8 billion) from regional budgets and 199.2 billion roubles (US\$ 3.7 billion) by organizations.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Balancing Russia's Budget Could Cost Pensioners \$46 Billion", *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/balancing-russias-budget-could-cost-pensioners-46-billion/524383.html>

<sup>34</sup> "Russian Military To Order Major Research To Counter 'Color Revolutions'", *RT*, June 22, 2015 at <http://rt.com/politics/268378-russian-military-color-revolutions/#.VYi9NO6t7aA.facebook>

<sup>35</sup> "Defense Ministry Starts Ecological Clean-Up In Arctic Region", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/802981>

<sup>36</sup> "Russia Cuts 2018 FIFA World Cup Preparations Budget By \$560 mln", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/sports/802937>

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said, on June 25, that the military spending in Russia's budget for 2016 will be cut although the figure is expected to be less than the 10 per cent that has been earmarked for the other sectors.<sup>37</sup>

Russia's federal security service FSB has detained Crimea's industrial policies minister Andrey Skrynnik. The Minister is suspected of complicity in embezzlement of government assets worth 48 million roubles (nearly \$1 million) committed by an organized group.<sup>38</sup>

## International

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **EU extends sanctions against Russia for six months; Russia to renew food embargo list; Russian officials see a 'colour revolution' in Armenia; Armenia's biggest Orthodox church handed over to Russian military base; Russia emerges as China's biggest oil supplier; Gazprom to invest US\$ 9 billion in Power of Siberia gas pipeline project to China over 3 years; Russian and Chinese officials discuss terrorism and colour revolutions; Russia and Mongolia to join China for World War II parade; Kremlin says Putin-Obama telephone conversation was constructive; Lithuania says NATO jets escorted Russian military planes 10 times during the period June 15-21; Normandy Quartet confirms adherence to Minsk-2 and calls for de-escalation; Ukrainian president rules out federalization; Russian Foreign Ministry sceptical about US involvement in 'Normandy Four'; IMF says Ukraine's US\$ 3 billion bond transaction with Russia should be treated as Kiev's official debt; Russia and North Korea discuss nuclear security; Gazprom looking to build a global alliance with Shell; Russian and Egyptian foreign ministers call for active efforts to resolve Syria crisis; Russian S-300 air defence system manufacturer signs deal with Iran; Hamid Karzai meets President Putin in Moscow; CSTO to set up a crisis response centre in Moscow; Russia's share in authorized capital of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to be US\$ 6.5 billion; German Foreign Minister says many conflicts cannot be resolved without Russia; Kazakhstan's parliament ratifies agreement with Turkmenistan on Caspian Sea delimitation.**

The EU Council at the foreign ministers' level has, on June 22, extended the economic sanctions against Russia for six months until January 31, 2016.<sup>39</sup>

Russia's Agriculture Ministry will prepare an updated food embargo list with stricter requirements for the import of certain products from the West. Moscow had introduced an embargo on food imports in August 2014 in retaliation to the sanctions imposed by the West against it due to the developments in Ukraine. Russia's food embargo involves a one-year ban on meat, fish, dairy, fruit and vegetable imports from the West.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> "Finance Ministry Proposes To Cut Military Spending in Russia's 2016 budget", *Itar-Tass*, June 25, 2015 at [http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/06/25/finance\\_ministry\\_proposes\\_to\\_cut\\_military\\_spending\\_in\\_russias\\_2016\\_budge\\_43877.html](http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/06/25/finance_ministry_proposes_to_cut_military_spending_in_russias_2016_budge_43877.html)

<sup>38</sup> "FSB Detains Crimea's Industrial Policies Minister", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/804559>

<sup>39</sup> "EU Extends Sanctions Against Russia For Six Months", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/802896>

<sup>40</sup> "Russia To Renew Food Embargo List", *Itar-Tass*, June 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/803484>

Russian lawmakers have said, on June 24, that the protests on the streets of Yerevan can be the first stage of a “colour revolution” similar to those that have toppled governments in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Russia has deep economic, political and military ties with Armenia, and officials in Moscow have said that they are closely following developments in the country. The protests – initially over a 16 per cent hike in electricity prices scheduled for implementation in August – have taken on an anti-Russian dimension since Armenia’s energy company Electric Networks of Armenia, is owned by Russian state-controlled group Inter RAO. The chairman of Inter RAO is Igor Sechin – the head of Rosneft.<sup>41</sup>

Armenian authorities will hand over to Russia an important Russian Orthodox cathedral and land adjoining it in the north-western Gyumri region where a Russian military base is located. This will be home to a new clerical cultural centre. The military’s base deputy commander Archimandrite Andrey stated that the cathedral is the biggest Russian Orthodox Church in Armenia.<sup>42</sup>

Russia has surpassed Saudi Arabia to become China’s top oil supplier in May. Russian exports accounted for one-third of all China’s oil imports in May, rising 20 per cent from the previous month to touch 3.9 million tons. Saudi deliveries during the same period was 3.05 million tons.<sup>43</sup>

Gazprom will invest 480 billion roubles (US\$ 8.8 billion) through 2017 in the Power of Siberia gas pipeline to China. The 4,000-kilometer pipeline will carry Russian gas to China under a 30-year gas supply contract worth US\$ 400 billion signed last May. Construction of the Russian half of the pipeline began in May while Gazprom had said earlier this month that construction on the Chinese side had also begun. The company has not ruled out constructing gas storage facilities in China.<sup>44</sup>

Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev and Meng Jianzhu, the Secretary for Political and Legal Affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held consultations on June 24. They discussed ways to deal with terrorism and colour revolutions and avert interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.<sup>45</sup>

Troops from Russia and Mongolia will march together with Chinese forces in a parade in Beijing in September to commemorate the end of World War II.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “Russian Officials See ‘Color Revolution’ in Armenia”, *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-officials-see-color-revolution-in-armenia/524384.html>

<sup>42</sup> “Armenia’s Biggest Orthodox Church Handed Over To Russian Military Base”, *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/804187>

<sup>43</sup> “Russia Beats Saudi Arabia to Become China’s Top Oil Supplier”, *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-beats-saudi-arabia-to-become-china-s-top-oil-supplier/524296.html>

<sup>44</sup> “Russia’s Gazprom to Invest \$9 Billion in Gas Pipeline to China Over 3 Years”, *The Moscow Times*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-gazprom-to-invest-9-billion-in-gas-pipeline-to-china-over-3-years/524447.html>

<sup>45</sup> “Patrushev and Chinese Party Official Meet To Discuss Terrorism And ‘Colour Revolutions’”, *Itar-Tass*, June 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/803678>

<sup>46</sup> “Russia and Mongolia to Join China for World War II Parade”, *The Moscow Times*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-and-mongolia-to-join-china-for-world-war-ii-parade/524402.html>

Russian President Putin had a telephone conversation with his US counterpart Barack Obama on June 26. Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that Putin refuted allegations of Russian military presence in Ukraine and described their conversation as constructive. He said that the two presidents' conversation was 'quite lengthy and constructive, considering divergence of opinion on some issues. At the same time, it was constructive in terms of the absence of an alternative to dialogue, discussing issues to facilitate their resolution'.<sup>47</sup>

The Lithuanian Defence Ministry has said that NATO fighters based at the Lithuanian air base Zokniai took off ten times from June 15 to 21 to follow up Russian military planes. It stated that while a few flights were pre-agreed, made with the transponder switched on and with air/ground radio contact maintained, yet there were flights that were not pre-agreed and were carried out in the silent mode. This has been the highest figure in the past few months.<sup>48</sup>

The meeting of "Normandy Quartet" (Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine) foreign ministers has taken place in Paris on June 24. The four ministers confirmed their adherence to the Minsk agreements and called for de-escalation and ceasefire in Donbass. Commenting on results of the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the foreign ministers of the "Normandy Quartet" have unanimously spoken against attempts to disrupt the Minsk accords and bring the situation in Donbass to a military scenario. He stated that "there is a feeling that there are forces that want to disrupt the process. I will not name them. Many prefer a military scenario for different reasons. Some want for the situation not to improve, but on the opposite, to deteriorate."<sup>49</sup>

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has ruled out the country's federalization and said that the leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk Republics can be prosecuted under Ukrainian legislation. He stated that "no federalization will be permitted. The initiators of creating any republics will be brought to justice. Should anyone try, the response will be instantaneous. No one should have the temptation to create any republics in Donetsk, Luhansk or Bessarabia. The issues of national defence, security, public order and external relations and the issues that keep the vertical chain of command integral will be regarded as an exclusive competence of state power".<sup>50</sup>

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov has said, on June 23, that Moscow remains sceptical about the idea of Washington's joining the "Normandy Four" and the Contact Group on Ukraine. He stated that "it is very difficult to change the rules in the middle of the game. The process is very delicate, this is obvious for everyone. The Americans' formal presence or absence is not the point. We have our own channels of dialogue with them on the issue. And the United

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<sup>47</sup> "Kremlin Says Putin-Obama Conversation Was Constructive, Leaders Committed To Dialogue", *Itar-Tass*, June 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/804144>

<sup>48</sup> "Lithuania: NATO Jets Escort Russian Military Planes 10 Times on June 15-21", *Itar-Tass*, June 22, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/803020>

<sup>49</sup> "'Normandy Quartet' Confirms Adherence To Minsk-2 And Calls For De-Escalation", *Itar-Tass*, June 24, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/803474>

<sup>50</sup> "Ukrainian President Poroshenko Rules Out Federalization", *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/803350>

States certainly offers consultations to Germany, France and Ukraine. Of course, the Americans are involved in the resolution of this conflict, formalities do not really matter".<sup>51</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has formed a preliminary view that Ukraine's US\$ 3 billion bonds sold to Russia should be treated as official rather than private debt. This will exclude them from the bond restructuring Ukraine is negotiating with a creditor group led by Franklin Templeton, placing a greater burden on private bondholders. The status of the bonds is yet to be approved by the IMF's executive board. Russia has repeatedly said that the bonds it purchased from Ukraine should be treated as official aid and repaid in full when they mature in December while Ukraine has argued that the debt was structured as Eurobonds under UK law and is subject to the same treatment as private creditors. Ukraine transferred US\$ 75 million to Russia on June 22 as coupon payment on its \$3 billion Eurobond. Kiev has said on many occasions it considers Russia's loan as commercial debt and insists on its restructuring.<sup>52</sup>

Speaker of the State Duma Sergey Naryshkin and Chairman of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly Choe Thae-bok discussed the broader contours of nuclear security during their interaction held in Moscow on June 23. However, they did not discuss the topic of restarting the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear problem.<sup>53</sup>

