

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Yaqoob-ul Hassan

Gulbin Sultana

Gunjan Singh

Titli Basu

Niranjan C. Oak

Rajorshi Roy

Saroj Bishoyi

Amit Kumar

Rajbala Rana

Afghanistan and Pakistan

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1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010

Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **India invited to key conference on Afghanistan; America's interest in Pakistan would further strengthen terrorists; Protests an opportunity to unite Afghans; Finance Minister grants of \$250 mln with World Bank to improve roads across Hindukush; Exchange of fire erupts at border in Paktika after Pakistan opens gate inside Afghanistan territory.**

Pakistan in an unexpected move has invited India's foreign minister to a key regional conference on Afghanistan to be held in Islamabad next month. "A formal invitation has been sent to India and 25 other countries for the Heart of Asia ministerial meeting on Afghanistan to be hosted by Pakistan," *Express Tribune* of Pakistan quoted an unnamed official of Foreign Office as saying. This comes only few days after the U.S. Congress said in a report that Pakistan was fearful of strong relations between Afghanistan and India. According to a report by *Congressional Research Service* (CRS), Pakistan is using proxies in Afghanistan to counter Indian influence in the war-hit country. However it is said that if New Delhi accepts Pakistan's invitation, the ice will be broken between the two nuclear-armed hostile neighbours. The conference, which will be held on December 7 and 8, is said to be attended by several neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, including Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the UAE. An Indian diplomat, speaking to *Express Tribune* on condition of anonymity, confirmed New Delhi had received the invitation but said the decision on whether the external affairs minister will attend the conference has yet to be taken.¹

Upper House of the Parliament or Meshrano Jirga says that America's interest in Pakistan would further strengthen terrorists. Pakistan's Chief of Army General Raheel Sharif is scheduled to pay a state visit to the United States in coming days and besides other issues he will also discuss Afghanistan's security with US officials. International Relations Commission of Meshrano Jirga has expressed concern over his visit. Senators have said that US's interest in Pakistan would further strengthen terrorists and result in boost of fighting in Afghanistan. International Relations Committee of parliament urged American officials and Senate on Monday to abide by their commitments to Afghanistan. A statement released by the commission states that the US should prevent support to terrorists by Pakistan and not allow further bloodshed of innocent Afghans. General Raheel Sharif will visit the United States from

¹ "Pakistan Invites India to Key Conference on Afghanistan", *Tolo News*, November 9, 2015, at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22256-pakistan-invites-india-to-key-conference-on-afghanistan>

15-20 November and hold talks with military and political leadership on different issues including Afghanistan's security and stalled peace talks with Taliban.²

General John F. Campbell, Commander of NATO-led Resolute Support in Afghanistan, said Wednesday's protest in Kabul was an opportunity for unity among Afghans and that the country's problems will be overcome through solidarity. Discussing on November 11 massive demonstration over the beheading of seven Zabul residents allegedly by Daesh members, Campbell also extended his condolences to the bereaved families. He said the US no longer has a direct role in military operations in the country but that the Afghan security forces are able to deliver a solid response to militants. "My condolences go out to the families impacted by this, but again I would emphasize that the Taliban, in this case maybe Daesh, are the ones that are inflicting casualties on civilians," he said. Touching on the peace process issue, he said the National Unity Government (NUG) leaders have done much in this regard and that this process will take a longer time. "On the peace process and dividing of the Taliban... I think again the Taliban has to bring the right people that represent them [the Taliban]. If there is a division among them, it may take a little bit longer to bring them to the peace table," he added. In addition he raised the issue of the Afghan government's request for military equipment from other countries.³

Minister of Finance Eklil Ahmad Hakimi on November 14 signed a grant of \$250 million with World Bank to improve transport links across the Hindukush mountain range, including the rehabilitation of the Salang road and tunnel. World Bank is supporting the new project – the Trans-Hindukush Road Connectivity Project – through its International Development Association (IDA) fund which is for the poorest countries. The project will develop the existing mountain crossings into dependable, all-season roads that will allow the movement of vital passenger traffic and goods across the Hindukush mountain range throughout the year. There are currently only two road crossings over the mountain range, with the Salang highway carrying most of the cross-Hindukush traffic. The other road is unpaved secondary crossing between Baghlan and Bamiyan. The project will carry out civil works for the upgrading the unpaved Baghlan-Bamiyan road (152 km) to a paved road, as well as rehabilitate the Salang road and tunnel (87 km). The Trans-Hindukush Road Connectivity Project will be implemented over the next seven years under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works (MPW). MPW has appointed a high ranking official to ensure close oversight of project implementation and its coordination with stakeholders.⁴

An exchange of fire has taken place on Afghanistan-Pakistan border in Paktika province after Pakistani forces opened the gate they had built inside Afghanistan territory. Reports suggest

² "America's Interest In Pakistan Would Further Strengthen Terrorists, Warns Senate", *Khaama Press*, November 10, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/americas-interest-in-pakistan-would-further-strengthen-terrorists-warns-senate-4101>

³ "Kabul Protest An Opportunity To Unite Afghans: Campbell", *Tolo News*, November 10, 2015, at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22290-kabul-protest-an-opportunity-to-unite-afghans-campbell>

⁴ "Finance Ministry Signs Grant of \$250 mln with World Bank to Improve Roads Across Hindukush", *Khaama Press*, November 14, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/finance-ministry-signs-grant-of-250-mln-with-world-bank-to-improve-roads-across-hindukush-4115>

that Pakistani forces have fired indiscriminate shells on border police in Shkin and Barmal district of Paktika province. Nabiullah Peerkhil, spokesperson for the governor of Paktika province said that Afghan forces have been in defence position and waiting for the orders from the headquarters. This comes after Pakistan opened the gate built in Angor Ada area of Barmal District inside Afghan territory on November 14. According to reports, high ranking Pakistani officials attended the opening ceremony of the gate. Meanwhile, Pakistani Army says rockets were received from Afghan side which were responded. "Pakistanis also fired in the direction from which rockets were fired. No loss reported," states a statement released by the Army's media wing ISPR.⁵

A new survey conducted *The Asia Foundation* shows that Afghans are more concerned over political transition, insecurity, and struggling economy of the country and there for losing confidence in the government this year which marks the first of the National Unity Government. "Afghan optimism about the overall direction of the country, fear for personal safety, and confidence in government fell to their lowest point in a decade. Afghans cite deteriorating security, unemployment, and corruption as the main reasons for their pessimism," reveals the survey conducted with 9,586 Afghan citizens representing 14 ethnic groups and all 34 provinces in June 11-28, 2015. "Afghanistan experienced the impact of the three simultaneous security, political, and economic transitions in 2015," said Abdullah Ahmadzai, *The Asia Foundation's* Country Representative in Afghanistan. "Against this intensely challenging backdrop, the 2015 survey reflects Afghans' understandable concerns, and a frustration that more progress isn't being made. The results show increased scepticism in the government's ability to effectively address these challenges. The survey is also a clear signal to the international community and regional neighbours that steadiness, patience, and support are what's needed as Afghanistan struggles to achieve peace and stability."⁶

Pakistan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Climate change has cost the country \$20bn; Fifteen-year \$16 bn LNG deal with Qatar; Talks with Brahamdagh, other Baloch groups in second phase; Army voices concern over NAP's poor enforcement; Pakistan, Tajikistan to enhance defence and trade ties; COAS meets US defence secretary, army chief, CJCS.**

The government estimates that Pakistan has, collectively, suffered losses to the tune of \$20 billion due to the adverse and increasing effects of climate change. In a detailed report submitted before the National Assembly, the government also accepted – in so many words – that "Pakistan is among the countries which are most vulnerable to climate change, and has a very low technical and financial capacity to adapt to its adverse impacts". The more

⁵ "Exchange of Fire Erupts at Pak-Afghan Border in Paktika after Pakistan Opens Gate Inside Afghanistan Territory", *Khaama Press*, November 16, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/exchange-of-fire-erupts-at-pak-afghan-border-in-paktika-after-pakistan-builds-gate-inside-afghanistan-4121>

⁶ "Citizens More Concerned About Overall Direction Of Afghanistan, Survey Shows", *Khaama Press*, November 17, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/afghans-more-concerned-about-overall-direction-of-the-country-survey-shows-4130>

immediate and pressing task for the country was to adapt itself to this climate change, the government said. In a written reply to a question put to the Ministry of Climate Change by *PTI's* Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan, the government stated that coastal and marine environment, dry land ecosystems, agriculture and livestock sector, forests, biodiversity and health were among the sectors that had been seriously affected by climate change.⁷

Pakistan has finalised a 15-year \$16 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) deal with supplier Qatar, and shipments are expected to begin next month, energy minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said on November 9. The amount is 1.5 million tonnes per year, the minister told Reuters on the side-lines of an Asian ministerial energy roundtable in the Qatari capital Doha. The two sides have agreed a price, he said without elaborating. "We have finalised the deal. The first shipment is expected in December," he said. "We are hopeful for similar deals in the future."⁸

Following the Baloch rebel leader Brahamdagh Bugti's willingness to shun militancy and join the mainstream politics of Balochistan, the government's negotiating team has concluded the first round of talks with these groups through mediators. In an interview with *BBC* on August 27, Brahamdagh Bugti, the leader of banned Balochistan Republican Party (BRP), said if the people of Balochistan so desired, he was willing to a truce with the authorities and return to his home province. Saeed Zehri, who represents the Baloch youth and is also trusted by the militant groups, is mediating the talks. He is stationed at the Balochistan House, Islamabad, these days. Zehri recently returned from abroad to undertake mediatory efforts between the militant group leaders and the federal government. Talking to *The News*, Zehri said following the greenlight from the highest government and establishment authorities to resolve the lingering issue of Balochistan insurgency, which is part of the National Action Plan, reconciliation with all the rebel groups including Brahamdagh Bugti had been initiated.⁹

The army went public on November 10 with its concerns about poor implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and warned that efficacy of its counter-terrorism efforts could be undercut by inadequate supporting actions by civilian agencies. Presiding over a corps commanders' meeting at the General Headquarters, Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif underlined the need for matching/complementary initiatives on the part of the government to secure long-term gains of the operations (against terrorists) and enduring peace in the country, according to the Inter Services Public Relations. The meeting reviewed the country's internal security situation and the progress on the implementation of the 20-point NAP. Some of the areas pointed out by the army that require immediate attention are implementation of the NAP, completion of investigation of terrorism cases by joint investigation teams (JITs) and

⁷ "Climate Change Has Cost The Country \$20bn: Report", *Dawn*, November, 9, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1218423/climate-change-has-cost-the-country-20bn-report>

⁸ "Pakistan Finalises 15-Year \$16 bn LNG Deal with Qatar", *The News*, November 10, 2015, at [http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40633-Pakistan-finalises-15-year-\\$16-bn-LNG-deal-with-Qatar](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40633-Pakistan-finalises-15-year-$16-bn-LNG-deal-with-Qatar)

⁹ "Talks with Brahamdagh, Other Baloch Groups In Second Phase", *The News*, November 11, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40654-Talks-with-Brahamdagh-other--Baloch-groups-in-second-phase>

Federally Administered Tribal Areas reforms. The effects of the operations, Gen Sharif warned, could be “undermined” if the critical areas remained unaddressed.¹⁰

Pakistan and Tajikistan agreed on November 12 to strengthen cooperation in the fields of energy, defence and trade and vowed to improve connectivity to deepen bilateral ties. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, while addressing a press conference after their delegation level talks here at the PM House, termed the visit ‘productive’ and ‘fruitful’. They said it helped further expand their multifaceted relationship. The two leaders, besides inking a joint statement, witnessed the signing of seven agreements dealing with cooperation in energy, industrial sectors, extradition, establishment of a joint business council, and collaboration in science and technology and geology. “We reviewed our ties and agreed to build on the potential of our relationship for the mutual advantage of the two peoples,” Prime Minister Sharif said. The Tajik president termed the visit a success and said the two countries had laid a ‘solid foundation’ by inking another set of agreements which would help them explore new avenues of cooperation. Mr Sharif said that establishment of the joint business council would help strengthen bilateral trade.¹¹

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Raheel Sharif, began his five-day official visit to the United States on November 16 for wide ranging talks with top officials from the State and Defence Department that will focus on bilateral defence cooperation and regional issues. Gen Raheel is visiting the United States at the Pentagon’s invitation and met Defence Secretary Ashton Carter and his deputy Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford and Army Chief of Staff Mark A Milley General on the first day of the visit. The leaders discussed the regional situation, Pak-India tension, Pak-Afghan relations and other topics. General Raheel will also meet Secretary of State John Kerry and other top officials including Commander Centcom besides various Senate and Congress committees, Director General ISPR Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa said. He said that the visit was part of an exchange programme between the military leadership of the two countries. The visit is also very significant as it is taking place at a time when important changes are taking place in our region and the situation is changing, he said and added that the talks will include bilateral military-to-military relations and issues of regional security and stability.¹²

Bangladesh

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **India–Bangladesh exchanged Nur Hossain and Anup Chetia; EU to give €50million grant for primary education in Bangladesh; Bangladesh Government asks Amnesty International to apologise; US updates travel alert; US state dept. reps meet Bangladesh**

¹⁰ “Army Voices Concern Over NAP’s Poor Enforcement”, *Dawn*, November 11, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1218911/army-voices-concern-over-naps-poor-enforcement>

¹¹ “Pakistan, Tajikistan To Enhance Defence And Trade Ties”, *Dawn*, November 13, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1219330/pakistan-tajikistan-to-enhance-defence-and-trade-ties>

¹² “COAS Meets US Defence Secretary, Army Chief, CJCS”, *The News*, November 17, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-40729-COAS-meets-US-defence-secretary-army-chief-CJCS>

Home Minister; India and Bangladesh signed the SOP to operationalize the “Agreement on Coastal Shipping”.

