

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

- **In another blow to Afghan peace process, a top Afghan peace negotiator Maulvi Arsala Rahmani shot dead in Kabul; Afghan officials fear tough times post withdrawal**

In another blow to Afghan peace process, according to reports, gunmen shot dead a top Afghan peace negotiator Maulvi Arsala Rahmani in the capital Kabul on May 13, 2012. Rahmani was one of the most senior members on Afghanistan's High Peace Council, set up by President Hamid Karzai two years ago to open talks with insurgents. "He (Rahmani) was stuck in heavy traffic when another car beside him opened fire," said General Mohammad Zahir, head of the investigations unit for Kabul police. Rahmani, a former Taliban minister, was on his way to a meeting with lawmakers and other officials in a government-run media centre in the heavily barricaded diplomatic centre of Kabul. However, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed, denied involvement in Sunday's assassination. The head of the peace council and former Afghan president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated by a suicide bomber last year.¹

In another development, according to Afghan officials, Afghanistan faces tougher security challenges in the next phase of a transition from foreign to Afghan forces as insurgents step up their attacks. According to reports, President Hamid Karzai is expected to announce on May 10, 2012 the transfer of 230 districts and the centres of all provincial capitals to Afghan control in the third phase of a handover before most Nato troops pull out by the end of 2014. "In 2014 we will face a national survival test, but our enemies have to know that this nation is committed to fulfil this process," Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, head of the transition process, told reporters in Kabul.²

Pakistan

- **Pakistan Foreign Minister Khar Pakistan refutes US claim of Zawahiri's presence in Pakistan; US ambassador to Pakistan plans to step down; US panel cuts aids to Pakistan; Siachen talks to be held in June; Pakistan tests a short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile**

According to reports, Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar has refuted US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's claim that Al Qaeda top leader Al Zawahiri is present in Pakistan. Clinton made the observation while on a tour to India. Khar said if anyone has such information, they should provide it to Pakistan.³

¹ Gunmen kill senior Afghan Peace negotiator, *Dawn*, May 13, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/13/gunmen-kill-senior-afghan-peace-negotiator/>

² Afghanistan faces tougher times in next security handover, *Dawn*, May 10, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/10/afghanistan-faces-tougher-times-in-next-security-handover/>

³ "Khar challenges US claim of Zawahiri's presence in Pakistan", *Dawn*, May 7, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/07/khar-challenges-us-claim-of-zawahiris-presence-in-pakistan/>

In another development, according to reports, US envoy to Pakistan Cameron Munter is planning to step down this summer. Munter, who was sworn in as ambassador to Pakistan in October 2010, has served during a period of unprecedented turbulence and suspicion between the two countries, whose uneasy alliance since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks has centered around the fight against militants operating from Pakistan.⁴

According to reports, a US House of Representatives panel moved on May 9, 2012 to cut the foreign aid budget by some nine per cent, targeting economic aid and contributions to the United Nations and the World Bank. The panel maintains aid to Israel and Egypt at the administration's requests but denies \$800 million that was requested for a special fund for training and equipping Pakistan's military in counterinsurgency tactics.⁵

Meanwhile, according to reports, Pakistan has said that it will host next round of talks with India over Siachen on June 11-12, 2012. "Siachen is part of the dialogue process between India and Pakistan and defence secretary level talks on Siachen will be held on June 11 and 12 in Islamabad," foreign ministry spokesman Moazzam Ahmad Khan. "We want to resolve all issues through meaningful and result-oriented dialogue, and Siachen is an issue which is a source of concern for both the countries," Khan added.⁶

In other developments, reports noted that Pakistan has carried out a successful test firing of a short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile on May 10, 2012, the military said. The launch of the Hatf III, which has a range of up to 290 kilometres and can also carry conventional warheads, came at the end of a field training exercise, a military statement said.⁷

Bangladesh

- **Dipu Moni Co-chairs the first Bangladesh-India Joint Commission meeting; Bangladesh buys fifty double-decker buses from India; Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman receives Indira Gandhi Gold Plaque 2011**

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni co-chaired the first Bangladesh-India Joint Commission meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister SM Krishna on May 7, 2012. The Joint Commission was formed under the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka on September 6-7, 2011.⁸

⁴ US envoy to Pakistan to depart this summer, *Dawn*, May 8, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/08/us-envoy-to-pakistan-to-depart-this-summer/>

⁵ Panel cuts foreign aid, military aid to Pakistan, *Dawn*, May 10, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/10/panel-cuts-foreign-aid-military-aid-to-pakistan/>

⁶ India-Pakistan talks on disputed glacier in June, *Dawn*, May 11, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/11/india-pakistan-siachen-talks-in-june-islamabad/>

⁷ Pakistan tests nuclear capable missile, *Dawn*, May 10, 2012 at <http://dawn.com/2012/05/10/pakistan-tests-nuclear-capable-missile/>

⁸ "Indo-Bangla joint body meets today", *The Daily Star*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=233093>.

Reports noted that under India's \$1 billion credit agreement inked two years ago, Bangladesh bought fifty double-decker buses from India.⁹

In other developments, according to reports, Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman visited Kolkata on May 7 to receive the prestigious Indira Gandhi Gold Plaque 2011. Mr. Atiur has been awarded the Gold Plaque by the Asiatic Society in Kolkata in recognition of his significant contribution to international co-operation towards human progress.¹⁰

Sri Lanka

- **Prof. G. L. Peiris attends Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau; The Presidential Task Force for a Trilingual Sri Lanka held its preliminary meeting; Sri Lanka- Kuwait sign cooperation protocol; Sri Lanka's Atomic Energy Authority commenced an emergency response programme**

Reports noted that External Affairs Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris left for Egypt on May 10, 2012 to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau held from May 7-10 in Charm El Sheikh, Egypt.¹¹

The Presidential Task Force for a Trilingual Sri Lanka headed by the Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunga held its preliminary discussion at BMICH, Colombo on May 10, 2012.¹²

According to reports, Sri Lanka and Kuwait have agreed to strengthen bilateral relations between the two states and exchange experiences in various fields. The two countries have signed a cooperation protocol on May 10 to protect the rights and duties of Sri Lankan workers employed in the rich Middle Eastern country. Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare Dilan Perera who is on a visit to Kuwait has signed the protocol with the Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Lt. Gen. Ahmad Abdulatif Al-Rujaib.¹³

In other developments, reports noted that Sri Lanka's Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) has commenced an emergency response programme with the Disaster Management Ministry in the event of a nuclear disaster. The AEA is currently preparing a document requesting funds from the Power and Energy Ministry for its nuclear disaster mitigation programme. The AEA has commenced an emergency response programme after the Fukushima disaster and India's decision to increase the capacity of the Kudankulam nuclear plant in South India.¹⁴

⁹ Azad, M Abul Kalam, "50 Indian double-decker buses arrive: 240 more in pipeline", *The Daily Star*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=233123>.