Gazprom's chief executive Alexei Miller has said, on June 23, that the company is building a global strategic alliance with Royal Dutch Shell that will include asset swaps and allow the Russian company to penetrate new markets. It had earlier announced that Shell and Germany's E.ON and Austria's OMV — had agreed to build two new Nord Stream gas pipelines to Germany. An agreement with Shell will also facilitate the expansion of the firms' joint US\$ 20 billion liquefied natural gas plant in Sakhalin as well as global upstream asset swaps. Mr. Miller stated that 'documents of such significance are signed only once every five years or maybe even 10'. Gazprom, which is under U.S. but not EU sanctions, is fighting for market share in Europe in the face of increasingly oversupplied gas markets, and is locked in a long-running dispute over payments to Europe with conflict-stricken Ukraine.<sup>54</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shukri discussed developments in Syria in a phone call on June 23. Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement – 'Lavrov and Shukri exchanged views on developments in the Middle East with emphasis on the situation in and around Syria. The two diplomats highlighted the need to continue active political and diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis based on reaching a consensus about ways to settle internal political differences and with respect to that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also touched on some practical issues related to future development of

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<sup>51</sup> "Russian Foreign Ministry Skeptical About US Involvement in 'Normandy Four'", *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/803377>

<sup>52</sup> "IMF Says Ukraine's \$3 bln Bonds Sold to Russia Should Be Treated As Kiev's Official Debt", *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/803223>

<sup>53</sup> "Russia, North Korea Discuss Nuclear Security", *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/803138>

<sup>54</sup> "Russia's Gazprom Building Global Alliance With Shell", *The Moscow Times*, June 23, 105 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-s-gazprom-building-global-alliance-with-shell/524289.html>

the Russian-Egyptian foreign policy cooperation'. The ministry said that the call was initiated by Egypt.<sup>55</sup>

Russian S-300 air defence system manufacturer Almaz-Antey and Iran's Centre for Innovation and Technology Cooperation have signed a cooperation agreement on June 25. The press release stated that the 'sides agreed on interaction in promoting Russian innovative products of civilian designation on the Iranian market and organizing joint production of these products at Russian and Iranian industrial enterprises'.<sup>56</sup>

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai during his meeting with President Putin in Moscow on June 25 has praised "blossoming" relations between Kabul and Moscow. He emphasized Russia's long history of military, economic and cultural support for the Afghanistan going back to the 19th century, and downplayed any lasting hostility from the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, and its ensuing decade-long military presence. He said that 'Russia is a neighbour of Afghanistan and what happens in Afghanistan has a direct influence on Russia'. During the meeting, President Putin raised concerns about the rise of Islamic State in Afghanistan. He said 'we are seeing processes that are making us uneasy. The so-called Islamic State is more and more active in Afghanistan and is feeling more confident. I think that in 25 out of 34 provinces we see the presence of the Islamic State.' Karzai warned that the militants were using his country as a "trampoline" for expanding into Central Asia.<sup>57</sup>

Senior officials of CSTO have, on June 26, discussed plans to establish a crisis response centre to help member states deal with major security threats. The new centre will be based at an information technology complex for software and hardware development, which is currently being equipped in one of the Russian Defence Ministry's military towns in Moscow. CSTO Secretary-General Nikolay Bordyuzha said the centre was expected to coordinate with Russia's new National Defence Control Centre, aimed at integrating the leadership and direction of defence and security structures in real time. The centre would be part of the CSTO Secretariat and would coordinate work with the Joint Staff in an effort to make the crisis response system work in all member states of the alliance.<sup>58</sup>

Deputy Finance Minister Sergey Storchak has said, on June 29, that Russia's share in the authorized capital of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will total US\$ 6.5 billion. Russia receives 65,362 shares in the bank and 5.92 per cent of votes. It has become the third largest founder in terms of votes and shares after China and India.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Russia, Egypt Foreign Ministers Call For Active Efforts To Resolve Syria Crisis", *Itar-Tass*, June 23, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/803207>

<sup>56</sup> "Russian S-300 Air Defence System Manufacturer Signs Deal with Iran", *Russia and India Report*, June 25, 2015 at [http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/06/25/russian\\_s-300\\_air\\_defence\\_system\\_manufacturer\\_signs\\_deal\\_with\\_iran\\_43879.html](http://in.rbth.com/news/2015/06/25/russian_s-300_air_defence_system_manufacturer_signs_deal_with_iran_43879.html)

<sup>57</sup> "Karzai Hails Deepening Russian-Afghan Ties", *The Moscow Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/karzai-hails-deepening-russian-afghan-ties/524451.html>

<sup>58</sup> "Russia-Led Security Bloc To Set Up Crisis Response Centre in Moscow", *Itar-Tass*, June 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/804131>

<sup>59</sup> "Russian Share In Authorized Capital Of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to be \$6.5 bln", *Itar-Tass*, June 29, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/804667>

German's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in an interview with *Welt am Sonntag*, published on June 28, spoke about the role of Russia in resolving international conflicts, including the Iranian nuclear programme. He said 'Russia has its own interests in having that conflict settled. Till now, the Ukrainian crisis has not affected the position of the Russian Federation at the negotiation table. This conflict is one of the conflicts in that region, which cannot be settled without Russia.'<sup>60</sup>

The Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan has passed, on June 25, the bill on ratifying the agreement with Turkmenistan on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea between the two countries. The interstate agreement was signed in Ashgabat at the end of last year.<sup>61</sup>

## India-Russia Relations

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Russia limits buffalo meat imports from India over disease concerns; India expresses interest in new Shtil-1, frigate-launched surface to air missiles.**

A spokesperson for Russia's agriculture watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor has said that Russia is imposing restrictions on the supply of buffalo meat from India as several cases of foot-and-mouth disease have been recorded in Uttar Pradesh. A total of four Indian companies started to export buffalo meat to Russia earlier this year. Three of them are located in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>62</sup>

Tekhnodinamika General Director Maxim Kuzyuk has said, on June 25, that India has shown an interest in buying the new Shtil-1 naval surface to air missile systems being installed on frigates 11356 project. The missiles await their testing phase. India has already received six ships of a similar class to 11356. However, these were equipped with an old model of the Shtil, which can launch once every 12 seconds, while the new Shtil-1 can launch once every 1.5-2 seconds.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Many Conflicts Cannot Be Solved Without Russia - German Foreign Minister", *Itar-Tass*, June 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/804454>

<sup>61</sup> "Kazakhstan's Parliament Ratifies Agreement With Turkmenistan On Caspian Sea Delimitation", *Itar-Tass*, June 26, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/803774>

<sup>62</sup> "Russia Limits Buffalo Meat Imports From India Over Disease Concerns", *Sputnik News*, June 22, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/business/20150622/1023671649.html#ixzz3eWRcIP00>

<sup>63</sup> "India Keen On New 'Shtil-1' SAMs for Navy", *Russia and India Report*, June 23, 2015 at [http://in.rbth.com/economics/2015/06/23/india\\_keen\\_on\\_new\\_shtil-1\\_sams\\_for\\_navy\\_43811.html](http://in.rbth.com/economics/2015/06/23/india_keen_on_new_shtil-1_sams_for_navy_43811.html)

## D. West Asia

### Iran

(June 15-28, 2015)

- **Sanctions will be lifted on day of implementing nuclear deal; Iran lawmakers ban nuclear inspectors from military sites; Iran, Syria urge firm fight against ISIL terrorists; Tehran rejects U.S. human rights accusations.**

Abbas Araqchi, a senior nuclear negotiator, has said that nuclear related economic sanctions against Iran will be removed on the day of implementing a potential agreement. "Nuclear related economic and financial sanctions against our country will be annulled on the day of implementing the nuclear agreement," Araqchi said in an interview with the IRIB. Araqchi also said that a good agreement will not be missed just to meet the deadline.<sup>64</sup>

Iran's parliament voted to ban access to military sites, documents and scientists as part of a future deal with world powers over its contested nuclear programme. The bill, if ratified, could complicate the ongoing talks in Vienna between Iran and the six-nation group — the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany — as they face a self-imposed June 30 deadline. The talks are focused on reaching a final accord that curbs Iran's nuclear programme in return for the lifting of economic sanctions.<sup>65</sup>

Iran's Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said ISIL Takfiri terrorists are seeking to distort the image of Islam, urging serious fight against terrorism and extremism. "They (the ISIL terrorists) are tarnishing both the holy name of Islam and the objectives of Islam through extremist approaches, violence and by resorting to intimidation and terror in the Muslim world," Rahmani Fazli said at a joint press conference with his Syrian counterpart Major General Muhammad Ibrahim al-Sha'ar in Tehran. He added that the ISIL terrorists are preparing the ground for foreigners to promote Islamophobia and are posing a danger to "unity, solidarity and stability in the Muslim world in cooperation with the West, the US and reactionary countries in the region."<sup>66</sup>

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Marzieh Afkham said the Islamic Republic of Iran respects the rights of the Iranian people as a humanitarian obligation. Her remarks followed a report by the U.S. State Department which accused Iran of restricting "civil liberties, including the freedoms of assembly, speech, religion, and press," according to the *Press TV*. She went on to criticize the U.S. for its high rate of violating the rights of the people of colour, propagating Islamophobia, pressing religious minorities, discriminating against migrants, supporting Israel's crimes, etc., and said

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<sup>64</sup> "Sanctions will be Lifted On Day Of Implementing Nuclear Deal: Araqchi", *Tehran Times*, July 7, 2015 [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=247485](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=247485)

<sup>65</sup> "Iran Lawmakers Ban Nuclear Inspectors From Military Sites", *Yahoo News*, June 21, 2015 <http://news.yahoo.com/iran-parliament-bans-access-military-sites-scientists-102753448.html>

<sup>66</sup> "Iran, Syria Urge Firm Fight against ISIL Terrorists", *Presstv*, June 22, 2015 <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/06/22/416965/Iran-Syria-Interior-Minister-Abdolreza-Rahmani-Fazli-Muhammad-Ibrahim-alShaar-ISIL>

instead of interfering with other countries domestic affairs, the U.S. government would better pay attention to its own problems at home.<sup>67</sup>

## Iraq and Syria

(June 15-28, 2015)

- **Syrian Kurds 'seize Tal Abyad'; Islamic State lays explosives in Syria's Palmyra ruins; ISIS crucifies 2 little boys; Pakistani cleric launches anti-ISIS curriculum in Britain; Three French jihadists return home after fighting in Syria.**

Syrian Kurdish fighters say they have taken control of the Islamic State-held town of Tal Abyad, cutting off a major supply route for the jihadist group. The YPG advance has been supported by Syrian rebel groups and air strikes by the US-led coalition against IS. For the Kurds, capturing Tal Abyad allows them to link up the other pockets they control along the Turkish border, from Iraq in the east to Kobane in the west.<sup>68</sup>