The government of Bangladesh brought back Nur Hossain, the prime accused in the sensational seven-murder case in Narayanganj, from India on November 12. A team of police took Nur in its custody after the Indian Border Security Force handed him over to the Border Guard Bangladesh at Benapole. The deportation took place a day after the Bangladesh Government handed over top ULFA leader Anup Chetia to the Indian authorities. Anup Chetia had been in prison since his arrest in Mohammadpur in December 1997.¹³

The European Commission has approved a grant of EUR 50 million for the primary education sector of Bangladesh. This funding under the 2015 budget is in addition to the ongoing European Union contribution to the sector which makes the EU the second largest grant provider for the Third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP 3), said an EU press release.¹⁴

Blasting the Amnesty International over a statement on war crimes trial, the government has demanded the rights watchdog withdraw the statement immediately and apologise for its highly objectionable pronouncement concerning the pro-independence forces. In a protest note sent to Amnesty headquarters in London, the government said the watchdog in its October 27 statement went beyond its usual stand, and caused widespread outrage by suggesting that the “pro-independence forces” in Bangladesh be also implicated for committing “serious crimes”.¹⁵

The US Department of State has issued a travel alert for Bangladesh, claiming there is reliable information to suggest that terrorist attacks could occur against foreigners in the country. In its updated travel alert issued in Washington on November 10, the US, citing “recent violent attacks”, asked its citizens to exercise appropriate caution and maintain a high level of vigilance during their travel to Bangladesh. However, Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the updated travel alert “is not based on reality”.¹⁶

The US officials, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) for South and Central Asian Affairs William E. Todd and Director of South and Central Asian Affairs for Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, Clinton Brown, visited Dhaka on November 4-6, left on November 6 for Colombo, then returned to Dhaka on November 8 for additional meetings. During their first visit, the US delegation had meetings with the home minister of Bangladesh and other government officials, while on the second visit on November 8, they spoke with Foreign

¹³ “Nur Hossain Brought Back from India”, *The Daily Star*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/india-set-return-nur-171727>.

¹⁴ “EU To Give €50m Grant For Primary Education in Bangladesh”, *The Daily Star*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/eu-give-%E2%82%AC50m-grant-primary-education-bangladesh-171643>.

¹⁵ “Govt Asks Amnesty Int'l To Apologise”, *The Daily Star*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/govt-asks-amnesty-intl-apologise-170491>.

¹⁶ “US Updates Travel Alert”, *The Daily Star*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/us-updates-travel-alert-171103>.

Minister AH Mahmood Ali and had a meeting with Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque at the state guesthouse, Padma.¹⁷

India and Bangladesh signed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in New Delhi on November 15 to operationalize the “Agreement on Coastal Shipping” signed between the two countries in June 2015. The SOP was signed by the Joint DG (Shipping) Ministry of Shipping, Government of India and Chief Engineer and Ship Surveyer, Department of Shipping, Government of Bangladesh in the presence of Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Shipping and Road Transport and Highways. The SOP has been framed as per the terms and conditions of the Agreement on Coastal Shipping and both India and Bangladesh have agreed to its provisions. The SOP will pave the way to promote coastal shipping between India and Bangladesh and would enhance bilateral trade between the two countries by bringing down the cost of transportation of EXIM cargo. The SOP contains provisions which stipulate that India and Bangladesh shall render same treatment to the other country's vessels as it would have done to its national vessels used in international sea transportation.¹⁸

Sri Lanka

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs visits Singapore; Sri Lanka, Bangladesh discuss strengthening ties; The Federal Minister for Commerce of Pakistan visits Sri Lanka.**

Singapore is to help Sri Lanka restructure the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following talks held between Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, during Samaraweera's visit to Singapore from November 12 to 13, 2015. During the visit, Samaraweera also called on Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law K Shanmugam and met Attorney-General V K Rajah. He visited the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) for a briefing on Singapore's anti-corruption measures on the same day. In addition, Samaraweera delivered a public lecture on “Politics and Development in Sri Lanka” organised by the Institute of South Asian Studies on November 12, 2015.¹⁹

Dr Harsha De Silva, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, met Tarik Ahsan, High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Colombo, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and discussed on further strengthening political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries. During the discussion, among other matters the Deputy Minister reiterated the importance of establishing linkages between the ports of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.²⁰

¹⁷ “US State Dept. Reps Meet Bangladesh Home Boss”, *The Daily Star*, November 9, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/us-state-dept-reps-meet-bangladesh-home-boss-169507>.

¹⁸ “India and Bangladesh Sign Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to Operationalize Agreement On Coastal Shipping”, *PIB*, Release ID :130487, November 15, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

¹⁹ “Singapore To Help Sri Lanka Restructure Foreign Ministry”, *Colombo Gazette*, November 15, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/11/15/singapore-to-help-sri-lanka-restructure-foreign-ministry/>.

²⁰ “Sri Lanka, Bangladesh Discuss Strengthening Ties”, *Colombo Gazette*, November 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/11/10/sri-lanka-bangladesh-discuss-strengthening-ties/>.

The Federal Minister for Commerce of Pakistan Khurram Dastgir Khan called on Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe at Temple Trees on November 10. The Minister was accompanied by High Commissioner of Pakistan in Sri Lanka Maj Gen (R) Syed Shakeel Hussain and a high level official delegation. The Sri Lankan Minister for Industry and Commerce, Rishad Bathiudeen, Sri Lankan Secretary Commerce and Industry T. M. K. B. Tennakoon and other high ranking officials were also present during the meeting. Khurram Dastgir Khan expressed the hope to broaden and deepen the bilateral FTA through the inclusion of services and investments in its ambit. The Minister emphasized that Pakistan and Sri Lanka need to diversify their existing trading patterns by focusing on non-traditional items of import and export and by creating more trade linkages between provinces and regions within the two countries. The Commerce Minister requested the Prime Minister to ease visa facilities and issue multiple visas to Pakistani businessmen and investors to facilitate their travel to Sri Lanka on regular basis. The two sides also agreed to further strengthen the bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries especially in cement, sugar, higher education and pharmaceutical sectors. The Prime Minister welcomed the prospects of Pakistani investments in cement and sugar sectors and assured his governments support to promote the bilateral trade. During his Sri Lankan visit, the Commerce Minister will also call on Sri Lankan Minister for Public Administration Ranjith Madduma Bandara, Minister for Industry and Commerce, Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen and Minister for Megapolis and Western Development Hon Champika Ranawaka.²¹

Maldives

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **President of India extends greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the Maldives on the eve of their Republic Day; State of emergency lifted; Agreement signed with Chinese company for 1,500 housing units in Hulhumalé; Bill on AIIB membership passed; Member of the Chinese Central Military Committee, Admiral Wu Shengli visits Maldives; Foreign investments worth \$799 million registered over two years.**

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the Republic of Maldives on the eve of their Republic Day, November 11, 2015. In his message to His Excellency Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, the President of the Republic of Maldives, the President has said, "On behalf of the Government and the people of India and on my own behalf, it gives me great pleasure to convey to Your Excellency and to the people of the Republic of Maldives, warm felicitations and good wishes on the occasion of your Republic Day." It further stated, "Our time tested and historical ties of

²¹ "Pakistan Seeks To Broaden Ties with Sri Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, November 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/11/10/pakistan-seeks-to-broaden-ties-with-sri-lanka/>.

friendship and cooperation have been focused achieving our common aspirations of peace, stability, progress and development.”²²

The state of emergency enforced from November 4, 2015 has been lifted on November 10. The Attorney General Mohamed Anil said that the early termination of the 30-day State of Emergency follows progress in ongoing investigations by security forces, arrest of several people on suspicion of possession of weapons, and international organisations’ calls to terminate the emergency as soon as possible. The Attorney General said that minimizing the impact on tourism is also one of the reasons for the President to revoke the State of Emergency.²³

Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure has signed an agreement with a Chinese company for the construction of 1,500 middle-range housing units in Hulhumalé. The agreement was signed at a ceremony at Hotel Jen on November 9 by Minister of Housing and Infrastructure Dr Mohamed Muizzu, and General Manager of China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) Shi Jintao. Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Muizzu said that this is the first batch of housing units to be established under Phase 2 of the Hulhumalé Development Project. The estimated time of completion for the project is May 2018. The project is expected to begin in 2016.²⁴

Parliament has passed the bill proposed by the government regarding Maldives becoming a member of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The purpose of the bill, submitted by Nilandhoo MP Abdulla Khaleel and passed by the unanimous vote of the parliament on November 12, is to establish a comprehensive law and detailed policies on Maldives’ AIIB membership.²⁵

A member of the Chinese Central Military Committee and Navy Commander, Admiral Wu Shengli has arrived in the Maldives on an official visit.²⁶

Ministry of Economic Development has announced that 55 foreign investment projects worth \$799 million have been registered over the past two years. This came in a report highlighting the ministry’s achievements on the occasion of the second anniversary of the current government. A total of 47 foreign investment projects in the tourism sector with a total initial investment amount of \$1.056 billion have been registered since December 2014. Other proposed mega foreign investments include the airport development project, worth \$800 million.²⁷

²² “President of India’s Message on the Eve of Republic Day of Maldives”, *PIB*, Release ID :130368, November 10, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

²³ “State of Emergency Lifted”, *SunOnline*, November 10, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34525>.

²⁴ “Agreement Signed with Chinese Company for 1,500 Housing Units in Hulhumalé”, *SunOnline*, November 9, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34491>.

²⁵ “Bill on AIIB Membership Passed”, *SunOnline*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34561>.

²⁶ “Member of the Chinese Central Military Committee, Admiral Wu Shengli has Arrived in the Maldives”, *SunOnline*, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34616>.

²⁷ “Foreign Investments Worth \$799 Million Registered Over Two Years”, *SunOnline*, November 17, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/34654>.