¹⁰ "BB governor leaving for Kolkata to receive Indira Gandhi Gold Plaque", *The Daily Star*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=233100>.

¹¹ "External Affairs Minister leaves for Egypt", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, May 10, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201205/20120510external_affairs_minister_leaves_egypt.htm.

¹² "First meeting of Presidential Task Force on a Trilingual Sri Lanka", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, May 10, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201205/20120510first_meeting_presidential_task_force_trilingual_sl.htm

¹³ "Sri Lanka, Kuwait to forge stronger relations, signs agreement to protect worker rights", *Colombo Page*, May 12, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May12_1336841175CH.php

¹⁴ "Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Authority seeks funds to set up a nuclear emergency response programme", *Colombo Page*, May 13, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12/May13_1336889764CH.php.

Maldives

- **Maldivian President visits India; US Ambassador accredited to the Maldives pays a courtesy call on President**

In an important development, President Dr Mohamed Waheed made an official visit to India, on the invitation of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on May 11. Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Abdul Samad Abdulla, Minister of Finance and Treasury Abdulla Jihad, and Minister of Housing and Environment Dr Mohamed Muiz and first Lady Madam Ilham Hussain accompanied the President during this visit. President said that the main objective of the visit was to strengthen the existing bilateral relations between the Maldives and India. During his visit, President Dr Mohamed Waheedy met with President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, the Minister of External Affairs of India, Mr S.M. Krishna, Foreign Secretary Mr Ranjan Mathai and National Security Advisor of India Shivshankar Menon.¹⁵ At the press briefing the President said that senior officials of the Indian government had given their assurance that the Indian government's assistance and support to the Maldives would always continue unaffected.¹⁶

In another development, the United States Ambassador accredited to the Maldives Ms Patricia A. Butenis paid a courtesy call on President Dr Mohamed Waheed on May 8, 2012. At the meeting held at the President's Office, the US Ambassador expressed her concerns over the current economic situation in the Maldives. The Ambassador assured the President that the US would provide any assistance required, in getting international aid in stabilising the Maldivian economy.¹⁷

B. East Asia

South East Asia

- **Singapore foreign minister visits India; Thailand signs Tablet deal with China; Protests against China in the Philippines; China, Thailand conduct joint naval exercise; India likely to withdraw from Vietnam oil block; Malaysian Airlines to start more flight to India**

According to reports, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law K. Shanmugam arrived in New Delhi on a three-day introductory official visit to India during which he co-chaired the second Joint Ministerial Committee Meeting on bilateral cooperation between the two nations with External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna. Shanmugam, who was on a visit to India from May 7 to May 10, 2012 during his stay in Delhi called on Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar. He also met with the Minister of Law and Justice and Minister of

¹⁵ "President departs on official visit to India", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, May 11, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=7379>.

¹⁶ "Indian Government is with us" - President Waheed", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, May 12, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=7393>.

¹⁷ "US Ambassador calls on the President", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, May 8, 2012 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=7351>.

Minority Affairs and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Shanmugam also visited Guwahati and Ahmedabad.¹⁸

In another development, the Thai Information and Communication Technology Ministry signed a US \$ 32.8 million contract on May 10, 2012, to buy the first batch of 400,000 computer tablets from a Chinese supplier. The deal with Shenzhen Scope Scientific Development follows a one-and-a-half-month delay. The company must deliver all the tablets within 60 days of the contract signing or “face a fine for each day’s delay”, ICT Minister Anudith Nakornthap said. The first lot of 2,000 tablets will be delivered to the ICT Ministry next week. Shenzhen Scope Scientific Development, the maker of the Scopad brand, offered a price of US \$ 81 per unit for the government’s One Tablet per Child project. According to reports, an ICT Ministry source said they are working with several insurance firms to come up with a warranty model to charge 300 baht a year as an insurance premium.¹⁹

Reports noted that shortly after China launched deep water oil rigging in South China Sea hundreds of Filipinos on May 11, 2012 rallied outside the Chinese embassy in Manila to protest against Beijing’s alleged flexing of the muscles against Philippines over territorial disputes in the region. Filipinos have planned similar rallies in Australia, New York, Canada, Hong Kong and other places. As the rally was planned earlier a large posse of policemen was posted outside the embassy.²⁰

According to reports, Chinese and the Thai naval forces personnel started joint military training Zhanjiang in south China’s Guangdong province on May 11, 2012. China and Thailand respectively sent teams of 372 members and 126 members to participate in the training, codenamed Blue Commando-2012. The training, focusing on anti-terrorism, consists of field survival training and other drills, as well as seminars. The training is the second of its kind by the two navies’ marine forces since 2010.²¹

Reports noted that India is likely to withdraw from an oil block in the South China Sea after hydrocarbons did not show up in an exploratory well. Vietnam has also been conveyed about plans to terminate operations on commercial considerations. The block has been at the centre of much diplomatic problems between China, Vietnam and India that included demarches, summons and affirmations of sovereignty over the same patch of sea.²²

In other developments, according to reports, Malaysian Airlines is looking at enhancing air connectivity to India, especially to Tier-II cities. “We are looking at more connectivity to India