Islamic State jihadis have mined the spectacular ancient ruins in Syria's Palmyra, according to an antiquities official and monitor, prompting fears for the Unesco world heritage site a month after the extremist group overran the central Syrian city. Syria's antiquities chief, Maamoun Abdulkarim, and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said that the group had placed mines and explosives in Palmyra's Greco-Roman ruins.<sup>69</sup>

ISIS made two youths hang from a beam by their wrists after accusing them of eating during daylight hours in the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights said. "Residents of the village of Mayadeen in Deir ez-Zor province reported that ISIS suspended from a crossbar two boys aged under 18 near the headquarters of the Hissba [jihadi police]", Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman told. A placard was attached to them: "They broke the fast with no religious justification".<sup>70</sup>

A prominent Pakistani Islamic cleric launched a "counter-terrorism" curriculum in London, to rebut the message of militant groups such as Islamic State (ISIS) and stop young people becoming radicalized and heading to Syria. Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri, a politician, scholar and fiery orator, said he wanted his 900-page curriculum, containing theological and ideological arguments to undermine extremists, to be taught not just at mosques and Islamic institutions but at schools across Britain. "We want to make clear that all activities being carried out by ISIS or any other terroristic and extremistic organization either in the name of God or religion or establishing any

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<sup>67</sup> "Tehran rejects U.S. Human Rights Accusations", *Tehran Times*, June 27, 2015 [http://www.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=247667](http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=247667)

<sup>68</sup> "Islamic State conflict: Syrian Kurds 'Seize Tal Abya'", *BBC World*, June 15, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33132809>

<sup>69</sup> "Islamic State Lays Explosives In Syria's Palmyra Ruins", *The Guardian*, June 21, 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/21/islamic-state-isis-explosives-syria-palmyra-ruins>

<sup>70</sup> "ISIS Crucifies 2 Little Boys for Eating During Ramadan", *Al Alam*, June 23, 2015 <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1713754>

kind of Islamic state by acts of violence ... are totally in violation of the Koran and Islam," he told *Reuters*.<sup>71</sup>

French authorities questioned two women and a man who have recently returned from Stria. The three French nationals were deported by the Turkish government after trying to illegally cross from Syria into Turkey. They face charges of joining "terrorist groups" and fighting alongside the Islamic State militants (IS/ISIS) in northern Syria. According to media reports, the suspects have been in Syria for nearly three months before escaping the war-torn country and returning home. Hundreds of French nationals have reportedly joined the ranks of the IS radical group in Syria and Iraq.<sup>72</sup>

## The Gulf

(June 15-28, 2015)

- **Saudi Arabia tells citizens to ignore latest WikiLeaks release; 27 killed in ISIS attack on Kuwait mosque.**

Saudi Arabia has warned its citizens to ignore thousands of its diplomatic documents leaked by the transparency site *WikiLeaks*, which give a rare insight into the kingdom's habit of buying influence and monitoring dissidents. The 61,000 Saudi cables, the first tranche of 500,000 promised by Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder, also show the country's sharp focus on its strategic rival Iran and the revolution in Egypt, and support for allies and clients in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East. Nothing yet published matches embarrassing revelations about the Saudis in *WikiLeaks*' 2010 release of US diplomatic documents, which reported King Abdullah calling to "cut off the head of the [Iranian] snake."<sup>73</sup>

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has claimed the deadly bombing on a Kuwaiti mosque, which left 27 people killed and 227 wounded, according to the Health Ministry. An ISIS statement posted on social media identified the bomber as Abu Suleiman al-Muwahed and said the target was a "temple of the rejectionists" - a term used by the Islamist militant group to refer to Shiite Muslims - and said dozens were killed or wounded. This is not the first time ISIS has attacked a Shiite mosque in the Gulf region. ISIS has claimed responsibility for bombings at two different Shiite mosques in Saudi Arabia in recent weeks. The GCC Secretary General Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani said the Kuwait attack was a "horrifying crime" and against "Islamic values."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Pakistani Cleric Launches Anti-ISIS Curriculum In Britain", *Reuters*, June 23, 2015 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/23/us-britain-security-curriculum-idUSKBN0P31P820150623>

<sup>72</sup> "Three French Jihadists Return Home After Fighting in Syria", *ARA News*, July 7, 2015 <http://aranews.net/2015/06/three-french-jihadists-return-home-after-fighting-in-syria/>

<sup>73</sup> "Saudi Arabia Tells Citizens To Ignore Latest Wikileaks Release", *The Guardian*, June 21, 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/21/saudi-arabia-ignore-wikileaks-release>

<sup>74</sup> "27 Killed in ISIS Attack On Kuwait Mosque", *Alarabia*, June 26, 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/06/26/Explosion-hits-mosque-in-Kuwait-during-Friday-prayers-.html>

## E. The United State of America

### National

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **US 'not cured' of racism and President Obama calls for introspection; Race becomes 2016 election issue; Changes to US hostage policy; Defence acquisitions leader urges innovation, technical excellence; DoD receives 'A' grade in small business procurement; Republican-led Congress passed TPA; Supreme Court health ruling seals Obama legacy; Intelligence community aims to maintain U.S. military advantage; Strong nuclear deterrence critical to national security; Supreme Court rules gay marriage legal nationwide; Republican candidates, conservatives criticize same-sex marriage ruling.**

Days after nine members of a historic African American church were gunned down in South Carolina, President Obama said despite significant improvement in race relations, the United States is “not cured” of racism. As the first African American to lead the United States, Barack Obama has long fielded questions on just how much progress the U.S. has made when it comes to race relations. During an hour-long interview with WTF podcast host Marc Maron, the president acknowledged opportunities have opened up and attitudes have changed in his lifetime, but said that the legacy of slavery and discrimination “casts a long shadow” and is “still part of our DNA.” Obama went on use the n-word to make his point. He said it’s not a matter of it not being polite to say the word in public.<sup>75</sup> President Barack Obama touched on themes of religion, divine grace, racism, and guns in a powerful speech at the funeral of pastor Clementa Pinckney, one of nine black Americans killed inside a Charleston church in an alleged race-motivated shooting last week. The president mentioned the alleged gunman, 21-year-old Dylann Roof, saying “blinded by hatred, he failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood: the power of God’s grace,” which he said the families of victims showed when they said they would forgive the killer. But Obama said the tragedy should call Americans to introspection on thorny issues of racism and guns, and ask themselves tough questions.<sup>76</sup>

Charleston shootings have propelled the issue of race into the early stage of the 2016 presidential campaign. At a campaign event in Florissant, Missouri, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton described last week’s tragedy in Charleston as “an act of racist terrorism perpetrated in a house of God.” Clinton said that in the wake of Charleston, it has become clear that “equality, opportunity and civil rights in America are still far from where they need to be.” Clinton said the Confederate flag is a symbol of the nation’s racist past and should not fly anywhere. Fellow Democratic contenders Bernie Sanders and Martin O’Malley have also called for the Confederate flag to be pulled down from flagpoles around the country and relegated to museums. Some of the

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<sup>75</sup> Pande, Aru, “Obama: US ‘Not Cured’ of Racism”, *VOA News*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-us-not-cured-of-racism-/2832190.html>

<sup>76</sup> Ramirez, Luis, “Obama: Charleston Tragedy Calls for Introspection”, *VOA News*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-eulogy-charleston-tragedy-calls-for-introspection-/2838917.html>

Republican presidential contenders were quick to condemn the Charleston shootings, including former Florida Governor Jeb Bush. "It just breaks my heart and I know it breaks your heart as well, and we need to find ways to bring love back into our society," he said. Bush and several other Republican contenders applauded South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley's call for the Confederate flag to come down, but they were criticized for waiting to speak out about the flag until after the Republican governor made her appeal.<sup>77</sup>

President Barack Obama on June 24 unveiled an extensive reform of U.S. policies for dealing with hostage-takers, in which he pledged to use "all instruments of national power" to recover Americans held by terrorists abroad. In a lengthy policy directive released shortly before the president's White House meeting with former hostages and their families, Obama said the government could and would "assist private efforts to communicate with hostage-takers ... through public or private intermediaries." Unlike some European allies, the United States does not make concessions to hostage-takers and has a strict no-payments strategy, saying ransoms only encourage further kidnappings and put funds in the hands of militants. The government, Obama said, will no longer threaten to prosecute families who try to negotiate with kidnappers or choose to pay ransom to win their relatives' release.<sup>78</sup>

Undersecretary of Defence for Acquisitions, Technology and Logistics Frank Kendall spoke to approximately 1,000 DoD acquisitions personnel at AFIT's campus on June 23. Kendall commended the Air Force for its efforts to streamline and save money in a challenging fiscal environment during his speech at the Air Force Institute of Technology in Ohio. Kendall emphasized the need for the U.S. military to achieve dominant capabilities through technical excellence and innovation and to continue to strengthen a culture of cost-consciousness and professionalism. DoD Can 'Get Better' "We can all get better at what we do". "This is about building capacity within our departments." Better Buying Power 3.0 is aimed squarely at improving the acquisitions process, Kendall said.<sup>79</sup>

The U.S. Small Business Administration on June 26 recognized the Defence Department for its leadership within the federal government and commitment to improving small business procurement. During a news briefing with Pentagon reporters, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, was joined by SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet to announce the results of the fiscal year 2014 Small Business Federal Scorecard. Contreras-Sweet said DoD improved upon its previous grade. Last year, she said, "we gave them a 'B.' This year, they received their first 'A' for awarding \$54.3 billion in prime contracts to small businesses." Contreras-Sweet said it takes "leadership and coordination at the highest levels of government" to grow small business economy, and DoD is a "shining example" of what leadership can do. Kendall said the Defence Department's emphasis on small business procurement began

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<sup>77</sup> Malone, Jim, "Race Becomes 2016 Election Issue After Charleston Shootings", *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/race-becomes-election-issue-charleston-shootings/2835777.html>

<sup>78</sup> "Obama Announces Changes to US Hostage Policy", *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-soften-ransom-policy-hostage-families/2834930.html>

<sup>79</sup> Eaton, Michele, "Acquisitions Leader Urges Innovation, Technical Excellence", *DoD News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129114>

five years ago with the Better Buying Power initiative, and that it was a practical way to leverage “great ideas” and economic stewardship.<sup>80</sup>

The U.S. Congress has granted President Barack Obama and his successor a powerful tool to get trade deals approved: so-called “fast-track” authority that shields proposed pacts from legislative meddling. By a 60-38 vote, the Senate passed Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) on June 24, a measure that boosts prospects for two of the biggest trade deals in U.S. history. Under TPA, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership would be approved with simple-majority congressional votes. Lawmakers could not amend either accord. “The key victory for American workers and products stamped ‘Made in the USA’ comes today,” said a jubilant Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell before the vote. Having been approved by both houses of Congress, TPA goes to the White House for President Obama’s signature less than two weeks after backers fretted it would die on Capitol Hill. The sudden boost in momentum for free trade sorely disappointed opponents like Independent Senator Bernie Sanders, who is running for president as a Democrat.<sup>81</sup>