B. East Asia

China

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Chinese President attends the G20 Summit; Chinese President extends condolence to the French President; China and Laos sign railway deal; Premier Li Keqiang scheduled to attend the East Asia leaders' meeting; Chinese President meets the President of Turkmenistan; China wants to expand ties with Mongolia; Chinese Premier urges to adopt ways strengthen and stabilize the economy.**

Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the G20 summit held at Antalya the Mediterranean coastal city. During the summit Xi met various world leaders and BRICS leaders. From G20 Xi Jinping is flying to Manila to attend the 23rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting which is scheduled for November 18 and 19.²⁸

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a telegram extending his condolences to the Francois Hollande President of France following the terrorist attacks in Paris. Xi stated that, "China has always been against all forms of terrorism, and is willing to work with France and the international community to strengthen cooperation on security, to combat terrorism and to help protect people in all countries".²⁹

On November 13 Chinese head of National Development and Reform Commission, Xu Shaoshi, signed an intergovernmental railway cooperation agreement in Beijing with Deputy Prime Minister of Laos Somsavat Lengsavad. This aims to introduce modern rail in Laos in 2020. A 418 kms line will connect Kunming with Lao capital city of Vientiane. China will be investing 70 percent of the total cost. According to Wang Xiaotao the deputy head of the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, "The project will significantly boost the socioeconomic development of Laos, improve the nation's transportation and generate a lot of jobs for local people. Of course, it will also inject new momentum into the economy of China's southwestern regions."³⁰

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is scheduled to attend the annual East Asia Leaders' meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from November 20 to 23. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei, "China's attendance to the meeting is important for deepening its

²⁸ "Chinese President Arrives in Turkey for G20 Summit", *China Daily*, November 14, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015xiattendG20APEC/2015-11/14/content_22459251.htm, accessed November 16, 2015

²⁹ "President Xi Extends Condolences To France, Condemns Terrorist Attacks", By Wang Qingyun, *China Daily*, November 14, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-11/14/content_22456904.htm, accessed November 16, 2015

³⁰ "China, Laos Sign Railway Deal", By Zhao Lei, *China Daily*, November 14, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/14/content_22456399.htm, accessed on November 16, 2015

relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and promoting the East Asian cooperation".³¹

On November 12 Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov the President of Turkmenistan. During the meeting Xi said that, "The frequency and efficiency of the high-level exchanges will help to expand their partnership on electricity, information technology, agriculture, finance, transportation and other non-energy sectors".³²

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met the President of Mongolia Tsakhia Elbegdorj. During the meeting Li asserted that, "China is willing to enhance production capacity cooperation with Mongolia, offer a hand in resources exploration, infrastructure construction and industrialization, achieve win-win results, and transfer the political consensus to more practical results".³³

While discussing the economic growth the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang asserted that the government should undertake a number of measures like tax reductions, in order to reduce the burden and also stabilize the economy. Li also asserted that, "There will be more investment to improve infrastructure in middle and western China to achieve balanced development and private companies are welcomed to invest in such projects".³⁴

Japan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Japan-Russia summit meeting in Antalya; Abe and Turnbull discuss regional cooperation; Japan and Turkey bilateral summit in Istanbul; Japan joins the world in condemning Paris attacks.**

On November 15, Japan-Russia summit meeting was held in Antalya on the side-lines of the G20 Summit. President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed that after Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Russia in September, bilateral cooperation together with the economic prospects will continue to deepen.³⁵ Both leaders deliberated on the likelihood of concluding a peace treaty officially ending their World War II resentments. In addition, discussion on a possible of Putin's visit to Japan is yet to produce a decision.³⁶

³¹ "Premier Li To Attend East Asia Leaders' Meetings", *China Daily*, November 13, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/13/content_22454136.htm, accessed on November 16, 2015

³² "Two Nations Vow To Grow Energy Links", By Qin Jize and Chen Mengwei, *China Daily*, November 13, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/13/content_22445397.htm, accessed on November 16, 2015

³³ "China will Enhance Ties with Mongolia, Premier Says", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, November 11, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/11/content_22433553.htm, accessed on November 16, 2015

³⁴ "Premier Promises to Stabilize Economy with Multiple Measures", By An Baijie, *China Daily*, November 10, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/10/content_22423332.htm accessed November 16, 2015

³⁵ "Japan-Russia Summit Meeting", *MOFA Japan*, November 16, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/rss/northern/page4e_000349.html

³⁶ "Abe, Putin Fail To Set Date For Russian President's Visit to Japan", November 16, 2015 at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201511160034

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Malcolm Turnbull discussed numerous issues including regional security concerns and cooperation for instance Japan-Australia-United States cooperation and Japan-Australia-India during their bilateral summit On November 14. Both leaders also exchanged view on the evolving situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.³⁷

On November 13, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held a summit meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Turkey in Istanbul. Both leaders discussed a wide range of issues including strengthening economic relations since there is untapped potential in the bilateral economic relationship. They further discussed the prospect of negotiations on the Japan-Turkey Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Japanese participation in Turkish infrastructure projects is increasing. Prospects related to the food and agricultural industry and Sinop Nuclear Power Plant project explored.³⁸

On November 14, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemned the Paris terror attacks and expressed sincere solidarity with France. He argued that Japan as a nation shares similar values as France and terrorism must not be tolerated at any cost. Abe reiterated that in collaboration with the global community, Japan will continue its fight against terrorism. Furthermore, Abe underscored that Japan will undertake anti-terrorism measures domestically to protect Japanese nationals overseas.³⁹

Korean Peninsula

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **North Korea declared a no-navigation zone near Wonsan; Japan requests the removal of comfort women statue; Mass protests in Seoul against labour and education reform plans; India-RoK has signed a MoU to enhance bilateral air service cooperation between the two countries.**

Reports in the South Korean media indicate that North Korea has declared a no-navigation zone operative from November 11-December 7 around the east coast in Wonsan. This development has increased rumours that North might launch a missile in the near future. There is no confirmation if North has alerted the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in advance. In case of a missile launch, it will have the potential to disrupt the inter-Korea agreement.⁴⁰

At the 10th working-level talks, Japan has again put forward a request to get rid of the statue situated across the Japanese embassy in Seoul which honours several thousand Korean

³⁷ "Japan-Australia Summit Meeting", *MOFA Japan*, November 16, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/ocn/au/page3e_000420.html

³⁸ "Japan-Turkey Summit Meeting", *MOFA Japan*, November 14, 2015 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/me_a/me1/tr/page3_001487.html

³⁹ Remarks by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the attacks in Paris, Kantei, November 14, 2015 at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201511/press1114.html

⁴⁰ "N.Korea Appears To Be Preparing To Fire Missile", *The Korea Times*, November 15, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/12/485_191031.html

comfort women compelled into prostitution during war. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe earlier requested the South Korean administration to remove the statue during his bilateral meeting with President Park on November 2. A civil society group, the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan established the statue.⁴¹

A few thousands staged demonstrations and demanded President Park Geun-hye's resignation in Seoul on November 14. Protesters affiliated to the construction, autoworkers and teachers staged demonstrations against President Park's labour and education policies which allegedly allows employers greater freedom to fire workers.⁴²

India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Republic of Korea (RoK) after negotiations in New Delhi on October 14th and October 15th, 2015, to enhance bilateral air service cooperation between the two countries. The major issues that were formalized are as follows:

- Capacity Entitlement: The capacity entitlement for both the countries have been increased from existing 6 services per week to 19 services per week.
- Points of Call: Two additional points of call viz. Chennai and Bengaluru have been granted for Republic of Korea carriers.
- Additional Beyond Points: Apart from Tokyo and Los Angeles, two additional beyond points of call viz. Seattle and Vancouver, have been granted for Indian carriers. This means that the Indian carriers can mount air services to these destinations via Korea so that the operations could become more economical.
- Intermediate Point: Ho-Chi-Minh city is now available as an intermediate point to the carriers of both countries in addition to Bangkok, Macau or Hong Kong. This gives an opportunity to the Indian carriers to provide additional options to the people travelling to Vietnam.
- Domestic code share points: To increase seamless connectivity for the benefit of passengers, both sides agreed to allow domestic code-share to any four points in their respective countries.

The signing of the MoU comes against the backdrop of two rounds of inconclusive talks on December 21, 2012 in New Delhi and on October 20-21, 2014 in Seoul, as the two sides could not come to an agreement on various issues including number of frequencies to be increased and the quantum of fifth freedom rights on intermediate points. Therefore, there was a stalemate on enhancement of air connectivity between India and Korea despite the growth in economic and trade relations and tourism between the two countries.⁴³

⁴¹ "Japan Steps Up Demands For Removal of 'Girl Statue'", *The Korea Times*, November 12, 2015 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/12/120_190857.html

⁴² "Massive Crowd Protest In South Korea Against Park's Labour Reform Plans", *Reuters*, November 14, 2015 at www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-protest-idUSKCN0T30O520151114#OTxUG9tzzHKY6wkh.99

⁴³ "India Signs MoU with Republic of Korea to Enhance Bilateral Air Service Cooperation", *PIB*, Release ID :13043, November 13, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

C. Southeast Asia and Oceania

ASEAN

(November 1-15, 2015)

- **ASEAN scraps joint defence statement amid naval spat; Malaysia calls on ASEAN to stay united over rising South China Sea tensions; Emergency hotline set up for ASEAN defence ministers.**

Defence ministers from 18 Asia-Pacific countries cancelled a signing ceremony for a joint declaration that was supposed to be issued at the end of their two-day biannual ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus (ADMM-Plus) meeting on November 4. The 18 ministers, meeting in Subang on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, had been expected to adopt the "Kuala Lumpur Joint Declaration". No official reason was given for the last minute cancellation, but China issued a statement blaming what happened on "certain countries" outside of the immediate region, a pointed reference to the United States and Japan.⁴⁴ Contrary to Chinese claims, the U.S. official said that China opposed mention of its construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea in the joint statement, but "a number of ASEAN countries felt that (it) was inappropriate" to exclude any mention of it in the official statement.⁴⁵ The ADMM-Plus groups the 10 countries of Southeast Asia and 8 other countries – Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.

Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein on November 3 called on his counterparts from Southeast Asia to stay united as one in dealing with superpowers like US and China. As defence ministers from 10 ASEAN member countries gathered for an annual retreat ahead of meetings on November 4 with their dialogue partners, China and US, Malaysia's Defence Minister emphasised the importance of ASEAN's role in the region's peace and security. "Our paramount concern is the security stability and peace in the region," said Hishammuddin. "How we engage major powers as a bloc, that's very important. Individually we may not have much impact but I personally believe as chair of ADMM, together 10 nations engaging major powers could make a difference." Meanwhile, Malaysia said that it remained hopeful for an amicable solution to diffuse rising geo-political tensions in the key waterway that's been described as a lifeline of the ASEAN economic community.⁴⁶

Malaysian defence minister Hishammuddin Hussein said on November 3 that a hotline had been set up for ASEAN defence ministers to promote rapid response cooperation in times of emergency. The ministers witnessed a signing ceremony for the Direct Communication Link

⁴⁴ "ASEAN Scraps Joint Defence Statement Amid Naval Spat", *CNBC*, November 4, 2015, at <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/11/04/no-ASEAN-joint-defense-statement-as-us-china-fight-over-south-china-sea.html>

⁴⁵ Parameswaran, Prashanth, "China Blocked ASEAN Defence Meeting Pact Amid South China Sea Fears: US Official", *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2015, at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/china-blocked-asia-defense-meeting-pact-amid-south-china-sea-fears-us-official/>

⁴⁶ Goh, Melissa, "Malaysia Calls on ASEAN to Stay United Over Rising South China Sea Tensions", *Channel NewsAsia*, November 3, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/malaysia-calls-on-ASEAN/2236246.html>

(DCL) initiative. "We are now a phone call away from each other. This hotline will reduce the risk of incidents at sea," said Dr Ng, Defence Minister of Singapore.⁴⁷

Southeast Asia

(November 1-15, 2015)

- **Suu Kyi's party wins historic majority in Myanmar polls; Malaysia detains 8 for alleged links with terror groups; Singapore and Thailand navies conduct bilateral naval exercise.**

Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party on November 13 secured a historic majority in Myanmar's parliament, making it possible for them to form the Southeast Asian country's first truly civilian government in more than half-a-century. With the tally remained to be counted, the Election Commission said that Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won 21 additional seats pushing it over the threshold of 329 seats needed for a majority in the 664 member two house Parliament. The party with a combined parliamentary majority could be able to select the next president, who could then name a Cabinet and form a new government.