¹⁸ ‘Singapore, India reaffirm excellent bilateral ties’, *Channel News Asia*, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1200454/1/.html> May 10, 2012

¹⁹ ‘ICT Ministry finally inks deal for tablets’, *Bangkok Post*, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/telecom/292741/ict-ministry-finally-inks-deal-for-tablets> May 11, 2012

²⁰ ‘Filipinos rally against China in Manila’, *Northern Voices Online*, <http://nvonews.com/2012/05/12/filipinos-rally-against-china-in-manila/> May 12, 2012

²¹ ‘China, Thailand begin joint military exercise’, *China Daily*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/11/content_15274276.htm May 11, 2012

²² ‘India finds oil drilling off Vietnam a losing proposition’, *The Hindu*, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3405680.ece> May 11, 2012

and are evaluating the market here,” Malaysian Airlines General Manager (Western India) Nur Shaffik Haris said that in a media interview.²³

China

- **China, Japan and ROK start FTA talks this year; Colombian President visit China; Military Newspaper warns manila; PLA denies level-2 combat capabilities; Hu urges SCO to ensure security for members; Putin to visit China; Wen congratulates Medvedev; Thailand-China start joint military training; Chinese defense Minister visits US Marine base; Chinese navy training vessel visit India; AL chief wants closer China-Arab ties**

In a recent development China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have decided to launch talks of a free trade area later this year.²⁴ In addition to this Colombian President concluded his five day state visit to China.²⁵

Meanwhile the Chinese defense ministry has denied reports which indicate that the PLA units have entered level-2 combat readiness.²⁶ On the other hand the China's Liberation Army Daily has warned Manila that any attempt to seize the Huangyan Island's sovereignty will be not be accepted by the Chinese government.²⁷

Hu Jintao has expressed desire that the SCO should deepen cooperation to ensure mutual, reliable security for its members.²⁸ There are also reports that President Putin will be visiting China early June 2012 to attend the Beijing summit of SCO.²⁹ Meanwhile Premier Wen Jiabao congratulated Dmitry Medvedev on becoming the Russian Prime Minister.³⁰

On the regional front, the Marine forces of China and Thailand are conducting a joint military training in South China's Guangdong province.³¹

²³ 'Malaysian Airlines planning to increase India connectivity', *The Economic Times*, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-05-13/news/31689716_1_air-connectivity-aviation-market-passengers May 13, 2012

²⁴ "China, Japan, ROK to start FTA talks this year" *China Daily*, May 13, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/13/content_15279628.htm

²⁵ "Colombian president concludes China visit" *China Daily*, May 12, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/12/content_15277881.htm

²⁶ "China denies PLA at level-2 combat readiness" *China Daily*, May 12, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/12/content_15276516.htm

²⁷ "Military newspaper warns Manila" *China Daily*, May 10, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/10/content_15260400.htm

²⁸ "Hu urges SCO to ensure security for its members" *China Daily*, May 12, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/12/content_15275682.htm

²⁹ "Putin to pay state visit to China" *China Daily*, May 11, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/11/content_15274653.htm

³⁰ "Wen congratulates Medvedev on becoming Russian PM" *China Daily*, May 8, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/08/content_15241401.htm

³¹ "China, Thailand begin joint military training" *China Daily*, May 11, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/11/content_15274276.htm

In another important development, Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie visited Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. It is the home of the II Marine Expeditionary Force.³²

In other developments, according to reports, the Chinese Navy training vessel “Zhenghe” arrive Kochi Port, India for a good will visit.³³

The Arab League (AL) chief Nabil al-Arabi expressed his desire for closer relations between Arab countries and China.³⁴

Japan

- **Japan to send its second SDF team to S. Sudan; Japan and South Korea to sign a defence pact soon**

According to reports, the Japanese government has decided to send its second SDF team to South Sudan as part of UN Peacekeeping mission there, even though Tokyo seems confident that the conflict between Sudan and newly independent South Sudan has reduced. It has also been argued by the Japanese officials that the SDF’s participation in the peacekeeping mission does not really violate Japan’s long-held rules that restrict its participation in peacekeeping mission in conflict areas.³⁵

In a significant development, reports noted that Japan and South Korea are to sign a pact on the protection of defense secrets as early as later this month during talks between Japanese defense Minister Naoki Tanaka and his South Korean counterpart Kim Kwan Jin scheduled to be held in Japan. With the help of the agreement-General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)- the two countries would be able to share military data such as missile trajectory information gathered by Aegis-equipped destroyers. This is the first time that the two have decided to sign the agreement since the end of the World War II.³⁶

South Korea

- **South Korea and the US conducts joint air force training exercise**

Reports noted that South Korea and the US recently conducted a joint air force training exercise starting from May 7. The exercise known as the “Max thunder” is held in South Korea’s western

³² “Chinese defense minister visits US Marines base” *China Daily*, May 11, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/11/content_15264172.htm

³³ “Chinese navy training vessel visits India” *China Daily*, May 9, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/09/content_15252062.htm

³⁴ “AL chief calls for closer Arab-China ties” *China Daily*, May 8, 2012 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-05/08/content_15237510.htm

³⁵ “2nd SDF team to be dispatched to S. Sudan”, *Daily Yomiuri*, May 12, 2012, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120511005666.htm>

³⁶ “Japan, S. Korea near defense pact” , *Daily Yomiuri*, May 9, 2012, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120508005678.htm>

air space and will end on May 18. The exercise would demonstrate the ability of the allied air forces to “immediately respond in cases of contingency on the Korean Peninsula”.³⁷

North Korea

- **North Korean leaders busy visiting Southeast Asian countries**

In a significant development, North Korea’s No.2 leader Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly (North Korean Parliament) visited Singapore. He was accompanied by Ri Kwang Gun, chairman of the Commission for Joint Venture and Investment and North Korean Light Industry Minister An Jong Su. After Singapore, Kim is to leave for Indonesia on a four-day long visit. In the meantime, Chief of the General Staff of the North Korean People’s Army- Ri Yong Ho- too recently paid a visit to Laos. During his visit, Ri reportedly insisted on the necessity of the two countries’ armed forces making “positive efforts to deepen friendship”.³⁸