For President Barack Obama, the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on June 25 to uphold his signature health care law represents a victory for him and his legacy. Signing a national health care law that would guarantee coverage for all Americans was a cornerstone of Obama’s bid for the presidency seven years ago. Now the Supreme Court’s ruling means that law has survived yet another challenge. “This was a good day for America,” the president remarked, celebrating the court’s upholding of the law – known unofficially as “Obamacare” – in a statement in the White House Rose Garden shortly after the ruling was announced. With many Americans who were previously excluded from health plans because of pre-existing conditions now covered, the president said he believes there can be no doubt the law is working, and described it as part of the fabric of America that cannot be undone.<sup>82</sup>

U.S. dominance will shrink in the new multipolar world but the military is working to maintain its advantage, Acting Undersecretary of Defence for Intelligence Marcel Lettre said at the GeoInt Symposium in Washington on June 25. Lettre said, “We’ve laid out detailed strategies and investment plans for preserving and growing key capabilities that make up our strongest advantages”. These include special operations forces, power projection, space capabilities, cyber defence and in intelligence collection and analysis. Defence intelligence is undergoing a transformation, Lettre said. The intelligence community will concentrate on global coverage, anti-access/area denial capabilities, counterterrorism and counter proliferation capabilities and protection from insider threats. It also must fund space-based capabilities and protect them, Lettre said. China has demonstrated the ability to shoot down satellites. Russian strategy calls for conflict

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<sup>80</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., “DoD Receives ‘A’ Grade in Small Business Procurement”, *DoD News*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129157>

<sup>81</sup> Bowman, Michael, “Republican-led Congress Hands Obama Major Win on Trade”, *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/congress-hands-obama-major-win-on-trade/2835826.html>

<sup>82</sup> Ramirez, Luis, “Supreme Court Health Ruling Seals Obama Legacy”, *VOA News*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/supreme-court-health-ruling-seals-obama-legacy/2837218.html>

in space. This is expensive, but necessary, Lettre said, because many earthbound capabilities rely on information, whether generated in space or information that travels through space.<sup>83</sup>

Ongoing nuclear upgrades by Russia, China and North Korea make it critical for the United States to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent force now and far into the future, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work told before the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on nuclear deterrence in the 21st century. Joining him was Navy Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr., vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Work said a nuclear attack is the only existential threat to the nation and that the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter such an occurrence. "A strong nuclear deterrent force will remain critical to our national security for the foreseeable future," Work added. Given the importance of nuclear weapons and a volatile 21st century national security environment, President Barack Obama directed the Defence Department to maintain a safe, secure and reliable triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems while adjusting force levels to the New START treaty, the deputy defence secretary said.<sup>84</sup>

President Barack Obama has hailed as "a victory for America" the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on June 26 that same-sex couples have the right to marry anywhere in the United States. In a five to four decision, the high court declared that the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of due process and equal protection for all overrule any state's attempt to outlaw same-sex marriages. Previously only 36 of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia had allowed gay marriage. Obama telephoned the lead plaintiff in the case, Jim Obergefell, congratulating him on live television.<sup>85</sup> Millions of Americans are celebrating U.S. Supreme Court ruling that same-sex couples have the right to marry in all 50 states across the country. But others are shocked and angry, including Republican presidential candidates, prominent Republican lawmakers, social conservatives and some religious groups. President Barack Obama called the decision a victory for America, but he also acknowledged that some Americans are not celebrating: "I know that Americans of goodwill continue to hold a wide range of views on this issue. Opposition in some cases has been based on sincere and deeply held beliefs." Reaction came quickly from social conservatives, including Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, who called the ruling a shocking abuse of power by the Supreme Court. "Marriage is rooted not only in human history, but also in the biological and social reality that children are created by, and do best when raised by, a mother and a father," Perkins said. Republican House Speaker John Boehner issued a statement saying he was "disappointed that the Supreme Court disregarded the democratically elected will of millions of Americans by forcing states to redefine the institution of marriage."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Garamone, Jim, "Intel Community Aims to Maintain U.S. Military Advantage", *DoD News*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129139>

<sup>84</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "Work: Strong Nuclear Deterrence is Critical to National Security", *DoD News*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129142>

<sup>85</sup> Malone, Jim, "US Supreme Court Rules Gay Marriage Legal Nationwide", *VOA News*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/supreme-court-backs-same-sex-marriage/2838241.html>

<sup>86</sup> Saine, Cindy "Republican Candidates, Conservatives Criticize Same-Sex Marriage Ruling", *VOA News*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republican-candidates-conservatives-criticize-same-sex-marriage-ruling/2839403.html>

## International: Asia

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **US condemns attack on Afghan parliament; World support for US policy in Asia, Mideast; Key issues remain as Iran deadline looms; U.S. airstrike kills person of interest in Benghazi attack; Military continues airstrikes against ISIL; Carter meets with Ukraine's defence minister; US, China acknowledge areas of tension; US, China broaden collaboration on climate issues; US slams Chinese 'government-sponsored' cyber-attacks; US, China step up fight against wildlife trafficking; Pacific trade talks enter 'fast and furious' phase.**

A group of heavily armed Taliban suicide bombers stormed Afghanistan's parliament on June 22 as the House was in session to decide whether to endorse Defence Minister-designate Masoom Stanekzai. Witnesses reported a series of explosions and gunfire from inside the building following the raid. The attack began with a massive blast at the main gate. The minister said no lawmakers were hurt, but officials say at least 30 other people were wounded, including five women and three children - some seriously. A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said the group was behind what he called a suicide mission aimed at members of the "slave" parliament. The U.S. Embassy strongly condemned the attack saying in a statement that it "shows blatant disrespect for democracy and the rule of law." "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families at this time," the statement said, expressing sympathy to the Members of Parliament who were targeted in the attack.<sup>87</sup>

A new poll suggests the world largely supports both the U.S. defence shift toward Asia and the U.S.-led military campaign against the Islamic State group, two centrepieces of the White House's foreign policy efforts. The United States' overall ratings also remain mostly positive, according to the Pew Research Centre poll, which looked at public opinion in 40 nations. A global median of 69 percent expressed a favourable opinion of the country. The figures are likely to be interpreted as a success by the Obama administration, which came to power in 2008 promising to improve the U.S.' global image in part by ending military entanglements in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>88</sup>

More than two years of negotiations on the future of Iran's nuclear programme, and international economic sanctions against it, face a deadline on June 30, with the two sides still reported to be far apart on several key issues. Negotiators from Iran and the six countries deputized by the U.N. Security Council have been meeting regularly to prepare for foreign ministers to join the talks in Vienna, including Iran's Mohammed Javad Zarif and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. A senior U.S. administration official said on June 25 negotiators are expected to be "close" to an agreement on the 30th, if they "can get there at all." The stakes are high, with Western officials saying that without an agreement Iran could resume enriching uranium and could have enough fuel for a

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<sup>87</sup> Gul, Ayaz, "US Condemns Taliban Attack on Afghan Parliament", *VOA News*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/taliban-attacks-afghan-parliament/2832048.html>

<sup>88</sup> "Survey Shows World Support for US Policy in Asia, Mideast", *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/survey-shows-world-support-for-us-policy-in-asia-mideast/2835079.html>

nuclear weapon within months. But that would also mean a further toughening of the sanctions, which have already crippled Iran's economy.<sup>89</sup>

Pentagon officials announced on June 25 that a June 15 U.S. airstrike in Mosul, Iraq, killed Ali Awni al-Harzi, a known Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) operative and organizational intermediary who was a person of interest in the September 11, 2012, attack against U.S. personnel in Benghazi, Libya. Harzi operated closely with multiple ISIL-associated extremists throughout North Africa and the Middle East. "His death degrades ISIL's ability to integrate North African jihadists into the Syrian and Iraqi fight and removes a jihadist with long ties to international terrorism," Pentagon officials said in a statement announcing that Harzi was killed in the airstrike.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, 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.<sup>91</sup>

On June 25, Defence Secretary Ash Carter met with Ukraine Defence Minister Colonel-General Stepan Poltorak at the NATO Defence Ministerial in Brussels, according to a Defence Department news release. This was two leaders' first meeting. Carter emphasized that the United States, together with its allies, "remains committed to supporting Ukraine in its effort to define its own course as a sovereign, democratic nation". The leaders reviewed ongoing U.S. security assistance to Ukraine's armed forces and border guard service, including the mid-July delivery of an additional 100 Humvees and the ongoing training of Ukrainian National Guard forces in Yavoriv, the release said.<sup>92</sup>

U.S. and Chinese officials were frank in discussing differences between the two countries on June 23, as they opened key annual talks, but both sides agreed that confrontation was not in the world's best interest. In opening the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden said, "We are not going to solve all of these problems in this meeting ... but we have to be committed to working towards solutions." China also expressed a desire for constructive relations with the United States. In equally frank comments, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang agreed Beijing and Washington do not agree on everything. But he insisted "confrontation is a negative-sum game," adding that "dialogue is always more preferable than confrontation."<sup>93</sup>

A partnership to track sea turtle migration and a joint effort to monitor air pollution near chemical industrial parks were two of the initiatives highlighted on June 23 at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. During a day with a heavy emphasis on environmental cooperation, U.S. and Chinese officials announced a series of new "EcoPartnership" programmes – collaborative private sector efforts between the two nations. The U.S. and China are two of the world's biggest

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<sup>89</sup> Pessin, Al, "Issues Remain as Iran Deadline Looms", *VOA News*, June 26, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/tough-issues-remain-as-iran-nuclear-talks-deadline-looms/2838270.html>

<sup>90</sup> "U.S. Airstrike Kills Person of Interest in Benghazi Attack", *DoD News*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129101>

<sup>91</sup> "U.S., Coalition Continue Airstrikes Against ISIL in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, June 28, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129174>

<sup>92</sup> "Carter Meets With Ukraine's Defence Minister", *DoD News*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129131>

<sup>93</sup> Dockins, Pamela, June "US, China Acknowledge Areas of Tension", *VOA News*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-china-kick-off-wide-ranging-talks/2833495.html>

greenhouse gas emitters. Both sides pledged support for efforts to cut emissions and serve as a model for other countries.<sup>94</sup>

The United States has criticized China for carrying out state-sponsored cyberattacks - a blunt accusation that comes as authorities in Washington continue to investigate a massive hack into federal employee data. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew made the comment on June 23 during the second day of high-level security and economic talks with Chinese officials. The Obama administration has not openly accused the Chinese government of being behind the digital attack on the Office of Personnel Management, but various officials have said they are increasingly convinced this is the case.<sup>95</sup>