Suu Kyi's victory had been widely expected, but few anticipated a landslide of such dramatic proportions. The results had shown a resounding rejection of military rule in Myanmar, which had been under army control for half a century. In comparison, the ruling pro—military Union Solidarity and Development Party had won 40 seats, according to the results till November 13 afternoon. While NLD majority assured it of being able to elect the president, Suu Kyi remained barred from the highest office by a constitutional provision inserted by the military before it transferred power to Thein Sein's quasi-civilian government in 2011. Suu Kyi had declared, however, that she would become the country's de facto leader, acting "above the president" if her party formed the next government, and that the new president would be a figurehead.⁴⁸

Eight Malaysians, including two civil servants, were detained for their links to terror groups Tadzim al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Malaysian Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Khalid Abu Bakar said that six of the alleged terrorists were remnants of the Tadzim al-Qaeda who went into hiding when their senior leaders were arrested in February 2013. "Two of the suspects, 24 and 33 years old, are suspected to be part of the Tadzim al-Qaeda Malaysia who were arrested in Lebanon on October 12, 2012 for trying to infiltrate into Syria to join terrorists," Khalid said. The younger detainee was a former civil servant from Selangor while the other had worked as an electrician in Kuala Lumpur. The IGP said that another two suspects, both aged 28, with alleged links to ISIS, were members of the same cell as two other civil servants who were arrested on August 19, 2015. "The cell has been active in

⁴⁷ "Emergency Hotline Set Up For Asean Defence Ministers", *The Straits Times*, November 3, 2015, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/emergency-hotline-set-up-for-ASEAN-defence-ministers>

⁴⁸ "Suu Kyi's Party Wins Historic Majority In Myanmar Polls", *The Hindu*, November 13, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/suu-kyis-party-wins-historic-majority-in-myanmar-polls/article7872421.ece>

spreading the ideology of Isis terror group among civil servants in that particular department," he added.⁴⁹

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) participated in a bilateral naval exercise, named Exercise Singsiam, from November 2-12. Exercise Singsiam, a biennial exercise was first held in 1981. Following a shore planning phase at Changi Naval Base in Singapore, the two navies conducted a sea phase in the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea. Exercise Singsiam, the 18th in its series, had expanded in scope and complexity over the years to include anti-air and anti-submarine warfare serials. The exercise underscored the close and long-standing defence ties between Singapore and Thailand, and had enhanced mutual understanding and interoperability between the two navies.⁵⁰

Oceania

(November 1-15, 2015)

- **Australia begins Naval Wargames with China; Fiji swears in new president.**

Australia began military exercises with China not far from the disputed artificial islands of the South China Sea (SCS). Canberra insisted that it was an invaluable chance to work alongside a regional neighbour, while analysts worried that it could be used for propaganda purposes by China. The "live fire" exercises were planned long ago but came at a time of rising diplomatic tensions in the SCS, where the Chinese had tried to further their territorial claims by building new islands. Royal Australian Navy would engage in war games alongside Chinese forces, not far from the disputed waters. On October 27, the U.S. had sent a warship through the area to assert what it called "freedom of navigation". Australian Defence Chief Air Chief Marshall Mark Binskin played down diplomatic concerns over the military exercises. "It's a chance to work with regional navies and show transparency and capability in what we do. It's what we do with a lot of regional navies. It is part of the relationship we have with a lot of the regional navies in the development between the defence forces, and so we shouldn't make it more than what it actually is," said Binskin.⁵¹

A retired military officer and diplomat was sworn in on November 12 as Fiji's first president since the Pacific country's democracy-restoring elections in 2014. Major General Jioji Konrote's inauguration took place in a ceremony at Government House, Suva, presided over by Chief Justice Anthony Gates. "I will dedicate myself to the wellbeing of the Republic of Fiji and all Fijians, protect and promote their rights," President Konrote said. Parliament elected Mr Konrote as president in October and he resigned as employment minister so he could take up

⁴⁹ "Civil Servants Among 8 Arrested Over Links With Terror Groups", *The Malaysian Insider*, November 2, 2015, at <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/civil-servants-among-8-arrested-over-links-with-terror-groups>

⁵⁰ "Singapore and Thailand Navies Conduct Bilateral Naval Exercise", *The Ministry of Defence*, Singapore, November 10, 2015, at http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2015/nov/10nov15_nr1.html#.VI2WY9IrLIU

⁵¹ Mercer, Phil, "Australia Begins Naval Wargames With China", *Voice of America News*, November 2, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/australia-begins-naval-wargames-with-china/3032653.html>

the role. The 67-year-old had previously commanded Fiji's UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon and served as Suva's high commissioner to Australia from 2001-06. He replaced Epli Nailatikau, who was appointed president in 2009 while the country was under martial law following a military coup in 2006. The president's role under a constitution adopted in 2013 was essentially a ceremonial head of state, with most power resting with Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama.⁵²

India and Southeast Asia

(November 1-15, 2015)

- **India, Indonesia sign two MoUs on energy, culture, and to expand defence cooperation; Echoing Modi-Obama agreement, Parrikar calls for freedom of navigation in South China Sea.**

India and Indonesia on November 2 signed agreements in the fields of renewable energy and culture and discussed possibilities of expanding cooperation in counter-terrorism and defence. Vice President Hamid Ansari, who met his Indonesian counterpart Jusuf Kalla, said that ways to diversify and increase bilateral trade as well to encourage investments in each other's country through private sectors were also discussed. "We have also discussed possibilities of expanding our cooperation in defence and counter-terrorism through intensification of our existing mechanisms," Ansari said. The Vice President, who was in Jakarta on the invitation of Mr Kalla said that the two countries shared similar positions on several global and regional issues including climate change, maritime security and freedom of seas in the South China Sea.⁵³ Ansari also emphasized, that as a maritime neighbour and a strategic partner, with a number of cultural similarities, including its own multicultural and multi-linguistic character, India had traditionally enjoyed close relations with Indonesia. On the economic side, he said that there existed about \$20 billion trade between the two nations and India's investments in Indonesia had been increasing.⁵⁴ He also thanked Indonesia for supporting India in organising 'Sahabat India - The Festival of India in Indonesia' earlier in 2015.

Days after the US sent its warship in the SCS flagging its concerns about the Chinese reclamation activities in the region, India on November 4 called for an early resolution of the problem. Batting for freedom of navigation, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar expressed hope for a "peaceful resolution of the dispute". Addressing the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meet (ADMM) + in Malaysia, Parrikar also stressed that ASEAN was central to India's 'Act East Policy'. "India hopes that all parties to the disputes in the SCS region will abide by the

⁵² "Fiji Swears In New President", *Business Standard*, November 12, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/fiji-swears-in-new-president-115111200449_1.html

⁵³ "India, Indonesia Sign Two MoUs on Energy, Culture; To Expand Defence Cooperation", *DNA*, November 2, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-indonesia-sign-two-mous-on-energy-culture-to-expand-defence-cooperation-2141220>

⁵⁴ "VP Ansari in Jakarta as India Seeks Deportation of Chhota Rajan", *The Jakarta Post*, November 2, 2015, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/11/02/vp-ansari-jakarta-india-seeks-deportation-chhota-rajana.html>

2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS, ensure its effective implementation, and work together to ensure a peaceful resolution of disputes. We also hope that the Code of Conduct on the SCS would be concluded at an early date by consensus," Parrikar said. Stating that maritime security is a common challenge, he said "the situation in the South China Sea and recent developments there have attracted concern". "This is natural since freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and overflight, unimpeded commerce and access to resources in accordance with recognised principles of international law including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, are of concern to all of us," he said.⁵⁵

D. Russia

Russia: National

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Putin says Northern Sea Route to drive Russia's greater integration with Asia-Pacific; Sochi to host Russia-ASEAN summit in 2016; Russia will not boycott the 2016 Olympics in Brazil; Russia will slash greenhouse gas emissions to 75 per cent of 1990s level; Export duty on oil to increase by 9 per cent from December 1; Russia cuts civilian aviation development programme; Russia lets FSB use part of Sea of Japan for security purposes; World's first LNG-powered locomotive put into operation in Russia; Energy minister says Russia to maintain competitiveness in the oil market even if prices remain low.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the development of Far Eastern ports, modernization of railways and the Northern Sea Route is likely to drive Russia's integration with the Asia-Pacific region and thereby also create an important infrastructure link between it and Europe. He added that Russia 'pays special attention to developing the potential of Far East' and has offered 'unprecedented tax and other incentives'. President Putin made these statements ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit meeting to be held in Philippines during November 18-19.⁵⁶

President Vladimir Putin has said that Sochi will host the Russia-ASEAN summit in 2016. He dwelled on the need to 'reach mutually advantageous agreements on traditional and renewable energy sources, emergency and disaster response, food security and agriculture.' Putin added that as the 'effect of tariff liberalization has started to wear off, there is a need for additional agreements covering services, investment, non-tariff barriers, competition policy, and subsidies.' He suggested that 'deeper regional economic integration can be a possible way

⁵⁵ "India calls for Early Conclusion of S China Sea Code Of Conduct", *The Indian Express*, November 5, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-calls-for-early-conclusion-of-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>

⁵⁶ "Putin: Northern Sea Route to Drive Greater Integration in Asia-Pacific", *Itar-Tass*, November 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/837019>

out of the current situation' by citing the successful establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union.⁵⁷

The President of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) Alexander Zhukov has said that Russia will not boycott the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro despite the severe sanctions against the All-Russian Athletics Federation (ARAF). Earlier, World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) had recommended that the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) suspend all athletes of ARAF from participating in international competitions due to drug abuse charges.⁵⁸

Minister of Natural Resources Sergey Donskoy has said that Russia intends to declare a cut in its greenhouse gas emissions to 75 per cent of 1990s level during the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris. He added that Russia will urge conference participants to determine 'actual emission reduction targets'.⁵⁹

The export duty on oil in Russia will increase by 9 per cent to US\$ 88.4 per tonne from December 1, 2015 as against US\$ 97.1 per tonne a month earlier. Meanwhile, preferential export duty on oil for a number of oil fields in Eastern Siberia, Caspian oil fields and Prirazlomnoye oilfield remains at zero. The same applies to duty on liquefied hydrocarbon gas.⁶⁰

Russia has amended the federal target programme on civil aviation development for 2002-2010 and until 2015, thereby slashing a number of targeted figures for 2015. The sale of ready-made aircraft and helicopters has been cut to 107.6 billion roubles (US\$ 1.6 billion) to 75.2 billion roubles (US\$ 1.1 billion) while the sale of aviation engines slashed from 48.4 billion roubles (US\$ 0.7 billion) to 13.5 billion roubles (US\$ 0.2 billion). Commercial deals for the export of technologies and technical services have been cut from 5.3 billion roubles (US\$ 80 million) to 1.5 billion roubles (US\$ 23 million). The annual sales of long-haul airliners and regional planes, as well as Russian-made helicopters have been reduced from 83 to 41 aircraft in 2015.⁶¹

The Russian government has empowered the border guard department of Federal Security Service (FSB) in the Primorye Territory to use two coastal facilities in the Nakhodka Bay of Sea of Japan (a pier on Cape Shefner and a pier on Cape Astafiev) for a period of twenty years for national defence and state security purposes. The document states that the water areas

⁵⁷ "Sochi to Host Russia-ASEAN Summit in 2016 – Putin", *Itar-Tass*, November 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/837015>

⁵⁸ "Russia Not To Boycott 2016 Olympics in Brazil — Russian Olympic Committee president", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/sport/836994>

⁵⁹ "Russia will Slash Greenhouse Gas Emissions to 75% of 1990s Level", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836826>

⁶⁰ "Export Duty On Oil in Russia To Increase by 9% from December 1", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836791>

⁶¹ "Russian Government Cuts Civilian Aviation Development Programme", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836746>

concerned should be used "exclusively for maintaining the country's defences and state security." All other activities in the area, including fishing, will be prohibited.⁶²

The world's first LNG-powered railway locomotive has been put into operation in Russia. This was stated by the press service of the Bryansk Machine-building Plant which manufactures the engines. The new locomotives are expected to save energy resources by 24 per cent a year.⁶³

Energy Minister Alexander Novak has said that Russia will maintain its competitiveness in the global oil market even if oil prices remain low. He stated that 'Russia's production costs are not much different from leading producers which have the lowest one, so we are absolutely competitive' and added that most of oil price in Russia comes from taxes, while production costs at some fields are in the range of US\$ 3 to US\$ 15 per barrel.⁶⁴

Russia: International

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Kremlin says there has been no change in Russia-US relations following President Putin's meeting with President Obama; Putin says Russia's relations with Western partners now less strained than a year ago; Putin holds meeting with Saudi King; Putin states that Russian and Turkish positions on Syria getting closer; Putin and Cameron highlight the need to jointly combat terrorism; Putin meets Japanese Prime Minister Abe; Russian Deputy PM stresses Syrian military operation is not aimed against opposition rebels; Syrian opposition confirms Russia's proposal on constitutional reforms; Russia agrees to restructure Ukraine's debt; Putin says US decision to supply weapons to Ukraine may spark new hostilities; Russia and Indonesia discuss nuclear power projects.**

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, on November 16, that while the meeting between Russian and American Presidents in Antalya has been constructive yet a breakthrough in bilateral relations is unlikely in the near future. He stated that 'these relations are what they are, so are the disagreements. But there is also the understanding the Russian-US dialogue has no alternative. That's a hard fact.' The two Presidents primarily discussed developments in both Syria and Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian President's aide Yuri Ushakov has said that while strategic goals of both Russia and US in the fight against Islamic State are 'very close in general' yet there exist 'differences on tactics'.⁶⁵

⁶² "Russian Government Lets FSB Use Part Or Sea Of Japan For Security Purposes", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/836741>

⁶³ "World's First LNG-Powered Locomotive Put Into Operation in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836346>

⁶⁴ "Russia to Maintain Competitiveness On Oil Market Even If Oil Prices Remain Low", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836750>

⁶⁵ "No U-turn in Russia-US Relations after Putin-Obama Meeting — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836766>