C. Russia

- **Russia lifts its embargo on weapons supplies to Libya; Russia insists US to provide guarantees that the Missile Defence Shield will not be used against it; Russia and France agree to develop their bilateral relations; Medvedev proposes more rapid increase of alcohol and tobacco excise taxes; Medvedev creates a commission to investigate the Sukhoi Super-jet crash in Indonesia; Putin submits Medvedev’s candidature for Duma approval as prime minister; EU foreign ministers to discuss relations with Russia; Russia to encourage foreign investment in the disputed Kuril islands; Reports: Russia is testing an Italian tank; Medvedev instructs to propose amendments to laws on rallies and marches; Russia’s gold and forex reserves down to 523 billion dollars for the week April 27-May 4, 2012**

According to reports, Russia has lifted its embargo on weapons exports to Libya which it had imposed during the turmoil in the region.³⁹

President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia will insist that the United States give guarantees under which missile defence was not targeted against Russia.⁴⁰

Russian President Vladimir Putin and France’s President Elect Francois Hollande in a telephonic

³⁷ “South Korea, US hold joint air force exercise”, Mainichi Daily, May 7, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120507p2g00m0in093000c.html>

³⁸ “N. Korea’s No. 2 arrives in Singapore”, Mainichi Daily, May 12, 2012, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120512p2g00m0in028000c.html>

³⁹ “RF lifts embargo on weapons supplies to Libya”, ITAR-TASS, May 7, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/412255.html>

⁴⁰ “RF to insist US guarantee MD not targeted against Moscow”, ITAR-TASS, May 7, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/412205.html>

conversation have expressed “their firm commitment to pool efforts to ensure progressive development of relations between Russian and France, which are of top priority for both states.”⁴¹

Dmitry Medvedev has proposed to increase alcohol and tobacco excises more rapidly than planned. At present alcohol and tobacco excises will grow by 20% by 2015.⁴²

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has instructed the Industry Ministry, the Foreign Ministry and the United Aircraft-Building Corporation to investigate the incident with the Sukhoi Superjet 100 that went missing in Indonesia on Wednesday, May 9. At present, Armavia and Aeroflot – Russian Airlines have eight Sukhoi Superjet 100 planes. As of the middle of April the planes have made over 3,350 commercial flights with about 6,500 flying hours. There are about 170 orders for the Sukhoi Superjet 100 planes.⁴³

Russian President Vladimir Putin has submitted to the State Duma lower parliament house the candidature of his predecessor, Dmitry Medvedev, for the post of Russian prime minister. It is expected that the State Duma will approve Medvedev as new prime minister at its extraordinary session on Tuesday, May 8.⁴⁴

According to reports, European Union foreign ministers will meet on May 14 to discuss international agenda issues, from the situation in Afghanistan and the Middle East to the human rights situation in Ukraine. Another important theme of the meeting in Brussels will be relations with Russia.⁴⁵

Sakhalin Region governor Alexander Khoroshavin has said that foreign investors from South Korea and China will for the first time come to the Kuril Islands and Japanese investors are also welcome to invest in the region. These projects are within the broader objective of development of Russia’s Far East.⁴⁶

Russia is testing Italy’s Centauro wheeled tank and considering building it under license. The first two machines with 105-mm and 125-mm guns are on trial at a Moscow Region proving ground. The 24 ton tank has a four-man crew, top speed of 100 km/h (60 mph) and range of 800 km (500 miles). It has a main gun and two 7.62 mm machineguns. In the past, Russia had signed a deal

⁴¹ “Putin, Hollande agree to pool efforts to promote bilateral relations”, ITAR-TASS, May 9, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/413051.html>

⁴² “Medvedev proposes more rapid increase of alcohol, tobacco excises”, ITAR-TASS, May 8, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/412697.html>

⁴³ “Medvedev creates commission to investigate Superjet incident”, ITAR-TASS, May 10, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/413587.html>

⁴⁴ “Putin submits Medvedev’s candidature for Duma approval as prime minister”, ITAR-TASS, May 7, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/412010.html>

⁴⁵ “EU foreign ministers to discuss relations with Russia”, ITAR-TASS, May 12, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/415829.html>

⁴⁶ “Foreign investors to come to Kurils for first time”, ITAR-TASS, May 12, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/416011.html>

with Italy in December for the semi-knocked down assembly of 60 Lynx light multirole armoured vehicles (LMV) from Iveco.⁴⁷

In other developments, Medvedev has instructed to make proposals, by July, on amendments to the Russian laws on the procedure of rallies, marches, demonstrations and pickets, and to laws on administrative liability to secure better protection of constitutional rights and freedoms of Russian citizens.⁴⁸

According to reports, Russia's gold and foreign exchange reserves plunged by 0.4 billion dollars (or by 0.73 percent) from 523.3 billion dollars to 522.9 billion dollars as of April 27-May 4. The level of gold and foreign exchange reserves totaled 498.649 billion dollars as at January 1. The record level of Russia's gold and foreign exchange reserves—598.1 billion dollars was set on August 8, 2008.⁴⁹

D. West Asia

Iran

- **Iran, Iraq sign joint statement on mutual cooperation; Iran mulls regional trade and economic alliance; Brazil acknowledges Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy; India pressed by US to restrict energy ties with Iran; Iran, Oman hold 10th joint military committee meeting; India, Iran to expand strategic cooperation; NAM summit to be held on August 22**

In a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart, the Iranian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs signed a joint statement on mutual cooperation and expressed Iran's desire to expand ties and cooperation with Iraq. He emphasised the importance of bilateral cooperation in stabilisation of the region and consolidating historical ties between the two countries.⁵⁰

Reports noted that Iran is considering the creation of a regional economic union along the lines of the European Union to counter the challenges of peace and security in the region and also to increase interaction between regional countries.⁵¹

According to reports, the Brazilian ambassador to Tehran has said that his country fully acknowledges the right of countries, including Iran, to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). He stressed that issues