U.S. and Chinese officials agreed to work together on public awareness campaigns and step up law enforcement. And for the first time, they focused on ways to combat the trafficking of marine species. Undersecretary of State Catherine Novelli said the United States and China are two of the world's biggest markets for illegal wildlife. "This illicit trade is really about, not just about individual collectors. It is also fuelling a million — a multibillion-dollar illegal enterprise which is supporting transnational crime," she said. China's state forestry administrator, Zhao Shucong, said his country had adopted a "zero tolerance" position on illegal wildlife trade. He said he hoped efforts to fight this crime would become a "global event."<sup>96</sup>

Pacific Rim countries are gearing up for a busy six weeks now that the U.S. Congress has approved legislation key to sealing a massive trade pact reaching from Canada to New Zealand, spurring a rush to get the deal over the finish line. Japanese Economy Minister Akira Amari said he hopes the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) can be wrapped up by the end of July, and New Zealand Trade Minister Tim Groser said he sees a U.S. summer break in August as a deadline. "If we haven't actually got most of it by then, it gets very difficult," he said in an interview. "It's going to be fast and furious in the next six weeks." It took more than six weeks for U.S. lawmakers to agree to grant President Barack Obama "fast-track" authority to expedite passage of trade deals through Congress, squeezing an already tight time frame, given elections in Canada in October and the United States and Peru in 2016. The 12 TPP partners have started to discuss timing for the ministerial meeting, a source close to the negotiations said.<sup>97</sup>

## India-US Relations

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Carlyle Group to invest \$500 million in India; India, US sign agreements on health, cancer**

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<sup>94</sup> Dockins, Pamela, "US, China Broaden Collaboration on Climate Issues", *VOA News*, June 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-china-broaden-collaboration-on-climate-issues/2834952.html>

<sup>95</sup> "US Slams Chinese 'Government-sponsored' Cyber Attacks", *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-slams-chinese-government-sponsored-cyber-attacks/2834990.html>

<sup>96</sup> Dockins, Pamela, "US, China Step Up Fight Against Wildlife Trafficking", *VOA News*, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-china-fight-wildlife-trafficking/2836329.html>

<sup>97</sup> "Pacific Trade Talks Enter 'Fast and Furious' Phase", *Reuters*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pacific-trade-talks-enter-fast-phase/2837862.html>

**research, tech; Indian scientist denied US visa; US has begun to fix visa problems; Indian-American community provides an important bridge; Ties attain new height under Obama administration.**

On June 22, a US-based private equity firm Carlyle Group said it will invest \$500 million in Magna Energy Ltd, an India-focused oil firm founded by Mike Watts, the man who saw oil in Rajasthan's Thar desert where global giant Royal Dutch Shell saw none. Carlyle, the second private equity fund after Warburg Pincus to have backed management team in creation of upstream firm, will fund Magna's bid to become a full-cycle oil and gas company through acquisitions and by securing local licences in India. Magna, Carlyle Group said in a statement, will primarily focus on development and production with a secondary focus on exploration. This is the single-largest private equity funding transaction in the Indian oil and gas field, a sector largely dominated by large established firms. Watts, who superannuated as Deputy CEO of Cairn Energy in 2014, had founded Magna with his former CFO-turned-Managing Director Jann Brown to invest in oil and gas fields in South Asia.<sup>98</sup>

On June 25, India and the US signed a series of agreements on health, seeking to enhance cooperation in areas such as cancer research, infrastructure development, training, capacity building and better assessment and application of new diagnostic technologies. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cancer Research and a Letter of Intent on Anti-microbial Resistance Research were signed by Secretary Health, B P Sharma, Secretary Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, K Vijay Raghavan, and US Ambassador to India Richard Verma, according to senior official of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry. The agreement on cancer research, prevention, control and management was signed among the NCRI (AIIMS), ICMR (DHS), the Department of Biotechnology, (MoST), NCI (NIH) and the US' Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the official said. Sharma and Verma also signed an MoU on collaboration in environmental and occupational health and injury prevention and control. The official said the collaboration will be in the areas for conducting research and training on development of low-cost technologies, diagnostics of existing medications against common cancers and development of existing therapies related to oncology. Another agreement was signed between the CDC, DHHS (USA) and the ICMR (DHR) on collaboration in environmental and occupational health and injury prevention and control.<sup>99</sup>

Dr MO Garg, an eminent Indian scientist has been denied a US visa for a conference in Ohio. Dr Garg heads the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), a prestigious civilian research organisation with 38 labs across the country. It employs 4,000 scientists with an annual budget of Rs. 3800 crores. He told *NDTV* that he submitted his passport to the US embassy in Delhi more than 20 days ago for the three-day conference that started on June 17. His passport has still not

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<sup>98</sup> "Carlyle Group To Invest \$500 million in India-Focused Magna Energy", *PTI*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-carlyle-group-to-invest-500-million-in-india-focused-magna-energy-2097874>

<sup>99</sup> "India, US ink MoUs on Health Infra, Cancer Research, Tech", *Zee News*, June 25, 2015 at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/india-us-ink-mous-on-health-infra-cancer-research-tech\\_1620044.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/india-us-ink-mous-on-health-infra-cancer-research-tech_1620044.html); "India, US sign agreements to strengthen cooperation in health sector", June 25, 2015 at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/z8YvJbjVEUau3X1wSBsqwL/India-US-sign-agreements-to-strengthen-cooperation-in-health.html>

been returned to him. "Visa issues are a thorn in the developing Indo-US relations," said the scientist to *NDTV*. Dr Garg has visited the US more than a dozen times since 1983; of the 30 patents he holds in the field of petrochemical research, six are registered in America. While he was Science Advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Professor CNR Rao had also slammed what he described as a regressive American visa regime that prevents travel to the US by eminent Indian scientists.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, the US State Department said it has begun to fix a technical problem that had disrupted US visa issuance around the globe, but it will take time to work off a big backlog. About 45,000 visas were issued on June 22, State Department spokesman John Kirby said, adding that the department typically issues around 50,000 per day. He declined to predict when the department would clear its backlog. US visa issuance had all but ground to a halt following a hardware problem with the database that handles biometric data which the US government screens before giving visitors visas.<sup>101</sup>

The small but influential Indian-American community provides an important bridge between India and the United States, Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee, said. Royce said, "We look forward to building the relationship between India and the United States and we thank the community here for the bridge that they help provide so that these two great democracies can work ever closer together for a common goal". He was speaking at a leadership reception organised by the Indo-American Community Services, a Chicago-based Indian community organisation. The event was attended by a number of US lawmakers. Indian-American community comprise about 3.1 million people alone and are the second-largest self-reported single-race Asian ancestry group after Chinese Americans.<sup>102</sup>

The US-India relationship has reached a new height under the Obama Administration as the two countries have forged landmark partnerships in several key areas like defence and energy, Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a Washington audience on June 26. Blinken said, "We have carried our relationship with India to new heights, forging landmark partnerships on clean energy, higher education and defence cooperation". He said the US has also deepened its engagement with the Asia Pacific, a region that increasingly is embracing the connection between good governance, sustainable growth, and long-term stability.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "Top Indian Scientist Denied US Visa, Embassy Offers Travel Next Week", *NDTV News*, Reported by Pallava Bagla, June 24, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/top-indian-scientist-livid-at-being-denied-us-visa-774778>

<sup>101</sup> "US Has Begun to Fix Visa Problems, Big Backlog to be Processed", *Reuters*, June 24, 2015 at [http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-has-begun-to-fix-visa-problems-big-backlog-to-be-processed-774712?ndtv\\_related](http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-has-begun-to-fix-visa-problems-big-backlog-to-be-processed-774712?ndtv_related)

<sup>102</sup> "Indian-American Community Is An Influential Bridge-Builder in US-India Relations", *FirstPost.Com*, June 29, 2015 at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/indian-american-community-is-an-influential-bridge-builder-in-us-india-relations-2316802.html>

<sup>103</sup> "US-India Ties Attain New Height Under Obama Administration: Antony Blinken", *PTI*, June 27, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-india-ties-attain-new-height-under-obama-administration-antony-blinken/articleshow/47842221.cms?prtpage=1>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Indian Navy's ships on operational deployment to South East Asia and Southern Indian Ocean in pursuit of India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy; INS Teg Reaches Seychelles to carry out EEZ surveillance and represent India in Seychelles' national day celebrations.**

The Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet ships are on a two month long operational deployment to South East Asia and Southern Indian Ocean in pursuit of India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy. As part of the deployment, two of the Indian warships, INS Ranvir (a Guided Missile Destroyer) and INS Kamorta (an indigenously built Anti-Submarine Corvette) entered Sihanoukville, Cambodia and the other two warships including INS Satpura, an indigenously built guided missile stealth frigate and INS Shakti, a sophisticated fleet tanker and support ship, entered Sattahip, Thailand on June 23. The ships are on a four day visit of the two countries. The previous visit by an Indian Naval ship to Thailand was in June 10. These ships are on the return leg after a 45 day deployment. On departure from Sihanoukville, INS Ranvir & INS Kamorta will exercise with the Cambodian Navy for enhancing interoperability in Maritime Operations including Search and Rescue. These ships have visited Singapore, Jakarta (Indonesia), Freemantle (Australia) and Kuantan (Malaysia) during deployment. During this deployment two warships also participated in the bilateral exercise SIMBEX-15 with the Royal Singapore Navy from 20-26 May 15.<sup>104</sup>

INS Teg, a stealth frigate of the Indian Navy is currently on a two-month long deployment in the South Indian Ocean with an aim to provide surveillance support in the region. This is in keeping with India's national objective of ensuring a secure and stable regional environment to allow unhindered economic and social development, not just in India, but also in the entire Indian Ocean Region. The ship reached Port Victoria on June 26 and will be there till July 9, 2015 as part of its mission to carry out joint EEZ surveillance in the Seychellois EEZ in areas selected by Seychelles Coast Guard, with SCG personnel embarked on board. The ship is also carrying items required for maintenance of SCG ships. The visit of INS Teg coincides with Seychelles' National Day celebrations on June 29, in which a 25-man marching contingent and Naval Band embarked from the warship will participate in the prestigious annual military parade. The ship's integral helicopter will also undertake a fly-past during the event. INS Teg is a state-of-the-art guided missile frigate of the Indian Navy and is based at Mumbai.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "Indian Naval Ships Enter Sihanoukville, Cambodia & Sattahip, Thailand," *PIB*, June 23, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122714>

<sup>105</sup> "INS Teg Reaches Seychelles: To Carry Out EEZ Surveillance and Represent India During National Day Celebrations," *PIB*, June 26, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122817>

## International

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **France considering building two nuclear reactors in Saudi Arabia; Israel confirms it was the target of cyber-attacks by Iran and Hezbollah.**