President Vladimir Putin has said that “Russia’s ties with its Western partners was much more strained a year ago than they are now.” He stated that “there were no problems back then, neither are any now, although relations were more strained than today. But life goes on, things change, new problems, new threats, new challenges that cannot be tackled single-handedly spring up. We must get united.” Putin added that he did not share the view that Russia was internationally isolated during last year’s Group of Twenty summit in Australia.⁶⁶

Russian President Vladimir Putin has met with the King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Antalya on November 16 during the G20 summit meeting. The meeting, held behind closed doors, was the first between the two leaders and their discussions covered developments in Syria apart from bilateral ties. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has emphasised on the importance of this meeting in the run-up to the Saudi king’s visit to Russia in the near future.⁶⁷

President Vladimir Putin has said that Russian and Turkish positions on Syria are getting closer. He stated that “we spoke a lot yesterday with Tayyip Erdogan about bilateral relations, and about the Syrian settlement. I had a feeling that we will be able to find some common points that will let us achieve general success. The Turkish president, as he directly told me yesterday, believes the Syrian crisis can be settled only politically. And conditions must be created for progress in that political process.” Meanwhile, Turkey has confirmed its interest in the Turkish Stream pipeline and Akkuyu nuclear power plant project.⁶⁸

Russian President Vladimir Putin and UK Prime Minister David Cameron have said, during a meeting in Antalya held on November 16, that it is necessary to fight terrorism together.⁶⁹

Trade, economic relations and possible political contacts were discussed during a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the side-lines of the G20 summit in Antalya on November 15. They also discussed Putin’s proposed visit to Japan and agreed to work via diplomatic channels to agree on the exact dates. The two leaders positively viewed the increase in contacts between Russia and Japan in the recent past.⁷⁰

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich has said, on November 11, that ‘Russia is not involved in fighting against rebels in Syria and pursues a goal of stopping the Islamic State terrorist organization.’⁷¹

⁶⁶ “Putin Says Russia’s Relations With Western Partners Now Less Strained Than Year Ago”, *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836919>

⁶⁷ “Putin Holds Meeting with Saudi King”, *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836800>

⁶⁸ “Putin States Positions On Syria With Turkish Leader Getting Closer”, *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836920>

⁶⁹ “Putin, Cameron Point To Need To Jointly Combat Terrorism”, *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836709>

⁷⁰ “Putin, Abe Agree Contacts Between Moscow And Tokyo Have Enliven”, *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836646>

⁷¹ “Russian Deputy PM Stresses Syria Military Operation Isn’t Aimed Against Opposition Rebels”, *Itar-Tass*, November 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/835725>

Qadri Jamil of Syria's People's Front for Change and Liberation has on November 12 confirmed Russia's proposal on the constitutional process in Syria that is likely to take up to 1.5 years to implement. He added that the 'proposals do not cover all aspects of the Syrian problem and some issues need further discussion.'⁷²

Russia has proposed to Ukraine that it pays its dues to Moscow in instalments of US\$ 1 billion per year starting 2016 to 2018. This was stated by President Putin on November 16. Putin added that 'it is a much better deal than what the IMF has been pushing Russia to offer.' The Ukrainian financial authorities have said that they consider Russia's US\$ 3 billion loan as a commercial debt and insist on its restructuring. Meanwhile, Russia insists the loan is a state debt and has demanded its full redemption.⁷³

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the US decision to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine may aggravate the situation in the country's southeast. He stated 'given the fact that the hostilities have ceased and cases of shelling are rare, it is unclear why the US Congress would adopt resolutions making it possible to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons. The question arises as to whether there is a desire to spark a war or provoke hostilities.'⁷⁴

Russian Minister for Economic Development Alexey Ulyukayev has met with the Indonesian Trade Minister Thomas Lembong in Manila on November 16 wherein they discussed bilateral economic cooperation including those in the nuclear power sector. Mr. Ulyukayev stated that Russia is implementing a number of projects with Indonesia in the field of non-ferrous metals, aluminium, nickel, aviation, and railways.⁷⁵

Russia: International

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Russia says there has been no progress on the draft UNSC resolution on anti-terror efforts; Kremlin says Putin and Xi have demonstrated solidarity in anti-terror initiative; Russia to finance 2 projects worth US\$ 2 billion in Iran; Russia and Iranian Presidents discuss bilateral cooperation; Armenia ratifies agreement with Russia on nuclear security cooperation; Russian and Venezuelan Presidents discuss bilateral relations; Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov meets with representatives of Syria's internal opposition; Moscow and Beijing discuss localising hydrocarbon equipment production in Russia; Russia to supply radar system to Iraq; Iraq to coordinate its counter-terrorist efforts with Russia; Russia to expand security cooperation within SCO; Russian military delegation and North Korean defence minister discuss military cooperation; China to receive first Russian S-400 missile systems in a year.**

⁷² "Syrian Opposition Confirms Russia's Proposal On Constitutional Reform", *Itar-Tass*, November 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/835833>

⁷³ "Russia Agrees To Restructure Ukraine's Debt — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836898>

⁷⁴ "US Decision To Supply Weapons To Ukraine May Spark New Hostilities — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836235>

⁷⁵ "Russian Minister Expects New Nuclear Projects With Indonesia", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836860>

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov has said, on November 16, that Russia's 'initiative to pool anti-terror efforts that was advanced at a ministerial session of the United Nations Security Council has not been agreed with foreign partners.' He added that the United Nations and its Security Council should be the legal basis that guarantees the joint struggle against terrorism. Speaking about Russia's role at the United Nations, Gatilov said that it was at the initiative of Russia that the resolutions on curbing the illegal trade in oil and artefacts had been passed.⁷⁶

Press secretary Dmitry Peskov has said that Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia and Xi Jinping of China, who met on the side-lines of the G20 summit in Antalya, have demonstrated absolute solidarity on the issue of action against terrorism. He added that the two leaders discussed developments in Syria apart from cooperation in BRICS, Yamal LNG project and Beijing's future presidency of G20.⁷⁷

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said that Russia and Iran are exploring 2 projects that will see Russian companies invest/extend credit worth US\$ 2 billion in projects in Iran. Mr. Siluanov made the statement during the side-lines of the G20 summit meeting.⁷⁸

Russian President Vladimir Putin has discussed bilateral ties with Iranian President Rouhani on November 13. The two leaders also agreed to continue dialogue on all issues of mutual concern during Putin's visit to Teheran on November 23 wherein he will attend a meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.⁷⁹

Armenia's parliament has on November 13 ratified an intergovernmental agreement with Russia on cooperation in the sphere of nuclear security. Under the agreement, Russia "will help Armenia improve the nuclear security infrastructure in line with the recommendations from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including handling spent nuclear fuel and nuclear waste." The agreement also outlines steps to boost professional skills of nuclear safety specialists and set up a crisis management centre.⁸⁰

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro have telephonically discussed bilateral cooperation on November 13. The Kremlin press service stated that 'the leaders exchanged opinions on further promotion of bilateral relations, including cooperation in energy.'⁸¹

⁷⁶ "No Progress On Russia-Initiated Draft UN SC Resolution On Anti-Terror Efforts — Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836807>

⁷⁷ "Putin, Xi Demonstrated Solidarity In Anti-Terror Efforts — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836790>

⁷⁸ "Russia to Finance 2 Projects Worth \$2 bln in Iran — Finance Minister", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836715>

⁷⁹ "Putin, Rouhani Discuss Bilateral Cooperation — Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836316>

⁸⁰ "Armenia Ratifies Agreement With Russia On Nuclear Security Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/836339>

⁸¹ "Maduro, Putin Discuss Bilateral Relations By Phone", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836340>

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has met with the representatives of Syria's internal opposition in Grozny on November 15. This includes lawmakers, political, religious and public figures who are members of the National Reconciliation Committee. Mr. Kadyrov stated that peace in Syria can only be achieved by the Syrian people.⁸²

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich has said that talks Beijing and Moscow have discussed the prospects of localizing the production of hydrocarbon equipment in Russia. He made these statements following the 12th meeting of the Russian-Chinese intergovernmental commission held in Beijing on November 16. The two countries have also discussed gas supplies through the Western route.⁸³

Russia is supplying flight radio-technical support equipment to Iraq that will be installed in an aerodrome of the country's Air Force. The equipment is likely to ensure radar control and navigation at a distance of up to 400 kilometres from the aerodrome and instrument landing of aircraft in poor visibility conditions.⁸⁴

Russian Foreign Ministry has said that Iraq intends to strengthen coordination and interaction with Moscow in fighting terrorism. It made the statement following a meeting between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and a delegation of the Iraqi parliament's Defence and Security Committee led by the committee head, Hakim al-Zamili.⁸⁵

Emergency Situations Minister Vladimir Puchkov has said that Russia plans to expand cooperation in the sphere of civil protection within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). He stated that emphasis will be placed on 'integrated monitoring, surveillance and laboratory control of hazardous factors and phenomena.' Puchkov added that Russia has put forward an initiative to 'create and develop regional control centres, coordinate humanitarian activity and emergency response efforts and proposed to continue the work on the development of such centres in the SCO space.'⁸⁶

A Russian military delegation and North Korean Defence Minister Pak Yong Sik have discussed ways to develop cooperation between the armies of the two countries. The meeting took place in Pyongyang on November 13. The Russian delegation was led by Deputy Chief of Staff Col. Gen. Nikolay Bogdanovsky. The two countries also signed an agreement on preventing dangerous military activities.⁸⁷

⁸² "Chechen Leader Meets With Representatives Of Syria's Internal Opposition", *Itar-Tass*, November 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836631>

⁸³ "Russia, China Discuss Localization Of Manufacturing Some Types Of Equipment in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, November 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/836681>

⁸⁴ "Russia to Supply Radar System For Iraqi Air Force Airfield — Source", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/836044>

⁸⁵ "Iraq to Coordinate Its Counter-Terrorist Efforts with Russia — Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836160>

⁸⁶ "Russia To Expand Security Cooperation Within Shanghai Cooperation Organisation — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/836051>

⁸⁷ "Russian Military Delegation, North Korean Defence Minister Discuss Army Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/836146>

Itar-Tass has reported, citing a source in the Russian military-technical cooperation that the first supplies of S-400 Triumph long-range anti-aircraft missile systems to China are 'planned no earlier than in a year or a year-and-a-half.' The signing of the contract was officially announced in the spring of 2015.⁸⁸

India-Russia Relations

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Seventh Indo-Russian joint training Exercise INDRA - 2015 commences at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges.**

The seventh Indo - Russian joint training Exercise INDRA - 2015 commenced at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges on November 8, 2015 with an impressive opening ceremony that saw the unfurling of the National Flags of both countries amidst playing of their National Anthems. Earlier on November 7, the Russian contingent from an Independent Motorised Brigade comprising 250 Military personnel along with supporting staff landed at Bikaner directly from Russia. The 14-day training schedule is focused on training on 'Counter Terrorism Operations in the backdrop of Desert terrain under a United Nations Mandate'. The conduct of this joint military exercise is seen as an important step to reinforce actions related to the establishment and fostering of peace, prosperity and stability in the world by the two nations.⁸⁹

E. Central Asia

Kazakhstan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev visits France; Central Asia's largest transport and logistics centre launched in Astana; East Kazakhstan and Xinjiang sign agreements worth US\$ 1.7 billion; Kazakhstan's energy holding postpones projects due to crisis; Kazakhstan to recalculate state budget based on Tenge rate of 300 for US\$ 1; Kazakhstan's exports for the first nine months of 2015 decreased by 42.5 per cent; Kazakh President ratifies SCO agreement on creating conditions for highway transportation; Kazakhstan to approve list of 65 big enterprises for privatization; Kazakh Muslim leaders denounce Paris attacks.**

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has held talks with his French counterpart François Hollande in Paris November 9. The two leaders sought to strengthen strategic cooperation in the energy, aeronautics and space sectors. They also signed a number of deals, including one between the National Space Studies Centre in France and the Kazcosmos Space Centre. In addition, a shareholders agreement was signed by KazMunaiGas with the French Air Liquide to set up a Kazakh-French JV to manufacture industrial gases. Meanwhile, the French official

⁸⁸ "China To Receive First Russian S-400 Missile Systems No Earlier Than In A Year — Source", *Itar-Tass*, November 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/835761>

⁸⁹ "Indo -Russia Joint Exercise Indra-2015 Begins", *PIB*, Release ID :130357, November 9, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

communiqué stated that the two countries expressed their willingness to work together to fight terrorism.⁹⁰