⁴⁷ "Russia Testing Italian Tank", RIA Novosti, May 12, 2012, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120512/173407220.html

⁴⁸ "Medvedev instructs to propose amendments to laws on rallies and marches", ITAR-TASS, May 7, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/411816.html>

⁴⁹ "Russia's gold, forex reserves down to 523 bln dlrs on Apr 27-May 4", ITAR-TASS, May 10, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/414323.html>

⁵⁰ "Iranian, Iraqi ministers sign joint statement on mutual cooperation", *Islamic Republic News Agency website*, May 6, 2012

⁵¹ "Iran mulling formation of economic union in region - senior official", *Islamic Republic News Agency website*, May 6, 2012

relating to Iran's nuclear programme must be addressed through negotiations and dialogue, possibly during the next round of Iran and the 5+1 group.⁵²

Separately, in a decree addressed to the Russian Foreign Ministry, President Vladimir Putin has instructed that Russia must strive to ensure that the issues surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme is settled exclusively through political and diplomatic means, on a gradual and mutual basis.⁵³

Following the talks with visiting US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, during which India was urged to 'do more' to scale down its oil trade to Iran, External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna has stated that India has to look at the issue beyond energy trade as it has vital stakes in the Gulf region. India has asked Iran to abide by international obligations under the NPT but has maintained that it has a right to pursue nuclear activities for peaceful purposes.⁵⁴

Reports noted that Iran and Oman held the 10th Joint Military Committee meeting on May 12 in Tehran. The two countries discussed expansion of regional and trans-regional relations, reinforcement of mutual cooperation in fields such as training and culture, and protection of sea borders.⁵⁵

In another development, in a meeting with visiting Indian Deputy National Security Advisor, Latha Reddy, the Iranian Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council has welcomed India's will to expand its strategic cooperation with Tehran. Both sides stressed the need to enhance cooperation in fields including energy, fight against common threats such as terrorism, piracy and narcotics, and in defence and naval security.⁵⁶ The Indian Minister for External Affairs, E Ahamed, also noted that India-Iran relations are 'satisfactory' in the political, economic, cultural, industrial and energy fields, in a meeting with the Iranian Foreign Minister in the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Shaykh.⁵⁷

In other developments, Iran has invited member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement to a summit to be held in Tehran on August 22 this year.⁵⁸

Syria

- **Syrian minister slams European sanctions; Russia will not change position on Syria - Foreign Minister; Elections held to Syrian People's Assembly**

The Syrian Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister has noted the direct implications on the Syrian people of European sanctions imposed on the country. He expressed appreciation for the

⁵² "Brazilian diplomat stresses Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy", *Islamic Republic News Agency website*, May 6, 2012

⁵³ "Putin issues Russian Foreign Ministry with instructions on Iran", *Interfax news agency*, May 7, 2012

⁵⁴ "India resists US pressure to restrict energy ties with Iran - PTI", *PTI news agency*, May 8, 2012

⁵⁵ "Iran, Oman to hold joint military committee meeting 12 May", *Islamic Republic News Agency*, May 9, 2012

⁵⁶ "Iran, India security officials call for strategic cooperation", *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1*, May 9, 2012

⁵⁷ "Iran, India ties improving steadily - foreign minister", *Islamic Republic News Agency website*, May 10, 2012

⁵⁸ "Iran invites leaders of Non-Aligned Movement to Tehran summit - agency", *Mehr news agency*, May 6, 2012

work of international organisations that are working in Syria. He reiterated Syria's commitment to ensure the success of Kofi Annan's peace plan.⁵⁹ The Syrian opposition on the other hand has decried claims that the plan is being implemented. The United States has also said that President Bashar al-Assad has not done enough to implement the plan.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Russia has announced that it will not change its position on Syria under the influence of external pressure. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, stated at a news conference in Beijing that Russia wants to find a peaceful solution to the crisis and will support implementation of the plans of UN and Arab League special envoy, Kofi Annan.⁶¹

In other developments, amidst the violence, elections were held for the People's Assembly on May 7. The Syrian news agency SANA reported large turnout at the polls. Government officials stated that the increasing turnout indicated Syrians' desire to 'continue the reform process' led by President Assad.⁶²

Turkey

● Turkey "losing hope" on Syria, denies support for military intervention

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that although Turkey has supported the Annan peace plan for Syria, it is "losing hope" about the crisis, given recent developments. He urged the UN to take more action, perhaps by boosting the number of UN observers in Syria. Erdogan denied reports that Turkey would support NATO military intervention in Syria. Turkey currently hosts nearly 23,000 Syrians in border camps.⁶³

Israel & Palestine

● Netanyahu urges Palestinians to return to negotiations with new unity government; China-Arab forum to boost ties, support Israeli-Palestinian peace process

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has appealed to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to 'use [the] opportunity' of the newly formed Israeli unity government to rekindle stalled peace talks. No direct (face to face) negotiations have taken place since Netanyahu took office in 2009, except for brief talks in September 2010. Palestinians have insisted that Israel stop settlement activity in East Jerusalem; Israel has so far continued settlement construction in the area, and home demolitions in occupied Arab neighbourhoods.⁶⁴

In another development, China's Special Envoy to the Middle East has stated that the China-Arab Cooperation Forum can play a significant role in boosting Arab-Chinese ties. Wu Sike announced

⁵⁹ "Syrian deputy foreign minister slams "inhumane" European sanctions", *SANA news agency website*, May 8, 2012

⁶⁰ "Syrian opposition decries claim Annan's plan is on track", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat website*, May 5, 2012

⁶¹ "Russia will not change position on Syria under external pressure – Lavrov", *RIA Novosti news agency*, May 10, 2012

⁶² "Syria interior minister says necessary measures taken to ensure safe, free polls", *SANA news agency website*, May 6, 2012; "Syrians turn out in large numbers for parliamentary polls - SANA website", *SANA news agency website*, May 7, 2012

⁶³ "Turkey "losing hope" about Annan plan for Syria – premier", *Anatolia news agency*, May 8, 2012