Reports say that France is considering building two nuclear reactors in Saudi Arabia. The deal is part of some \$12 billion with the kingdom. Under one of the agreements Airbus will sell 23 H-145 multipurpose helicopters to Saudi Arabia for €500 million as well as launch a feasibility study into building the reactors. A slew of deals worth billions of euros were announced following the first “Franco-Saudi Joint Commission” meeting in Paris, led by the defence Minister of France Laurent Fabius and Saudi Defence Minister Prince Mohamed bin Salman. The study for two European Pressurized Reactors (EPR) — which France considers the safest and most advanced in the world — takes on added significance given the current efforts by Saudi Arabia’s rival, Iran, to develop its own nuclear capabilities. In addition to the study, France will sign an agreement to train the Saudis on nuclear safety and the treatment of nuclear waste.<sup>106</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, Israel’s Defence Minister Moshe Ya’alon has confirmed that Israel was the target of cyber-attacks by Iran during last summer’s Gaza war and by Hezbollah. Speaking at an international cyber security conference at Tel Aviv University, Ya’alon insisted “no significant damage” was inflicted by Iranian operatives, terror organizations and hackers who targeted government, military and economic sites during the July-August 2014 Operation Protective Edge. He also confirmed for the first time findings from Tel Aviv-based Check Point Software Technologies, which reported in March that Israel, several Western countries and other Mideast states had since 2012 been targets of a sustained cyber spying campaign that the company believed was run out of Lebanon. According to the cyber security and information technology firm Check Point Software Technologies, the campaign was based on Trojan horse computer malware planted in its targets, which was activated to collect data over extended periods. The Check Point report also noted that monitoring these cyber infections was very challenging, due to the numerous ways in which they were disguised by the hackers.<sup>107</sup>

## III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

### Jammu & Kashmir

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Kulgam encounter ends with death of two militants; Security forces bust militant hideouts, recover huge cache of arms; Militancy in the Valley changes its face as local Kashmiri youths joining the militant ranks.**

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<sup>106</sup> “France, Saudi Arabia Announce \$12B in Deals,” *Defence News*, June 24, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/06/24/france-to-study-building-nuclear-reactors-in-saudi-arabia/29213887/>

<sup>107</sup> “Israel Confirms It Was Cyber Attack Target,” *Defence News*, June 24, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/cyber/2015/06/24/israel-target-for-iranian-hezbollah-cyber-attacks/29210755/>

The 15-hour-long gunfight between militants and government forces in south Kashmir's Kulgam district ended on June 22 with the death of both the rebels, police said. Reports said that both the militants died after the residential house they had taken cover in was razed down by the forces with an explosive device. The slain militants have been identified as Javed Ahmad, a resident of Redwani and Idrees Ahmad Nengroo son of Ghulam Hassan, a resident of Yariporta area of the district. As the news of the death of the militants spread in the area, the locals took to streets and pelted stones at the forces who responded with tear gas shells, witnesses said. Earlier, a civilian was killed as violent protests erupted near the site of the gunfight late on June 21 evening. The gunfight that broke out at 8pm on June 21 when the hiding militants fired on a joint party of Army 1 RR and CRPF who had cordoned off Redwani Bala village of Khudwani area had resumed again on June 22 morning following a lull during the night.<sup>108</sup>

Acting on specific information, the troops of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) and Special Task Force (STF) of police launched a joint operation and busted a hideout in general area of Bhimal Nala in Doda district on June 26, a defence spokesman said. The recoveries from the hideout yielded one 9mm pistol with two magazines, one under-barrel grenade launcher (UBGL) 30 mm, five rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), five canister boosters for rockets of RPG, six 30 mm grenades for UGBL, he said. In addition, seven Chinese hand grenades, three AK-47 magazines, two pistol magazines, 169 rounds of AK-47, 27 rounds of PIKA, 14 rounds of 7.62 mm Sniper Rifle and 79 rounds of 9 mm pistol were also recovered, the spokesman said. In another recovery, the troops of RR launched a search operation and busted a hideout in forest area of Deolmarg- Thinmarg in Mahore tehsil of Reasi district on June 25, he said. The recoveries from the hideout yielded one AK 47 rifle with two magazines and 30 rounds, two pouches, one Yaesu Set, one blanket, two utensils and one knife, he added. The hideout was in a natural cave which was three feet in depth and six feet wide and covered by a boulder, the spokesman said.<sup>109</sup>

Large inflow of hawala funds from gulf countries and more Kashmiri youths getting sucked into militancy are dangerously stoking terrorism in the Valley in a fresh test for security forces in their anti-militancy operations. This assessment has been made by security analysts with former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) Chief A S Dulat summing up the situation to say, "there are dark clouds on the horizon and some things seem to be not right." He has been associated with the Kashmir desk in Home Ministry in various capacities since 1990. Security sources said that militants are concentrating on two axes in South and North Kashmir. An axis from Tral, Batapora, Panjgaon and Yariporta in South Kashmir is witnessing a dominance of terror group Hizbul Mujahideen, while in the other axis from Palhalan to Sopore this group and few militants of Jaish-e-Mohammed are calling the shots, say police officials, who have been on the forefront of fighting militancy. The worrisome aspect, the officials say, is that in both the axes the leadership is in the hands of Kashmiri boys, who have joined the ranks of militancy recently, the sources said. Security analysts said that local recruitment, which had come down to a trickle, has picked up suddenly from January this year. Since March this year, nearly 50 boys have reportedly vanished from the Valley with Awantipora in South Kashmir accounting for nearly 15 of them followed by Kulgam (nine), Shopian

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<sup>108</sup> "Kulgam Encounter Ends With Death Of Two Militants", *The Greater Kashmir*, June 22, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/kulgam-encounter-ends-with-death-of-two-militants/190001.html>

<sup>109</sup> "Two Hideouts Busted, Arms Cache Recovered in J&K", *Business Standard*, June 26, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/two-hideouts-busted-arms-cache-recovered-in-j-k-115062600581\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/two-hideouts-busted-arms-cache-recovered-in-j-k-115062600581_1.html)

(seven), Anantnag (eight) and 11 from North Kashmir. The missing boys belonging to average middle class are being described as the new faces of terrorism in Kashmir and they are believed to be waiting for delivery of arms for all of them. "So far eight AK rifles have been smuggled into the area and we are sure that more may come in," a senior police official said. Simultaneously, the hawala funds, which had been curbed to a large extent, has now started flowing into the Valley especially from Gulf in abundance, they said. The over invoicing of goods by some Kashmiri businessmen doing trade in Gulf has also come to the notice of authorities in this regard, the sources said.<sup>110</sup>

## Northeast India

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Manipur moots stringent law against blockades; NDFB(S) facing severe financial crunch.**

Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Gaikhangam on June 24 declared that the State Government is likely to introduce a stringent law to prevent bandhs and economic blockades in the State. However, he appealed to the All Tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM) to withdraw its indefinite economic blockade on National Highways, saying that bandh and blockade bring suffering to the whole community. ATSUM had imposed the indefinite economic blockade on June 22 midnight to protest government's failure to fulfil its charter of demands which included establishment of a Scheduled Tribe Commission, service regularisation of 268 contract lecturers and 333 ad-hoc teachers in hill districts, etc. Several vehicles were destroyed by blockade supporters during the blockade. Meanwhile, a counter economic blockade by the Manipur Youth Front (MYF) in protest against the ATSUM blockade has started on June 24.<sup>111</sup>

A group of around 30 hard-core members of the Songbijit faction of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), headed by vice chairman of the outfit G Bidai, are constantly on the run after a narrow escape from the Ultanapi Reserved Forest last month. Meanwhile, the outfit is facing a severe financial crunch after the fund flow has been squeezed and the debt burden for running the camps in Myanmar crossed the Rs 1 crore mark. Highly placed security sources told *The Assam Tribune* that around 35 persons, headed by Bidai, and including 10 to 12 hard-core members of the outfit have been staying together following sustained operations by the police and security forces. But so far, five of them, including the PA to Bidai, have escaped. The group is moving around in the jungles of the Assam-Bhutan border areas and on several occasions, they had narrow escapes as the forces are close on their heels. During the operations, several persons, engaged as couriers by the group, have been nabbed by the forces and this has affected ration supply to the group. There have been reports that the group has even resorted to killing deer in the Manas National Park for food.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> "Kashmiri Youths Joining Militancy; Funds Coming From Gulf Countries: Analysts", *The Economic Times*, June 28, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/kashmiri-youths-joining-militancy-funds-coming-from-gulf-countries-analysts/articleshow/47851191.cms?cfmid=11001094>

<sup>111</sup> Samom, Sobhapati, "Manipur Moots Stringent Law Against Blockades", *The Assam Tribune*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jun2515/oth051>

<sup>112</sup> Choudhury, R Dutta, "NDFB(S) Facing Severe Financial Crunch", *The Assam Tribune*, June 27, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jun2715/at051>

## Left-wing Extremism

(June 22-28, 2015)

- **Palamu Express derails as Maoists blow up track in Jharkhand; Centre agrees to Maharashtra demand to let CRPF stay in Gadchiroli; Kerala High Court Maoist verdict: State government appeals against the ruling; Petition seeks action against Maoists, sympathisers; Chhattisgarh: Security forces seize rocket launchers, detonators from Naxal hotbed; New Maoist committee gives security forces jitters.**

Three bogies of the Palamu Express and its engine were derailed when Maoists triggered a blast on the railway tracks between Chhipadohar and Barwadih railway stations in Latehar district of Jharkhand on June 23. The incident, which occurred in a dense forest area, has left hundreds of passengers terrified. Palamu Express runs between Barkakana and Patna. "No report of injuries has been received so far," Palamu DIG Saket Kumar Singh said. A source said around 10 metres of the railway tracks have been damaged on the CIC section (Ranchi-New Delhi route) under Dhanbad division of South Eastern Railway. The incident has disrupted rail traffic on the crucial section. Several important trains are stranded at various stations, the source said.<sup>113</sup>

Giving into the demands of Maharashtra, the NDA government is learnt to have decided not to replace CRPF from the Naxal hotbed of Gadchiroli. UPA government had proposed to replace 5 battalions of CRPF with ITBP and redeploy them at Bijapur and Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, which are considered to be worst affected by left wing extremism. The move was first opposed by the State government and police saying it would lead to multiplicity of commands and derail the operations that were being carried out with CRPF and the new force will take time to get acclimatized with the terrain, local population and the problem. The government while deciding to continue with CRPF deployment in Gadchiroli also cited the example of Chhattisgarh where ITBP and BSF are deployed but are facing the problem of multiplicity of command. It was also argued that the CRPF has developed its own intelligence gathering mechanism involving locals and police that has helped to bring down the incidents of violence. A new force will require setting up its mechanism that may take time and also give opportunity to dormant forces to take control of the region.<sup>114</sup>