A new multimodal transport and logistics centre (TLC) has been set up in Astana on November 12. This is Central Asia's largest transport and logistics centre. It has a dry storehouse with an area of 29,300 square meters, a climatic storehouse of 13,300 square meters, a distribution centre of 25 thousand square meters, and a container ground of 70 thousand square meters. The centre can handle up to a million tons of cargo per year. Similar transport and logistics centres will be built in other Kazakh cities such as Aktobe, Pavlodar, Almaty, Uralsk, Atyrau, Aktau, Kostanai, and Semey. Construction of a TLC in Shymkent is to be finished by the end of this year.⁹¹

The East Kazakhstan province of Kazakhstan and China's northwestern Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous Region have signed an agreement on cooperation and memorandum of investments worth US\$ 1.7 billion during the visit of Governor Danial Akhmetov to Xinjiang on November 17. Investments will be used to develop a cattle-breeding cluster in East Kazakhstan, process agricultural produce, and finance construction projects. Trade between East Kazakhstan and China has exceeded US\$ 590 million in 2015. The Governor also invited Chinese investors to take part in projects such as construction of Maikapchagai-Shar railroad that will connect China and Kazakhstan, thermal electric power plant in Semei worth US\$ 600 million, and other industrial, agricultural and energy projects.⁹²

Kazakhstan's Samruk-Energy will postpone a number of projects due to the current economic situation in the country. This was stated by the company's Chairman Almasadam Satkaliyev on November 18. Samruk-Energy represents the interests of the state in the electro-energy sector by holding state assets in the electricity generation, transmission and distribution, and coal production sectors. Among the projects that have been suspended are the construction of a 250 MW wind farm in Yereimentau, 50MW solar plant in southern Kazakhstan and reconstruction and modernization of the hydropower plants cascade in Almaty.⁹³

Kazakhstan's Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dosayev has said, on November 18 that the government will recalculate the country's budget for 2016-2018 based on the exchange rate of 300 Tenge for US\$ 1. The tenge has depreciated by 29.7 per cent against the US dollar in

⁹⁰ "French, Kazakh Leaders Ink a Number of Agreements", *Silk Road Reporters*, November 9, 2015 at http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/11/09/french-kazakh-leaders-ink-a-number-of-agreements/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=5d139acf15-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-5d139acf15-204234821

⁹¹ "Central Asia's Largest Transport And Logistics Centre Launched in Astana", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15976-central-asia-s-largest-transport-and-logistics-center-launched-in-astana>

⁹² "East Kazakhstan and Xinjiang Sign Agreements Worth \$1.7 Billion", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 17, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15988-east-kazakhstan-and-xinjiang-sign-agreements-worth-1-7-billion>

⁹³ "Kazakhstan's Energy Holding Postpones Projects Due To Crisis", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 18, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15995-kazakhstan-s-energy-holding-postpones-projects-due-to-crisis>

the first 10 months of this year. He added that inflation is expected to remain at 6-8 per cent in 2016 and in 2017 while oil production target is set at 77 million tons.⁹⁴

National Economy Minister Yerbolat Dossayev has said that Kazakhstan's exports for the first 9 months of 2015 have decreased by 42.5 per cent while imports have declined by 23.8 per cent.⁹⁵

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has ratified the agreement among the SCO countries on 'creating conditions for highway transportation.'⁹⁶

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has expressed his displeasure at the pace of and scope of the second wave of privatization in the country. He stated that only 28 per cent of the facilities earmarked have been privatised. He has now ordered the Government to approve a list of 65 largest enterprises and national holdings for privatization.⁹⁷

In a statement issued November 15, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan has condemned the terror strikes in Paris. It stated 'we strongly denounce the actions of those who organised the terrorist attacks in Paris. We express our deepest condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the victims. We pray for a speedy recovery of the injured. Islam, which calls upon all mankind and representatives of different confessions for peace and unity, opposes shedding the blood of innocent people. The Holy Quran teaches that killing an innocent person is equal to killing all mankind.'⁹⁸

Kyrgyzstan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Kyrgyzstan detains alleged IS recruiter; Switzerland and UNDP to support Kyrgyz-Tajik cross-border cooperation.**

Authorities in southern Kyrgyzstan have, on November 16, detained a 19-year-old man suspected of recruiting fighters for the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria and Iraq. He is alleged to be a member of the banned Katibat al-Imam al-Buhari group. It has been estimated that approx. 500 Kyrgyz citizens have joined the Islamic State.⁹⁹

The Ambassador of Switzerland to the Kyrgyz Republic René Holenstein and the UNDP Resident Representative in Kyrgyzstan Alexander Avanesov have, on November 12, signed

⁹⁴ "Kazakhstan To Recalculate State Budget Based On Tenge Rate of 300 for \$1", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 18, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15994-kazakhstan-to-recalculate-state-budget-based-on-tenge-rate-of-300-for-1>

⁹⁵ "Kazakhstan's Exports For Nine Months Decreased by 42.5% - National Economy Minister", *Kazinform*, November 18, 2015 at <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2840337>

⁹⁶ "President Ratified SCO Agreement on Creating Conditions For Highway Transportations", *Kazinform*, November 10, 2015 at <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2837627>

⁹⁷ "Kazakhstan To Approve List of 65 Biggest Enterprises, Holdings For Privatization", *Kazinform*, November 18, 2015 at <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2840367>

⁹⁸ "Kazakh Muslim Leaders Denounce Paris Attacks", *The Asia Times*, November 17, 2015 at <http://astanatimes.com/2015/11/kazakh-muslim-leaders-denounce-paris-attacks/>

⁹⁹ "Kyrgyzstan Detains Alleged IS Recruiter", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, November 16, 2015 at <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-islamic-state-recruiter/27368567.html>

an agreement for the implementation of the “Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development” project in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The goal of the project is to create a more conducive environment for the promotion of sustainable peace and development in the border areas. Peace-building interventions will focus on Batken oblast of Kyrgyzstan and Sughd oblast of Tajikistan with the aim to build a constructive dialogue between cross-border communities. The Swiss Government through its offices in Bishkek and Dushanbe will provide equal contributions in the amount of US\$ 1 million to each of the national components of the project. The project is the next step in the implementation of the sub-regional programme launched through seed funding from UNDP’s Bureau for Programme and Policy Support (BPPS) in response to cross-border tensions in 2014. The project will work in six geographic clusters of villages of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.¹⁰⁰

Uzbekistan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visits Uzbekistan; Uzbek and German officials discuss bilateral ties and international issues; President Islam Karimov discusses cooperation prospects with Lukoil chief; Uzbek-Latvian intergovernmental commission meets in Tashkent; Turkish firm to build cement plant in Uzbekistan; Germany to finance modernization of regional medical centres.**

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has visited Tashkent on November 17 wherein he met with Uzbek President Islam Karimov. The two leaders discussed ‘state and priorities of further development of Uzbekistan-Pakistan interaction in political, trade-economic, cultural-humanitarian and other spheres.’ They also ‘shared views on regional and international issues.’¹⁰¹

Special Representative of Federal Foreign Office of Germany on Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Andreas Peschke has held negotiations with Uzbek Foreign Ministry officials on November 10. The two sides ‘exchanged opinion on current state and perspectives of further developing cooperation in political, trade-economic, investment and other spheres between Uzbekistan and Germany.’ They also discussed issues of interaction in the Uzbekistan-EU format and problems of international and regional character.¹⁰²

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has met with Lukoil President Vagit Alekperov in Tashkent on November 10. They discussed implementation of joint projects in Uzbekistan’s hydrocarbon industry. Lukoil has been running investment projects designed to ‘work out and develop’ promising gas deposits of Khauzak, Shady, Kungrad and the Kandym Group along with the ‘elaboration’ of oil and gas segments of the South-West Gissar and Ustyurt

¹⁰⁰ “Switzerland and UNDP Support Kyrgyz-Tajik Cross-Border Cooperation”, *The Times of Central Asia*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15973-switzerland-undp-support-cross-border-cooperation-between-kyrgyzstan-tajikistan>

¹⁰¹ “Prime Minister of Pakistan arrives in Tashkent”, *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, November 11, 2015 at <http://uza.uz/en/politics/prime-minister-of-pakistan-arrives-in-tashkent-17-11-2015>

¹⁰² “Uzbek, German Officials Discuss Bilateral Ties, Intl Issues”, *Uz Daily*, November 10, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-34221.htm>

region. Its investments have exceeded US\$ 5 billion. Lukoil has commenced construction of the Kandym Gas plant that will process 8 billion cubic meters of natural gas per annum. This project is expected to be complete by 2018.¹⁰³

A regular session of the Uzbek-Latvian intergovernmental commission on economic, industrial and scientific-technical cooperation was held in Tashkent on November 12. The two countries exchanged views on further development of cooperation in the field of science and technology, import and export, cargo transportation, food industry and ways to attract Latvian companies to the privatization process in Uzbekistan. Trade turnover between them stood at US\$ 245.7 million in 2014 and approx. US\$ 135 million in the first nine months of 2015. There are 32 enterprises with Latvian capital in Uzbekistan, which work in sectors like furniture, oil processing, textile, production of confectionary products, processing agriculture goods, services and transport.¹⁰⁴

The Turkish Dal Engineering Group has announced it will launch a new cement plant in Uzbekistan. The facility will be located in the Surkhandarya region and will have capacity of 1.5 million tons of Portland cement by late 2017. The construction of the plant will cost about US\$ 225 million. The two companies will seek a US\$ 90 million loan from Uzbekistan's Fund for Reconstruction and Development, as well as loans US\$ 110 million from second-tier banks in the county; along with equity from AMMC of US\$ 24.4 million.¹⁰⁵

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has signed a resolution "on measures on realization of programmes on modernization of regional multiple-discipline medical centres at financial cooperation with the Government of Germany" on October 30, 2015. As a result, Germany will provide financial aid to Uzbekistan in order to modernise the country's regional multi-discipline medical centres. The centres earmarked are based in Surkhandarya, Karakalpakstan, Andijan, Bukhara and Navoi regions.¹⁰⁶

Tajikistan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmon pays a visit to Pakistan wherein the two countries sign eight cooperation agreements; Chinese companies to irrigate farmland in Tajikistan; Tajikistan looking for investors in major projects; ADB to strengthen technical and vocational education in Tajikistan; Dushanbe mayor orders demolition of**

¹⁰³ "President Islam Karimov Discusses Cooperation Prospects with Lukoil Chief", *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, November 11, 2015 at <http://uza.uz/en/politics/president-islam-karimov-discusses-cooperation-prospects-with-11-11-2015>

¹⁰⁴ "Uzbek-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission Meets in Tashkent", *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, November 12, 2015 at <http://uza.uz/en/business/uzbek-latvian-intergovernmental-commission-meets-in-tashkent-12-11-2015>

¹⁰⁵ "Turkish Firm to Build Cement Plant in Uzbekistan", *Silk Road Reporters*, November 12, 2015 at http://www.silkroadreporters.com/2015/11/12/turkish-firm-to-build-cement-plant-in-uzbekistan/?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=095a46ba55-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f95a626cec-095a46ba55-204234821

¹⁰⁶ "Germany to Finance Modernization Of Regional Medical Centres", *Uz Daily*, November 9, 2015 at <http://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-34198.htm>

illegally built places of worship; EU supports 'environmental remediation' of uranium legacy sites in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmon has, on November 12, paid a state visit to Pakistan wherein he held talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. President Rakhmon stated that Pakistan's geo-strategic position and influence in South Asia and the Islamic world and growing trade and economic opportunities are of significance for Tajikistan. Mr. Sharif said that 'Pakistan is ready to become the gateway of Tajikistan to the southern sea routes.' The parties exchanged views on developing cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, investment, trade, energy, defence, security, science, technology, and culture. In total, eight cooperation agreements were signed that cover extradition, energy, political and foreign office contacts, industry and science. Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 89 million in 2014. A direct civilian air service is also expected to be launched in the near future.¹⁰⁷

Tajikistan's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has said, on November 11, that around 24 thousand hectares of farmland for growing cotton will be irrigated through Chinese investments in the Khatlon province. In addition, 4.5 thousand hectares will be used to grow rice, onion, and vegetables. The project is estimated to cost US\$ 300 million. The Juntai-Khatlon Sinsilu company will rent this farmland for 49 years and is expected to employ 15 thousand people. It will also build a cotton-processing factory in the Dangara district.¹⁰⁸

The government of Tajikistan is looking for investors to conduct a feasibility study for a project to produce alumina at the Kurgovad deposit in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region. The project aims at establishing production of primary aluminum from domestic raw materials (alumina) at the existing aluminium plant, as well as using by-products received during alumina processing in other industries. It is estimated to cost US \$684.9 million. Last year Tajikistan produced 121.2 thousand tons of primary alumina.¹⁰⁹