⁶⁴ "Israeli PM urges Palestinians to resume talks with new unity government", *The Jerusalem Post website*, May 9, 2012

this after a meeting with President Abbas. Wu said the forum would also push forward the peace process at a crucial time. The next forum meeting is scheduled to be held in Tunis at the end of May this year.⁶⁵

Yemen

- **Heavy casualties in fighting between al Qaeda and the security forces**

According to reports, eight soldiers and 20 al-Qaeda militants were killed on May 12 following clashes and shelling between al-Qaeda fighters and the Yemeni Army at Zinjibar in the Aden province. Twelve other soldiers were also injured in the incident. The large number of casualties from the Al Qaeda side is caused by the air strikes by the Yemeni security forces. The clashes erupted as the Army was advancing towards Zinjibar and Jaar, which are infested by the presence of al Qaeda. The Yemeni Defence Ministry is launching its “decisive and historic” battle for eradicating terrorism in the south of the country.⁶⁶

In another incident, thirty Yemen soldiers were killed on May 7, 2012 when al Qaida militants suddenly launched an attack on a military base in the Dofas district in the Abyan province. A dozens of other soldiers were taken hostage by the attackers. They also captured some tanks, cannons and other heavy weapons from the military base.⁶⁷

E. Africa

- **Ranbaxy introduces anti-Malaria drug in Africa; South Africa seeks Indian Cooperation for ICT skills; Top commander of Lord’s resistance Army captured in Central Africa; Egypt receives \$1 billion from Saudi Arabia; Libya warns Italy on illegal immigration into Europe**

Reports noted that Indian drug manufacturer Ranbaxy Laboratories further consolidated its presence in the emerging market of Africa, by introducing its new malaria-fighting drug “Synriam” and setting up manufacturing facilities in Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa. The drug, which provides quick relief from most malaria-related symptoms, including fever, and has a high cure rate of over 95 per cent, came as a boon for people in a continent plagued by malaria. The new drug has been approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for marketing in India and conforms to the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) for using combination therapy in malaria.⁶⁸

In another development, following a meeting with Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil, South African President Jacob Zuma said that South Africa needs to enhance skills in the areas of engineering, information and communication technology, computer science, finance, economics,

⁶⁵ “China-Arab forum to support Palestinian peace process – envoy”, *Xinhua news agency*, May 7, 2012

⁶⁶ “20 Al-Qaeda fighters, 8 soldiers killed in preparation for ‘bigger battle’ in south Yemen”, *Yemen Post*, May 13, 2012, at <http://www.yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=5350&MainCat=3>

⁶⁷ “Al Qaida attack kills at least 30 Yemen troops,” *Gulf News*, May 7, 2012 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/yemen/al-qaida-attack-kills-at-least-30-yemen-troops-1.1019633>

⁶⁸ “Ranbaxy boosts presence in Africa with malaria drug”, *Zee News*, May 11, 2012, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/ranbaxy-boosts-presence-in-africa-with-malaria-drug_16936.html

and accounting to boost the country's infrastructure programme. Zuma said that South Africa will be seeking cooperation with India on the acquisition of some of these skills. He also praised the existing development partnership between the two countries.⁶⁹

According to reports, the Ugandan military officials announced that they captured Joseph Kony's top military strategist, Ceasar Acellam, in a gun battle in central Africa. Acellam was taken into custody along with two other rebel fighters in a region near the border between Congo and Central African Republic, while the rest of the group of about 30 rebels managed to escape. It is to be informed that for nearly three decades, Kony and members of his Lord's Resistance Army have been attacking rural villages across four central African countries and have become notorious for forcing children to become soldiers and sex slaves.⁷⁰

Reports noted that Saudi Arabia provided \$1 billion to Egypt's central bank, which will give the government some time to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Egyptian and Saudi officials have been "coordinating" to implement the rest of a Saudi aid package to the North African country, which includes \$500 million to finance high-priority development projects, \$250 million for buying petroleum products and a \$200 million grant for small and medium-sized projects and industries. It was opined that the Saudi aid may also give a boost to Egypt's efforts to obtain the \$3.2 billion loan it requested from the IMF.⁷¹

In other developments, during a visit to Rome, Libyan Foreign Minister Ashour bin Khayyal opined that a deteriorating security situation in southern Libya threatens to increase illegal immigration into Europe from Africa. Bin Khayyal said unrest in the Sahel desert region of Libya's south, as well as violence by armed factions or former fighters who mounted the 2011 insurrection that toppled Muammar Gaddafi, were raising concern ahead of elections. In response, Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi said Italy was stepping up cooperation to improve monitoring and border controls and would seek a bigger contribution from European Union partners.⁷²

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **Indigenous cryogenic engine successfully tested by ISRO**

According to reports, in a major step, ISRO on May 12, 2012 successfully tested the indigenous cryogenic engine to be used to propel the country's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle.

⁶⁹ "South Africa looking to India for ICT skills", *Business Tech*, May 9, 2012, at <http://businesstech.co.za/news/government/11380/south-africa-looking-to-india-for-ict-skills/>

⁷⁰ "Joseph Kony Top Commander Captured in Central Africa", *ABC News*, May 13, 2012, at <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/05/joseph-kony-top-commander-captured-in-central-africa/>

⁷¹ "Egypt Gets \$1 Billion from Saudi Arabia, Minister Says", *Bloomberg*, May 10, 2012, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-05-10/egypt-gets-1-billion-from-saudi-arabia-minister-says.html>

⁷² "Libya minister warns Italy on clandestine immigration", *Reuters*, May 12, 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/12/us-libya-italy-idUSBRE84B06S20120512>

The test was conducted at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district. "The acceptance test of the indigenous cryogenic engine for the forthcoming GSLV-D5 flight was conducted successfully for 200 seconds at 17:10 hrs..." an ISRO statement said. "The performance of the engine was as predicted," it added.⁷³

International

- **US to resume sales of military supplies to Bahrain; Britain's defense secretary Philip Hammond: UK defense budget problem fixed**