Questioning the judgment delivered by a single bench on May 22 that being a Maoist is no crime and that police cannot detain a person merely because he is a Maoist, Kerala government has filed an appeal demanding that the order must be set aside. Government's appeal said the single bench's finding is absolutely illegal and against the provisions of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). In the appeal, the government reasons, "Maoism is an ideology which is accepted by certain persons who formed an organization which is banned in the country. Therefore, nobody

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<sup>113</sup> Mishra, Alok K N, "Palamu Express Derails As Maoists Blow Up Railway Track", *The Times of India*, June 24, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/Palamu-Express-derails-as-Maoists-blow-up-railway-track/articleshow/47790805.cms>

<sup>114</sup> Tripathi, Rahul, "Centre Agrees To Maharashtra Demand To Let CRPF Stay In Naxal District", *The Economic Times*, June 24, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/centre-agrees-to-maharashtra-demand-to-let-crpf-stay-in-naxal-district/articleshow/47793281.cms?cfmid=11001094>

can be a member of that banned association and can indulge in any Maoist activities or partake or be a sympathizer by words either spoken or written or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise as defined by section 2(o) of the Act. The word 'otherwise' is having wider amplitude and nobody can self-proclaim that he is a Maoist, which itself is an offence." Not only acts of violence can be punished as per UAPA but acts that seem to be innocent, such as advocating or advising or indirectly abetting or incite the commission of any unlawful activity and everybody associated with the dissemination, propagation, and spreading of the ideology will be held liable, government said in the appeal. It is also argued by the government that police taking a person for questioning cannot be said to be under illegal detention or custody. In Shyam Balakrishnan's case, which was considered by the single bench, police only took him for questioning, which cannot be termed as an illegal custody attracting Article 21 (protection of life and liberty), the appeal said.<sup>115</sup>

Countering the petition submitted by a joint action committee comprising 24 organisations and political parties asking police not to initiate any action against Maoist sympathisers, representatives of a few organisations in Coimbatore on June 24 petitioned the City Police Commissioner seeking stringent actions on Maoists and their sympathisers. They also lauded the police for initiating action against Maoists and sympathisers, recently. The petition was submitted by representatives of Bharatiya Janata Party, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Viswa Hindu Parishad, Hindu Munnani, Desabaktha Lawyers, Seva Bharati, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Swadeshi Vizhippunarvu Iyakkam and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.<sup>116</sup>

In a major haul of Maoists' weaponry, three improvised rocket launchers and two detonators have been seized from a dense forest in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district. The rocket launchers were recovered by a joint team of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and district police from the forest under Madanwada police station limits on June 24, Rajnandgaon Superintendent of Police P Sundarraj said on June 25. According to a senior police official involved in anti-Naxal operations, in 2005, rockets and launchers were recovered from Dhoudai police station limits of the insurgency-hit Narayanpur district. Now, after a long time such launchers have been again recovered in the region, the official said on condition of anonymity. "It is suspected that Naxals have now developed very powerful rockets that can cause major damage, but still they need to get equipped with good quality launchers," he said.<sup>117</sup>

With the security forces gradually limiting the movement of the CPI Maoists in the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) area, the banned outfit has reportedly modified its tactics as well as its organizational structure. The Naxals are believed to have formed a new committee called the Malkangiri-Visakha-Koraput divisional committee with an experienced leader at the helm to strengthen the rank and file and regain their past glory. According to sources, the new division was formed after the visit

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<sup>115</sup> Haneef, Mahir, "Being Maoist is a Crime; HC Ruling was Illegal: Kerala Govt", *The Times of India*, June 24, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/Being-Maoist-is-a-Crime-HC-Ruling-was-Illegal-Kerala-Govt/articleshow/47804400.cms>

<sup>116</sup> "Petition Seeks Action Against Maoists, Sympathisers", *The Hindu*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/petition-seeks-action-against-maoists-sympathisers/article7352033.ece>

<sup>117</sup> "Rocket Launchers, Detonators Seized From Naxal Hotbed", *The Hindu*, June 25, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rocket-launchers-detonators-seized-from-naxal-hotbed/article7353774.ece>

of Maoist central committee leaders to Visakha Agency in May and June this year. Around 14 leaders from the Dandakaranya Zonal Committee of Chhattisgarh, including Maoist central military chief Namballa Kesava Rao alias Ganganna and central regional bureau (CRB) chief Katakam Sudarsan alias Anand are learnt to have visited the district. The sources said the new committee was aimed at not only strengthening the Naxal presence in the AOB areas, but also to safeguard their movements in Chhattisgarh. If the AOB Maoists become weak, the ones in the Dandakaranya zone would be in danger as security forces of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha would seal the borders and corner them. Though one Venu calling himself the head of the Malkangiri-Visakha-Koraput divisional committee has already begun issuing press notes, the Visakha Rural cops suspect that Venu is none other than dreaded Gajarla Ravi alias Ganesh alias Uday, the present Malkangiri-Koraput border (MKB) divisional committee secretary.<sup>118</sup>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### United Nations

(June 9-22, 2015)

- **Libya talks commence; Burundi prepares for elections; South Sudan mission gets women police, UAVs; Boko Haram targets Chad; Syria talks continue; Special Rapporteur for HR urges UNSC to protect people from IS; Refugees enter Europe via Western Balkans; Deal or not, UNSC to monitored Iran till 2016; Ukraine gets UN office; Sanaa heritage destroyed in bombing; SG tours Central Asia; Climate gets its due; UN in Latin America; Miscellaneous.**

The UN facilitated talks for the formation of a unity government in Libya commenced in Skhirat, Morocco on June 8, 2015. The draft for this has been arrived at after five months of negotiations. The Special Representative for Libya, Bernardino León, urged all groups to bear in mind the growing incidences of terrorism given the instability in the country.<sup>119</sup> The internationally recognized Parliament however walked away from the talks on June 9, 2015 as it accused the UN plan of making way for an eventual take-over of Libya by the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>120</sup> On June 10, Germany stepped in and hosted the talks in Berlin.<sup>121</sup> Parties agreed to a draft proposal.<sup>122</sup> A press

<sup>118</sup> Siva G, "New Maoist Committee Gives Security Forces Jitters", *The Times of India*, June 28, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/visakhapatnam/New-Maoist-committee-gives-security-forces-jitters/articleshow/47848996.cms>

<sup>119</sup> "Presenting Draft Proposal, UN Envoy Urges Libyan Parties To 'Heal Rift That Has Torn Your Country Apart'", June 9, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51101#.VYe7Mfmqqko>

<sup>120</sup> "Elected Parliament Drops out of UN's Libya Talks", June 9, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/elected-parliament-drops-out-united-nations-libya-talks/2814888.html>

<sup>121</sup> "Germany Hosts UN Talks On Libya Despite Dispute Over Power-Sharing Plan", June 10, 2015, at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/06/10/germany-hosts-un-talks-on-libya-despite-dispute-over-power-sharing-plan/>

<sup>122</sup> "'Libya Doesn't Have Time,' Says UN Envoy, Urging Parties To Make Political Draft 'A Final One'", June 10, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51118#.VYpzJhuqqko>

release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany of June 17, 2015 attested that 23 factions from Libya, Commissioners of the P5 for Libya as well as Spain, Italy and European Union were present for the talks.<sup>123</sup> Meanwhile, on June 12, 2015, the Tunisian Consulate was attacked and 10 diplomatic staffs were abducted.<sup>124</sup>

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) voiced concern over the violence being perpetrated by the pro-Government militia Imbonerakure in Burundi. A press release said they had the testimonies of 47 Burundians who had fled to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Amidst rising fears of a slip back into civil war, the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein urged the opposition parties to prevent formation of militia among their supporters.<sup>125</sup> On June 11, the UN Special Envoy for Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, who was facilitating the talks between rival Burundian groups, stepped down from this role. As he was accused by the opposition of favouring the government.<sup>126</sup> The UN authorities expressed serious doubts about the prospects of a free and fair election considering the ongoing violence.<sup>127</sup> Senior Senegalese diplomat, Abdulaye Bathily, who is also the special representative for Central Africa, was appointed on June 21 to facilitate the talks.<sup>128</sup> The Secretary General appreciated the roadmap for the elections laid out by the African Union Peace and Security Council on June 13, 2015.<sup>129</sup>

The Kakuma UN refugee camp in Kenya has been enlarged in the wake of refugees coming from South Sudan.<sup>130</sup> Also, women police have been included in the UNMISS's police contingent in South Sudan to help in dealing with issues of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse and gender related abuse of vulnerable people in the Protection of Civilian (POC) sites.<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile

<sup>123</sup> "Press Release: Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier on Libyan Peace Talks", June 17, 2015, at [http://www.new-york-un.diplo.de/Vertretung/newyorkvn/en/\\_\\_pr/press-releases/2015/20150617-steinmeier-on-libyan-peace-talks.html?archive=3759636](http://www.new-york-un.diplo.de/Vertretung/newyorkvn/en/__pr/press-releases/2015/20150617-steinmeier-on-libyan-peace-talks.html?archive=3759636)

<sup>124</sup> "Libya: UN Official Calls For 'Immediate' Release Of Abducted Tunisian Diplomatic Staff", June 14, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51150#.VYqKYxuqqko>

<sup>125</sup> "Increased Militia Violence Could Push Burundi 'Over The Edge,' Warns UN Rights Chief", June 9, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51097#.VYezWpqqko>

<sup>126</sup> "UN Envoy Quits Role As Mediator In Burundi Crisis Talks", June 11, 2015, at <http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2015/06/11/un-envoy-quits-role-as-mediator-in-burundi-crisis-talks/>

<sup>127</sup> "Blatant Rights Failures in Burundi Make Upcoming Elections 'Impossible,' UN Expert Warns", *UN News*, June 19, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51207#.VYvs-Ruqqko>

<sup>128</sup> "U.N. Appoints Senegalese Diplomat To Mediate Peace Talks In Burundi", *Daily Star*, June 21, 2015, at <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2015/Jun-21/303133-un-appoints-senegalese-diplomat-to-mediate-peace-talks-in-burundi.ashx>

<sup>129</sup> "As Burundi Elections Draw Near, Ban Sends Special Envoy In Support Of Regional Efforts", June 21, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51212#.VYuy0xuqqko>

<sup>130</sup> "U.N. Expands Refugee Camp In Kenya As South Sudan Conflict Rages", June 20, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/20/us-southsudan-refugees-kenya-idUSKBN0P00TJ20150620>

<sup>131</sup> "UN Recruits Woman Police Officers In South Sudan", June 20, 2015, at <http://en.cihan.com.tr/en/un-recruits-woman-police-officers-in-south-sudan-1807134.htm?language=en>

the South Sudanese Government has expressed its unhappiness at the acquisition of attack helicopters and UAVs by the UNMISS.<sup>132</sup>