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$32 million project to promote a demand-driven, quality-assured, and flexible technical and vocational education and training (TVET) delivery system in Tajikistan. The project will help modernize the TVET system by developing industry-endorsed standards and competency-based training and assessment tools for 17 priority occupations. The project will upgrade physical learning and teaching facilities in 29 TVET institutions and will also strengthen governance and management, and improve access to quality programmes.¹¹⁰

Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloyev has ordered to demolish the illegally built places of worship in the city that do not meet the requirements of municipal engineering, fire

¹⁰⁷ "Tajikistan, Pakistan Sign Eight Cooperation Agreements", *Asia Plus*, November 13, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-pakistan-sign-eight-cooperation-agreements>

¹⁰⁸ "Chinese Companies To Irrigate Farmland in Tajikistan", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15969-chinese-companies-to-irrigate-farmland-in-tajikistan>

¹⁰⁹ "Tajikistan Looking For Investors In Major Projects", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15985-tajikistan-looking-for-investors-in-major-projects>

¹¹⁰ "ADB to Strengthen Technical And Vocational Education in Tajikistan", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15966-adb-to-strengthen-technical-and-vocational-education-in-tajikistan>

safety, epidemiology and sanitation. The decision also seeks to explore the possibility of using illegal buildings that do not meet sanitation, fire safety and municipal engineering conditions as small production workshops, educational, medical and social facilities and centres for studying information technology.¹¹¹

The Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of Tajikistan will, in partnership with the European Commission (EC), develop a Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Assessment for the 'remediation of uranium mining and processing' at the legacy sites of Degmay and Taboshar. This project aims to not only rehabilitate radioactively contaminated mine sites but is also expected to serve as a pilot project intended to set standards for similar rehabilitation projects in the entire Central Asia region.¹¹²

Turkmenistan

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Turkmen President visits Beijing; Turkmenistan plans long-term supply of electricity to Afghanistan.**

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov has visited Beijing on November 12 wherein he held discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Hailing Turkmenistan's support for China's Belt and Road initiative, Xi said China is willing to work with Turkmenistan on the construction of the China-Central Asia-West Asia economic corridor, which passes through Turkmenistan and is part of the initiative. He added that China looks forward to deepen cooperation in energy, potash fertilizer production, electricity, information technology, agriculture, finance, and transportation sectors.¹¹³

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has, on November 8, signed a decree on supply of electricity to Afghanistan till 2027. The decree authorizes the State Power Engineering Corporation "Turkmenenergo" of the Ministry of Power Engineering of Turkmenistan to conclude a contract with Afghanistan's "Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat" on supply of electricity from January 2018 to December 2027. Electricity will be supplied along the Atamyrat (Turkmenistan) - Andkhoy (Afghanistan) route.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ "Dushanbe Mayor Orders To Demolish Illegally Built Places Of Worship", *Asia Plus*, November 13, 2015 at <http://news.tj/en/news/dushanbe-mayor-orders-demolish-illegally-built-places-worship>

¹¹² "EU Supports Environmental Remediation Of Uranium Legacy Sites in Tajikistan", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15967-eu-supports-environmental-remediation-of-uranium-legacy-sites-in-tajikistan>

¹¹³ "Turkmenistan and China To Boost Cooperation", *The Times of Central Asia*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.timesca.com/news/15974-turkmenistan-and-china-to-boost-cooperation>

¹¹⁴ "Turkmenistan Plans Long-Term Supplies Of Electricity To Afghanistan", *Turkmenistan*, November 8, 2015 at <http://www.turkmenistan.ru/en/articles/18004.html>

F. The United State of America

National

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Department of Defence announces transfer of five Yemenis from Guantanamo to UAE; Washington alarmed over IS group's ambition to strike within the United States; Obama has vowed to help France in "hunting down the perpetrators" of the Paris attacks; Democratic presidential contenders promise a more aggressive fight against the IS group; Clinton defends her campaign contributions from Wall Street.**

On November 15, 2015, the US Department of Defence announced the transfer of Ali Ahmad Muhammad al-Razihi, Khalid Abd-al-Jabbar Muhammad Uthman al-Qadasi, Adil Said al-Hajj Ubayd al-Busays, Sulayman Awad Bin Uqayl al-Nahdi, and Fahmi Salem Said al-Asani from the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to the Government of the United Arab Emirates. As directed by the president's January 22, 2009, executive order, the interagency Guantanamo Review Task Force conducted a comprehensive review of these cases. As a result of those reviews, which examined a number of factors, including security issues, al-Qadasi, al-Busays, al-Nahdi, and al-Asani were unanimously approved for transfer by the six departments and agencies comprising the task force.¹¹⁵

Horrific terrorist carnage in Paris, France has refocused Washington's attention on the Islamic State (IS) group and its ambition to strike within the United States. The U.S. lawmakers noted, America is also in IS' crosshairs. Congressman Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, speaking on ABC's *This Week programme*, said, "We are a harder target, a harder target to reach". "But we know ISIS aspires to attack us here in the United States as well," he said. President Barack Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, also said, "There is not a specific, credible threat to the homeland at this time, but we are going to be very vigilant". The White House officials are however seeking to reassure the American public.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. President Barack Obama has vowed to help France in "hunting down the perpetrators" of the Paris attacks and said he plans to "redouble" efforts to eliminate the Islamic State group, known in Arabic as Daesh. Obama said after meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at start of the G-20 summit in the Turkish Mediterranean resort of Antalya on November 15.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "Detainee Transfers Announced", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-438-15, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/628980/detainee-transfers-announced>; and, "US Transfers 5 Yemenis From Guantanamo to UAE", *VOA News*, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/yemenis-guantanamo-transfer-uae/3059657.html>

¹¹⁶ Bowman, Michael, "Paris Attacks Raise Questions About US Security", *VOA News*, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/paris-attacks-raise-questions-about-united-states-security/3059112.html>

¹¹⁷ Ramirez, Luis, "Obama at G-20: US to 'Redouble' IS Fight After Paris Attacks", *VOA News*, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/paris-attacks-to-top-g-20-discussions/3058732.html>

During the second Democratic debate on November 14, U.S. Democratic presidential contenders promised a more aggressive fight against the IS group, but offered few specifics on how they would do so, as they faced off in their party's second debate of the primary election campaign. The debate was held in the early presidential nominating state of Iowa, focused largely on national security and foreign policy, coming a day after the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, France.¹¹⁸

During the second Democratic debate, Hillary Clinton was put on the defensive by rival Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders when he said Wall Street had been the major contributor to her campaigns. However, Clinton defended her campaign contributions from Wall Street by invoking her work to help the financial sector rebuild after the September 11, 2001, attacks, raising eyebrows among her Democratic challengers and Republicans alike. She said that she was representing New York in the Senate when downtown Manhattan was attacked and noted that she helped the city's financial hub rebuild.¹¹⁹

International: Asia

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **U.S. forces conduct an airstrike in Raqqa, Syria; Pentagon: Nabil's death will degrade ISIL's ability to meet the group's objectives in Libya; Carter: horrific and barbaric attacks in Paris were more than an attack on the nation; U.S. and France maintain a close relationship in countering terrorism; Obama is expected to focus on the TPP during a trip to the Philippines and Malaysia next week; US sends B-52 bombers to contested islands in the SCS, and receives a verbal warning from Chinese; Chinese contact US as Bombers approach Islands in SCS; China considers B-52 bombers approach as an excuse to challenge China's territorial claims in the SCS.**

According to the US DoD news release, "U.S. forces conducted an airstrike in Raqqa, Syria, on November 12, 2015 targeting Mohamed Emwazi, also known as "Jihadi John." "Emwazi, a British citizen, participated in the videos showing the murders of U.S. journalists Steven Sotloff and James Foley, U.S. aid worker Abdul-Rahman Kassig, British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning, Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, and a number of other hostages. It stated that "We are assessing the results of tonight's operation and will provide additional information as and where appropriate."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Gallo, William, "Democrats Talk Tough on IS, Offer Few Details at Debate", *VOA News*, November 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/democrats-clash-in-debate-on-national-security-issues/3058703.html>

¹¹⁹ "Democrat Clinton Invokes 9/11 to Defend Donations, Draws Ire", *Associated Press*, November 15, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/democrat-hillary-clinton-september-11-donations-criticized/3058886.html>

¹²⁰ "Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on Airstrike in Raqqa, Syria", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-433-15, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/628777/statement-from-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-on-airstrike-in-raqqa-syria>; and, "Pentagon: US Airstrike Kills Head of IS in Libya", *VOA News*, November 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pentagon-us-airstrike-kills-head-of-islamic-state-in-syria/3058224.html>

In a statement Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said that “On November 13, the U.S. military conducted an airstrike in Libya against Abu Nabil, aka Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi, an Iraqi national who was a long-time al Qaeda operative and the senior ISIL leader in Libya.” Cook said, “Nabil's death will degrade ISIL's ability to meet the group's objectives in Libya, including recruiting new ISIL members, establishing bases in Libya, and planning external attacks on the United States.” He added, “While not the first U.S. strike against terrorists in Libya, this is the first U.S. strike against an ISIL leader in Libya and it demonstrates we will go after ISIL leaders wherever they operate.” He said that “This operation was authorized and initiated prior to the terrorist attack in Paris.”¹²¹

US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter in a statement on the Paris attacks said that “This evening's horrific and barbaric attacks in Paris were more than an attack on the nation or people of France - they were an assault on our common human dignity. As NATO allies, as leaders of the counter-ISIL coalition, as nations working shoulder to shoulder from West Africa to the Indian Ocean, the United States and France will only strengthen our resolve.” Secretary Carter added, “As the president said tonight, in this moment of tragedy the United States stands with the people of France and its vibrant, multi-cultural democracy. For more than 200 years the United States and France have stood together in friendship.” He said, “We have stood for the common good and security of all nations. We have never stood closer than we do now.”¹²²

On November 14, 2015, Secretary Carter also spoke by phone with French Minister of Defence Jean-Yves Le Drian to convey his condolences for those killed during last night's terrorist attacks in Paris. Carter told Minister Le Drian that “the men and women of the Department of Defence stand with France entirely and are committed to helping France in any way that we can.” He added, “The U.S. and France maintain a close relationship in countering terrorism around the world including direct action in North Africa, Syria, and Iraq.”¹²³

U.S. President Barack Obama is expected to focus on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) during a trip to the Philippines and Malaysia next week, as part of the strategic rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama is scheduled to attending the APEC summit in Manila, followed by the ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur during his six-day stay in the region. National Security Advisor Susan Rice said, during a White House briefing on November 12 that “The TPP is central to our vision of the region's future and our place in it”.