According to reports, the United States said on May 11, 2012 that it is partially resuming sales of military supplies to key Gulf Arab ally Bahrain but maintaining a freeze on certain wire-guided missiles and vehicles. US State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said, "the items that we are releasing are not used for crowd control," urging Bahrain to tackle "serious unresolved human rights issues" amid a crackdown on pro-democracy activists. The equipment and services were released "for the purpose of helping Bahrain maintain its external defense capabilities," she said. "We will continue to maintain the holds on the TOW missiles and Humvees that were notified to Congress last October," she said amid concerns that they could be used against protesters. Bahrain serves as the headquarters for the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, which patrols the Gulf amid perceived threats to Arab allies in the region from neighboring Iran.⁷⁴

In another development, according to reports, Britain's defense secretary Philip Hammond said that he had finally balanced his department's books. Hammond told the Sunday Times newspaper that he will be able to announce this week that he has fixed the 38 billion pound (\$61 billion, 47 billion euro) so-called "black hole" in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) budget. "In the next few days we will be in a position to make the grand announcement that I've balanced the books," Hammond told the weekly broadsheet. "In terms of reducing the size of the civil service, the army and the air force, we shouldn't have to do any more over and above what we've already announced," he added.⁷⁵

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Municipal elections may get deferred in Jammu and Kashmir; Special Police Officer (SPO)**

⁷³ "Isro successfully tests indigenous cryogenic engine," Hindustan Times, May 12, 2012, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/Isro-successfully-tests-indigenous-cryogenic-engine/Article1-854840.aspx>

⁷⁴ "U.S. Will Resume Some Arms Sales to Bahrain," May 11, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120511/DEFREG02/305110005/-1/7daysarchives/U-S-Will-Resume-Some-Arms-Sales-Bahrain>

⁷⁵ "Britain's Defense Budget 'Black Hole' Sorted: Minister," May 13, 2012, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120513/DEFREG01/305130003/-1/7daysarchives/Britain-8217-s-Defense-Budget-8216-Black-Hole-8217-Sorted-Minister>

's son killed in grenade attack; Five militants killed in Uri, North Kashmir; Jammu and Kashmir Government to deploy spotters in Indo-Nepal border

Reports noted that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah after the reopening of civil secretariat hinted that municipal elections in Jammu and Kashmir will now be held towards the end of the year. The Chief Minister said the elections will be definitely held this year as huge amount of funds under various centrally-sponsored schemes were withheld.⁷⁶

In another development, according to reports, Jammu and Kashmir government has decided to deploy former militants as its "spotters" (police or military intelligence informant) on Indo-Nepal border to keep a check on Kashmiris who use the route to enter into India. Demand for deployment of J&K police as also the former militants (spotters) came after a group of 40 people including women and children from Kashmir were reportedly detained on Indo-Nepal border a week ago. It was alleged that among the 40 people, some male members included the youth had allegedly crossed over to Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK) for arms training and were now coming back alongwith their families. Decision to deploy the former militants was taken after the J&K government refused to deploy the J&K police on Indo-Nepal border because of lack of manpower in the state' police force.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, according to reports, Army on May 10, 2012 said that they have killed five militants in an encounter while foiling an infiltration bid in Uri Sector of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. According to Army sources, this was the first infiltration bid that has been foiled this year. Giving details of the gun-battle that reportedly lasted for 13 hours, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Baramulla-based 19 Infantry Division, Major General Bipin Rawat, told that Army was having prior information that militants were readying to sneak in.⁷⁸

In other developments, according to reports, a 12-year-old boy, the son of a Special Police Officer, was killed when suspected militants lobbed a grenade at their house in a remote village of Kishtwar district.⁷⁹

North East India

- **Maoists active in lower Assam; Blockade in National Highway (NH) 31 and 52 against demand for Bodoland; Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) calls off bandh; Four Maoists killed in Assam; Banned drugs seized at Imphal airport, Manipur; NSCN (Khole-Kitovi) cadres arrested in Dimapur; NSCN (K) to open truce office in Myanmar; Home Minister visits Arunachal Pradesh**

According to reports, after forming an armed wing in upper Assam, the Maoist rebel groups are now trying to consolidate their bases in the chicken neck connecting the North East region with

⁷⁶ "Civic polls may be deferred", *Greater Kashmir*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/8/civic-polls-may-be-deferred-116.asp>

⁷⁷ "JK to deploy spotters on Indo-Nepal border", *Greater Kashmir*, May 13, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/14/jk-to-deploy-spotters-on-indo-nepal-border-6.asp>

⁷⁸ "5 militants killed in Uri", *Greater Kashmir*, May 10, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/11/5-militants-killed-in-uri-84.asp>

⁷⁹ "SPO's son killed in grenade attack", *Greater Kashmir*, May 8, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/May/9/spo-s-son-killed-in-grenade-attack-77.asp>

the rest of the country, while, attempts are also on to strengthen the leading in lower Assam committee. The Maoist rebels already have strong bases in North Bengal area of West Bengal and it would be easier for them to set up bases in the chicken neck. Sources pointed out that having bases in the narrow corridor would give a passage to the Maoist rebels to sneak into the region from the rest of the country. Moreover, such bases will give the rebels a link to Nepal and Bhutan.⁸⁰

Reports noted that Home Minister P. Chidambaram arrived in Arunachal Pradesh on May 12 to review the law and order situation. Arunachal Chief Minister Nabam Tuki and a minister received the Home Minister in state capital Itanagar. Chidambaram was accompanied by Minister of State for Home Jitendra Singh and Joint Secretary, North-East, Sambhu Singh. The minister is likely to review the law and order situation in the state, particularly in the troubled districts of Changling and Tirap. He is also expected to take stock of developmental works.⁸¹

Reports noted that the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) on May 7, 2012 called off their 300 hour 'dawn to dusk' bandh in the Garo Hills region after a huge public outcry against their one week bandh in three districts. In a release to the media houses, the self-styled "C-in-C" of the militant outfit, Sohan D Shira said the bandh will be temporarily postponed after it ended due to people's plea to the outfit to end their agitation. The bandh which completed more than 150 hours was called by the militant outfit demanding halt of counter insurgency operations against the outfit and its camps. In a public rally held in East Garo Hills headquarter of Williamnagar on May 6, there was a public outcry against the showdown between the militants and the government.⁸²