The Boko Haram carried out a deadly attack in the Chadian capital N'Djamena killing 25 people.<sup>133</sup> The Geneva consultations with various stakeholders from Syria are continuing.<sup>134</sup> The Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, visited Damascus and met with 30 political parties, religious leaders and civil society organisations.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, the Syrian government has countered Qatari allegations of use of chemical weapons by the government by requesting the UN to take serious note of Qatar's support to terrorist groups attacking its people.<sup>136</sup> The UN has condemned aerial attacks by the government that have claimed several lives.<sup>137</sup> Nearly 23,000 Syrians have fled the country and have taken refuge in Turkey.<sup>138</sup>

Ben Emmerson, the Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights while countering terrorism has urged the Security Council to act to protect people from the threat of ISIL.<sup>139</sup>

There has been a steady increase in the refugees arriving at the Lesvos Island of Greece from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey. The numbers have risen from approximately 700 in January 2015 to 7000 in May 2015.<sup>140</sup> As on June 8, 103,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe: 54,000 in Italy, 48,000 in Greece, 91 on Malta and 920 in Spain. Meanwhile, the Western Balkans route has also become a point of entry to Europe.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> "South Sudan: UN Mission Reports Five People Injured In Shooting At Juba Marketplace", June 19, 2015, at <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article55399>

<sup>133</sup> "UN Chief Condemns Deadly Boko Haram Attack in Chad", *UN News*, June 15, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51157#.VYqXnhuqqko>

<sup>134</sup> "In Geneva, UN Envoy Meets Syria Stakeholders Amid Ongoing Consultations", *UN News*, June 10, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51112#.VYpv8Buqqko>

<sup>135</sup> "In Damascus, UN Envoy Wraps up Talks with Syrian Parties, Condemns Violence against Civilians", *UN News*, June 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51210#.VYuuqxuqqko>

<sup>136</sup> "Syria Urges UN To Take Measures Against Qatar", *Press TV*, June 11, 2015, at <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/06/11/415282/Syria-Qatar-chemical-weapons>

<sup>137</sup> "Syria: UN Rights Officials Deplore Government Aerial Attacks; Warn of Retaliation by Armed Groups", *UN News*, June 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51144#.VYqD3Ruqqko>

<sup>138</sup> "Thousands Flee Syria for Turkey, Escaping Aggression Between Rival Military Forces – UN Refugee Agency", June 16, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51165#.VYqbRhuqqko>

<sup>139</sup> "Security Council Has 'Obligation To Act Now' To Protect Civilians From ISIL – UN Rights Expert", June 22, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51217#.VZZw2Ruqqko>

<sup>140</sup> "As Refugees Flood Greek Island, UN Agency Warns Of Strained Resources", June 9, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51098#.VYezW\\_mqqko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51098#.VYezW_mqqko)

<sup>141</sup> "Western Balkans Experiencing Surge In Migrant, Refugee Crossings, Warns UN Agency", June 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51132#.VYqDBRuqqko>

As the last stretch of negotiations on the nuclear deal with Iran continued, the Security Council voted to extend the tenure of its sanctions monitoring committee until July 2016.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, the US administration came in for criticism for not reporting Iranian violations of the sanctions.<sup>143</sup> While the US administration denied the allegations, supporters of the deal with Iran in the US cautioned against using this as a pretext to nullify the deal.<sup>144</sup>

In Ukraine, internal displacement was on the rise as the conflict continued. There are over a million IDPs as of June 2015.<sup>145</sup> Meanwhile, a UN office to support the implementation of the Minsk Agreement for resolution of the conflict in East Ukraine was inaugurated by the US Ambassador to UN Samantha Power.<sup>146</sup>

The World Heritage site of the old city of Sanaa in Yemen had been damaged in the bombing in the ongoing conflict. Meanwhile, according to the WHO, nearly 2584 people have lost their lives since March 29, 2015.<sup>147</sup> The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has called for \$1.6 billion in aid for providing humanitarian assistance in Yemen.<sup>148</sup> The UN facilitated talks commenced in Geneva on June 22, 2015.

The Secretary General undertook a visit to Central Asian countries. In Kazakhstan, he addressed a Congress of religious leaders and urged them to prevent youth from joining sectarian terrorist groups.<sup>149</sup> In Tajikistan, he highlighted the importance of access to water, sanitation and human rights.<sup>150</sup> In Kyrgyzstan he lauded the role of the parliament and civil society in making significant headway in recovering from the ethnic clashes between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in 2010.<sup>151</sup> In Uzbekistan, he appreciated the progress made by the country in achieving the MDGs

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<sup>142</sup> "UN Keeps Iran Sanction Monitors", *Daily Star*, June 9, 2015, at <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jun-09/301275-un-keeps-iran-sanction-monitors.ashx>

<sup>143</sup> "U.N. Report Accuses Obama of Hiding Iran Sanctions Violations to Get Deal with Nukes", *The Washington Times*, June 9, 2015, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jun/9/un-report-accuses-us-hiding-iran-violations/>

<sup>144</sup> "U.S. Denies Shielding Iranian Sanctions Violations from UN", *US News*, June 10, 2015, at <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/06/10/us-denies-shielding-iranian-sanctions-violations-from-un>

<sup>145</sup> "Ukraine: UN Reports Uptick In Internal Displacement As Country's Conflict Grinds On", *UN News*, June 9, 2015, at [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51099#.VYe7B\\_mqqko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51099#.VYe7B_mqqko)

<sup>146</sup> "Samantha Power Arrives in Ukraine to Open UN Office for Support the Minsk Agreements", June 10, 2015, at <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/samantha-power-arrives-in-ukraine-to-open-un-office-for-support-the-minsk-agreements-390771.html>

<sup>147</sup> "Yemen: UNESCO Deplores Destruction Of Sana'a Heritage Site Bearing 'Soul Of Yemeni People'", *UN News*, June 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51134#.VYqDURuqqko>

<sup>148</sup> "UN Launches New Aid Appeal As Yemen Faces 'Looming Humanitarian Catastrophe'", *UN News*, June 19, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51197#.VZZxDRuqqko>

<sup>149</sup> "Religious Leaders at Forefront of Fight against Intolerance, Says UN Chief", *UN News*, June 10, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51111#.VYpv7Ruqqko>

<sup>150</sup> "In Tajikistan, Ban Highlights Importance Of Safe Water, Sanitation And Human Rights", *UN News*, June 9, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51096#.VYeyvmmqqko>

<sup>151</sup> "In Kyrgyzstan, UN Chief Celebrates Parliaments As Beacon Of Human Rights Efforts", *UN News*, June 11, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51121#.VYp0dhuqqko>

and its assent to the Universal Periodic Review carried out by the Human Rights Council.<sup>152</sup> In Turkmenistan, he lauded the role of the country in managing issues of climate change and sustainable development, while again emphasizing the importance of protecting human rights.<sup>153</sup>

At the Climate Change summit being held in Bonn, scientists of the IPCC have said that a 30-70 percent melting of the permafrost by the year 2100 will release substantial amounts of Green House Gases into the atmosphere and result in further global warming.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, a meeting of the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space took up the issue of how satellites can be used to understand and mitigate the consequences of global warming.<sup>155</sup> Also, at the World of Work Summit of the ILO, it was brought out that green technologies can also provide greater avenues for employment world over.<sup>156</sup> In the run up to the Paris Conference in December, the Pope too has issued an encyclical urging people all over the world to give consideration to lifestyles that are taking a toll on the environment and climate.<sup>157</sup> This was appreciated by the Secretary General.<sup>158</sup> The High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport set up by the Secretary General met in Milan and agreed to spell out policy options for developing environment friendly transportation to limit carbon emissions.<sup>159</sup> In yet another event, the Secretary General urged the insurance sector businesses to follow up on their commitment to increase climate-smart investment and focus on disaster risk mitigation to help build a sustainable world.<sup>160</sup>

Guyana is likely to seek UN arbitration for a final settlement of its boundary dispute with Venezuela.<sup>161</sup> In Columbia, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has raised an alert regarding

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<sup>152</sup> "Welcoming Progress towards MDGs, Ban Encourages Uzbekistan To Promote Human Rights", *UN News*, June 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51133#.VYqDlXuqqko>

<sup>153</sup> "In Turkmenistan, UN Chief Says Future Peace, Development Hinge On Human Rights", *UN News*, June 13, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51146#.VYqE8xuqqko>

<sup>154</sup> "Scientists Raise Permafrost Alarm at United Nation's Climate Talks", *NDTV News*, June 9, 2015, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/scientists-raise-permafrost-alarm-at-united-nations-climate-talks-770181>

<sup>155</sup> "At Annual Meeting, UN Committee On Space Issues Renews Focus On Sustainability And Climate Change", *UN News*, June 10, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51117#.VYpyzhuqqko>

<sup>156</sup> "Inaction on Climate Change Now Will Cost Us All In The Future," UN Labour Chief Warns Work Summit", *UN News*, June 11, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51122#.VYp4jRuqqko>

<sup>157</sup> "Pope Francis Asks Rich Nations To Stop Climate Change", June 19, 2015, at <http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/2015-06-19/Pope-Francis-asks-rich-nations-to-stop-climate-change-158111>

<sup>158</sup> "UN Chief Thanks Pope for Encyclical on Care Of the Environment", June 19, 2015, at [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/06/19/un\\_chief\\_thanks\\_pope\\_for\\_encyclical\\_on\\_care\\_of\\_the\\_environment/1152705](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/06/19/un_chief_thanks_pope_for_encyclical_on_care_of_the_environment/1152705)

<sup>159</sup> "Sustainable Transport Essential To New Global Goals And Low Carbon Economy – UN Panel", *UN News*, June 12, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51142#.VYqDuBuqqko>

<sup>160</sup> "Ban Urges Insurance Industry Leaders to Play Strong Role in Shaping More Sustainable Future", *UN News*, June 17, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51182#.VYvjGRuqqko>

<sup>161</sup> "UN Asked To Intervene In Border Dispute with Venezuela", June 11, 2015, at <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/UN-asked-to-intervene-in-border-dispute-with-Venezuela>

the armed clashes between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and government forces despite the 30-month talks in the country.<sup>162</sup>

The much awaited report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance has been released. The Report outlines several limitations of the current UN system and suggests the way forward for UN Reforms.<sup>163</sup> June 19 has been declared as the International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> "Colombia's Peace Talks at Risk amid Renewed Clashes, Warns UN Refugee Agency Chief", *UN News*, June 11, 2015, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51127#.VYp41Buqqko>

<sup>163</sup> "Top Diplomats' Report Builds Case For Change at the UN", June 16, 2015, at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2015/Jun-16/302306-top-diplomats-report-builds-case-for-change-at-the-un.ashx>

<sup>164</sup> "UN Declares June 19 International Day For The Elimination Of Sexual Violence In Conflict", June 20, 2015, at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/un-declares-june-19-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict\\_1616639.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/un-declares-june-19-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict_1616639.html)