According to reports, four suspected Maoist guerrillas were killed in a shootout with security forces in Tinsukia district. Three others escaped in the incident that took place in Borbaruah village, about 600 km from Tinsukia. An Assam police constable was also injured in the shootout. A hunt was on to trace the other cadres. A police operation began early May 9, following a tip that that some Maoists had taken shelter in the village. Police said three AK 47s, two grenades and some ammunition were recovered from the site. The Assam government has initiated training programmes for deputy commissioners and superintendents of police and other officials on how to counter the Maoists.⁸³

Meanwhile, reports noted that Manipur police have seized a huge quantity of banned drugs from Imphal airport. Preliminary investigations indicate the drugs were sent from New Delhi. A total of 21 cartons, each containing 7,000 strips of 10 tablets, of Acti Feel which is reported to be a banned drug were recovered by police from Tulihal airport, Imphal. Investigation reveals that the consignment originates from New Delhi. Separate cases have been registered at Imphal city police station and Singjamei police station for further investigation.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ "Maoists active in lower Assam", *The Assam Tribune*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0812/at07>

⁸¹ "Chidambaram in Arunachal", *The Assam Tribune*, May 12, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1212/at0155>

⁸² "GNLA calls off bandh after public outcry", *The Assam Tribune*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0812/oth05>

⁸³ "Four Maoists killed in Assam", *The Assam Tribune*, May 9, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0912/at042>

⁸⁴ "Banned drugs seized at Imphal airport", *The Assam Tribune*, May 9, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1012/oth06>

According to reports, personnel of 29 Assam Rifles launched a search operation and apprehended two cadres of NSCN (Khole-Kitovi) who are said to be the tax collectors of the outfit from Marwari Patti area in Dimapur. The cadres have been identified as Bokato Zhimo of Zunobhuto and Ramlal Shah of Signal Basti, Dimapur. According to Assam Rifles sources, one booklet of information slips, one booklet of tax collection receipts and Rs 3000 cash was seized from the custody of the two NSCN cadres. Both individuals confessed to have carried out tax collection in general area GS Road and Marwari Patti from shopkeepers.⁸⁵

Reports noted that exactly a month after signing a ceasefire agreement with the Myanmarese authority, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Khaplang) has said it will open a truce supervisory office in the neighbouring country. According to a statement by its information and publicity wing the sub-office, NSCN (K) at Khamti town in Myanmar would be for preserving peace and tranquility within its jurisdiction. The outfit would also set up a joint check-post at Thamanti in Makury area under the jurisdiction of Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) inside Nagaland for easy communication between the two sides and for prevalence of peace. The outfit claimed that the cease-fire agreement signed with the Myanmar authority on April 9, 2012 at Khamti town after more than 60 years of political struggle only proved that the NSCN led by SS Khaplang, a Hemi Naga from north-west Myanmar, was the only authentic political institution struggling for Naga sovereignty.⁸⁶

In other developments, according to reports, vehicular transport was affected for nearly four hours in Lower Assam on May 7, 2012 due to a blockade of National Highway 31 and 52 called by the Non-Tribal Protection Forum in protest against the Bodo Statehood demand. More than 10,000 non-tribals belonging to various districts of Lower Assam blocked the two highways at Baihata Chariali in Kamrup (Rural) district protesting against the proposed demand by the Bodos for the creation of a separate Bodoland State.⁸⁷

IV. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **UN condemns bomb attacks in Syria; UNSC to take action if situation remains unresolved in Guinea-Bissau; Indian and Pakistani envoys to UN hail economic ties between the countries; India's growth projected at 7.5%**

According to reports, the UN Security Council members and Secretary-General strongly condemned last week's deadly bomb attacks in Damascus and called for an end to the violence in Syria. All sides were called to abide by the Security Council Resolution 2043 and the six-point

⁸⁵ "NSCN cadres arrested", *The Assam Tribune*, May 9, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1012/oth07>

⁸⁶ "NSCN(K) to open truce office in Myanmar", *The Assam Tribune*, May 10, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may1112/oth05>

⁸⁷ "NH blockade against demand for Bodoland", *The Assam Tribune*, May 7, 2012 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0812/state05>

plan. The Council members also reaffirmed their full support for the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) and Joint Special Envoy Annan.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the UNSC reiterated its readiness to consider targeted sanctions against the perpetrators of last month's military coup in Guinea-Bissau if the situation continues to remain unresolved. The international community's calls for the return to civilian rule and restoration of constitutional order have so far gone unheeded.⁸⁹

In other developments, at the United Nations, envoys from India and Pakistan hailed the measures taken by their countries to improve economic ties between them. India's representative to the UN described the progress made towards opening more border trade routes, allowing movement of businessmen and the discussions to grant MFN status to India as being "steady steps in the positive direction" which has the potential to be a 'game changer' for the two countries.⁹⁰

A UN report projected India's growth in 2012-13 to be about 7.5 per cent with a steady economic performance mainly because of the Indian economy's strong fundamentals which include high saving and investment rates and rapidly expanding labour class. This is higher than the last year's estimated rate of 6.9 per cent growth.⁹¹

⁸⁸ "Secretary-General, Security Council strongly condemn bomb attacks in Damascus", *UN News Centre*, May 10, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41964&Cr=Syria&Cr1=>

⁸⁹ "Security Council warns of sanctions if Guinea-Bissau political crisis continues", *UN News Centre*, May 08, 2012 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41950&Cr=bissau&Cr1=>

⁹⁰ "India, Pakistan envoys to UN hail measures taken to improve trade", *The Economic Times*, May 13, 2012 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-05-13/news/31689682_1_pakistan-envoys-india-and-pakistan-abdullah-hussain-haroon

⁹¹ "UN sees India growing at 7.5%", *Deccan Herald*, May 11, 2012 at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/248518/un-sees-india-growing-75.html>