¹²¹ “Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on U.S. strike in Libya”, *DoD News*, Release No: NR-436-15, November 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/628954/statement-from-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-on-us-strike-in-libya>

¹²² “Statement from Secretary of Defence Ash Carter on the Paris Attacks”, *DoD News*, Release No: NR-434-15, November 13, 2015, at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/628941/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-on-the-paris-attacks>

¹²³ “Readout of Secretary Carter's Call with French Minister of Defence Jean-Yves Le Drian”, *DoD News*, Release No: NR-435-15, November 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/628948/readout-of-secretary-carters-call-with-french-minister-of-defense-jean-yves-le>

She added, "America's interests are integrally linked to the Asia-Pacific region," and, "This is where our security interests meet our economic interests in an undeniable way."¹²⁴

U.S. defence officials say two B-52 bombers flew near contested islands in the South China Sea earlier this week, and received a verbal warning from Chinese ground controllers in the latest instance of Washington challenging Beijing's expansive territorial claims there. According to Commander Bill Urban, a Pentagon spokesman, the bombers, which originated from and returned to a U.S. air base on Guam, conducted a "routine mission in international airspace in the vicinity of the Spratly Islands" on November 8 and November 9.¹²⁵ China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year, and the United States has said it will continue conducting patrols to assure freedom of navigation. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims in the region.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, China said on November 13 that it respects freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea (SCS). Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said that China opposed flights that used such freedoms as mere legal cover, strongly implying that Beijing considered the flights by the B-52 bombers as an excuse to challenge China's territorial claims in the SCS. Hong told reporters at a regular news conference that China "firmly opposes violating international law and undermining China's sovereignty and security interests under the pretext of navigation and overflight freedom".¹²⁷

India-US Relations

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Ninth edition of the RPBD to be held in Los Angeles, California, USA on November 14-15; CFR report: Rising India offers substantial opportunities to advance American national interests and offers 'joint-venture' model for-India-US relations; Given Pakistan's unwillingness to act against terror, US must reconsider its military assistance to Pakistan; India is vying to import armed Predator Avenger drones from the U.S.; Asian Indians form the biggest group of naturalized Americans; Ambassador Singh: Education sector is the area where bilateral relationship must get stronger; US says India has taken "important steps" in combating climate change.**

The Union Minister for External Affairs & Overseas Indian Affairs Sushma Swaraj will chair the ninth edition of the Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (RPBD) to be held in Los Angeles,

¹²⁴ Salinas, Mary Alice, "Obama Looks to Bolster Rebalance on Asia Trip", *VOA News*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-asia-trip-to-bolster-us-asia-pacific-rebalance/3056177.html>; and, "Obama Trip to Asia Light on Tourism for a Presidential Jaunt", *Associated Press*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-obama-trip-to-asia-light-on-tourism/3056179.html>

¹²⁵ Gallo, William, "US Sends B-52s Near Islands Claimed by China", *VOA News*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-sends-b-52s-near-islands-claimed-by-china/3056137.html>

¹²⁶ "Chinese Contact US as Bombers Approach Islands in S. China Sea", *Reuters*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/south-china-sea-islands-bombers-united-states/3055488.html>

¹²⁷ "China Says it Respects Navigation Freedom in South China Sea", *Associated Press*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-says-it-respects-navigation-freedom-in-south-china-asea/3056391.html>

California, USA on November 14-15. The Indian Delegation includes Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs; Ambassador of India to USA; the Consul General of India in San Francisco, senior officials from four State Governments and captains of the Indian Industry. The RPBD is an annual event organised by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), as part of its outreach to the Indian Diaspora in various global regions. RPBD will provide a unique platform and opportunity for the Government to engage with the Indian Diaspora in USA on issues such as Increasing engagement with the Indian Diaspora; Role of Diaspora in the new initiatives of the Government of India (such as Digital India, Make in India, National Mission for Clean Ganga, Swachh Bharat etc.); Innovation and Entrepreneurship; Education, Skills and Vocational Training; Soft-power-yoga, and the Bollywood-Hollywood Connect.¹²⁸

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in its recent report titled “Working With a Rising India: A Joint Venture for the New Century” has pointed out that “A rising India offers one of the most substantial opportunities to advance American national interests over the next two decades”. The report noted that rebounding from a recent economic growth slump, India has surpassed China this year to become the world's fastest-growing major economy. It stated, “If India can maintain its current growth rate, let alone attain sustained double digits, it has the potential over the next two to three decades to follow China on the path to becoming another \$10 trillion economy”.¹²⁹ It suggested that since India does not seek an alliance with the US, a ‘joint-venture’ model for US-India relations focused on shared pursuits and converging interests.¹³⁰

Nicholas Burns, former Undersecretary of State and South Asia expert said that given Pakistan’s unwillingness to act against terror groups targeting India, particularly the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the US must reconsider its military assistance to Pakistan. Burns said, participating in a discussion on India-U.S. relations at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), “Pakistan has the capacity to act against the terror groups that target India. It is a difficult task, but it can do it”. Alyssa Ayres, senior fellow at CFR, agreed with Mr. Burns and added that Pakistan’s argument that it was doing the best it can against terror groups was not borne out by its actions. In the October 2015 joint statement with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif recently, U.S. President Barack Obama had appreciated Pakistan’s counter terror measures. The statement had also said Pakistan was acting against the LeT.¹³¹

¹²⁸ “Reaching Out to the Indian Diaspora at the Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on November 14-15, 2015 at Los Angeles, USA”, *PIB*, Release ID :130392, November 11, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

¹²⁹ See the CFR Task Force Report on Working With a Rising India: A Joint Venture for the New Century, *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.cfr.org/india/working-rising-india/p37233>; and, “Joint Venture Model Would Work Best for Indo-US Relations, Suggests US Think Tank”, *The Business Insider*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.businessinsider.in/Joint-venture-model-would-work-best-for-Indo-US-relations-suggests-US-think-tank/articleshow/49766174.cms>

¹³⁰ “US Think Tank Suggests ‘Joint-Venture’ Model for US-India Relations”, *The Economic Times*, November 13, 2015 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-13/news/68252714_1_task-force-us-india-rising-india

¹³¹ George, Varghese K., “U.S. Must Stop Military Assistance To Pakistan: Experts”, *The Hindu*, November 13, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/us-must-stop-military-assistance-to-pakistan-experts/article7872164.ece>

As per news reports, India is vying to become one of the first countries to import armed Predator Avenger drones from the U.S. The unmanned aircraft manufactured by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. are sleek, fast, killing machines. From New Delhi they could hunt militants across Pakistan, and become a strategic consideration in border standoffs with China. If approved, the drones would be another sign of the growing defence ties between Washington and New Delhi: India was the second-largest buyer of U.S. arms in 2014, up from virtually nothing five years ago. The Avengers also represent a small but significant tilt in the strategic dynamics of a region with three nuclear powers and about 40 percent of the world's population.¹³²

Amid reports that indicate India and China are now starting to send more legal immigrants to the United States than Mexico, new data from the US department of homeland security shows that Asian Indians form the biggest group of naturalized Americans in nine states, mostly in eastern US. Mexican-Americans still dominate the central and western half of the US, but the fact Indians have such a high concentration in so many states comes as much as a surprise as Chinese not being the top immigrant population even in a single state. In nine states, Indians make up the biggest group of naturalized citizens. Those from the Dominican Republic, who nationwide topped those from China for the first time in at least a decade, are the biggest group in five states, the DHS data shows.¹³³

Addressing a gathering of students at Wright State University in Ohio on November 9, Indian Ambassador to the US Arun K Singh said that relations between India and the US are strong and getting stronger. Asserting that the Indo-US ties are strong, has said, education sector is the area where bilateral relationship must get stronger. Ambassador Singh said, "The area where relations must get stronger is in education. Your presence here is a part of that".¹³⁴

The White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters on November 9 that India has taken "important steps" in combating climate change, but it would like to see the country make a vital contribution to the broader global effort in meeting such challenges. Earnest said, "We certainly would expect that India would contribute to this broader global effort and this is something that is economically challenging for India, as the Indian government would be the first to tell you". Earnest added, "But at the same time, we have seen India take important

¹³² Bipindra, Nc and Lasseter, Tom, "India Seeks Armed Drones From U.S. in Challenge to Pakistan", *Bloomberg.com*, November 10, 2015 at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-10/india-seeks-armed-u-s-predator-drones-in-challenge-to-pakistan>

¹³³ Rajghatta, Chidanand, "In 9 US States, Indians Biggest Immigrant Bloc", *The Times of India*, November 10, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/In-9-US-states-Indians-biggest-immigrant-bloc/articleshow/49731124.cms>

¹³⁴ "Indo-US Relations Are Strong, Says Indian Ambassador Arun K Singh", *Press Trust of India*, November 10, 2015 <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indo-us-relations-are-strong-says-indian-ambassador-arun-k-singh-1242294>; and, "Indo-US Relations Are Strong: Arun K Singh", *Zee News*, November 11, 2015 at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/indo-us-relations-are-strong-arun-k-singh_1820863.html

steps in the past, and there was, earlier in the President's administration, a commitment that was made by the Indians to limit hydrofluorocarbons".¹³⁵

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Chief of Army Staff embarks on a four day goodwill visit to Japan; Defence minister dedicates Advanced Torpedo Defence System and Hydrodynamic Test Facility to the Nation.**

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Dalbir Singh will embark on a four day goodwill visit to Japan from 16 to 19 November 2015. The visit assumes special significance in light of the increasing defence cooperation between the two countries. The visit is part of the ongoing high level exchanges between the two countries. The enhancement of India-Japan Global partnership for the 21st Century to a status of 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' during the PM's visit to Japan in September 2014 was a defining moment in the bilateral relationship. Defence and security cooperation have emerged as a key component of this strategic partnership. The defence cooperation between the two countries has been characterized by cooperation in the field of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, exchange of training courses, exchanges at the functional level and cooperation in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations. Both sides have indicated a desire to further enhance cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.¹³⁶

The Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on November 14 dedicated to the nation the Seakeeping and Manoeuvring Basin (SMB) in Visakhapatnam. The Minister also handed over the Maareech - Advanced Torpedo Defence System developed by DRDO to the Indian navy. SMB facility is one of its kind in the country, set up as a joint effort of DRDO and Indian Navy. The facility puts India among the few nations in the world having the capability to undertake comprehensive hydrodynamic model testing of naval platforms and weapon systems. SMB would help to design and build state-of-the-art naval combatants such as submarines, ships, torpedoes, etc. Maareech, a joint project of Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL), Kochi and NSTL, Visakhapatnam is a state-of-the-art indigenous system for torpedo detection and countermeasures. This system offers a complete solution to detect and locate the incoming torpedo and to apply countermeasures to protect

¹³⁵ "US Expects India To Contribute More To Tackle Climate Change", *PTI*, November 10, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-11-10/news/68165118_1_climate-change-broader-global-effort-indian-government

¹³⁶ "Visit of Coas to Japan," *PIB*, November 15, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130490>

naval platform against torpedo attack. Two production grade Maareech systems have been developed and user evaluation trials completed on board two Indian Navy ships.¹³⁷

International

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **US Air Force sends six Boeing F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft to Turkey; France to re-deploy its sole aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle for strikes against the Islamic State.**

Reports say that, the first six US Air Force (USAF) Boeing F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft have arrived at Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey. F-15s were deployed after the Government of Turkey requested support in securing the sovereignty of Turkish air space. The United States and Turkey, as NATO allies, share a commitment to peace and stability in the region. In total the USAF plans to deploy 12 F-15C fighter aircraft to Incirlik. Moreover, these aircrafts would be joined by F-15E Strike Eagle multirole strike aircraft also.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, according to reports, France will soon re-deploy its sole aircraft carrier to the Gulf for strikes against the Islamic State. France is to deploy its aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle to the Gulf for strikes against the Islamic State. The deployment will be the second time in 2015 that the carrier has taken part in Operation Chammal, as France terms its anti-Islamic State strikes. The carrier was previously deployed to the Gulf from 23 February to 18 April. With 20 Rafale and Super Etendard Modernise (SEM) aircraft on board, the Charles de Gaulle will help relieve the pressure on France's land-based aircraft in the region. During the seven weeks that Charles de Gaulle last took part in the operation, its aircraft launched around 200 sorties. Since 27 September France has also been conducting strikes against the Islamic State in Syria.¹³⁹

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **One militant killed, two soldiers injured in Kupwara gunfight.**

A militant was killed and two army soldiers were injured in an encounter between the militants and troops of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) in Payerpathi Wanigah forests near the line of control (LoC) in Kupwara district, police said. "Troops of 41 RR surrounded the forest area following information about a group of militants hiding there," a senior police official told

¹³⁷ "Defence Minister Hands Over 'Maareech –Advanced Torpedo Defence System' to Indian Navy: Dedicates 'Hydrodynamic Test Facility' to the Nation," *PIB*, November 14, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130474>

¹³⁸ "Update: US F-15Cs Arrive In Turkey To Protect Turkish Air Space," *IHS Jane's*, November 11, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55947/update-us-f-15cs-arrive-in-turkey-to-protect-turkish-air-space>

¹³⁹ "France To Deploy Charles De Gaulle Again For Anti-IS Strikes," *IHS Jane's*, November 12, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/55939/france-to-deploy-charles-de-gaulle-again-for-anti-is-strikes>

IANS. The security forces were fired upon triggering an encounter in which the militant was killed, added the police.¹⁴⁰

Northeast India

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **UNLF cadre arrested from South Manipur; Bangladesh hands over Anup Chetia to India; Garo militants arrested in Meghalaya; Assam: Wanted NDFB(S) 'commander' killed, another arrested during joint operations.**

Troops of Red Shield Division apprehended a UNLF cadre from Salamkunjil Part-II, Churachandpur in South Manipur, claimed the Defence PRO on November 10. According to the press note, based on a specific input regarding the presence of an UNLF cadre, troops of the Division launched a joint operation on November 8. The party reached the location, carried out a thorough search and subsequently apprehended the cadre, namely Sanasam Prem Singh @ Abung (29) of Bishenpur district, Manipur.¹⁴¹

Acting on a request of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bangladesh on November 11 handed over ULFA general secretary Anup Chetia to a team of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials in Dhaka. The confirmation of Chetia's release came when Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said in Dhaka that the government has "released" Chetia on completion of his detention.¹⁴²

The area commander of Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) and a cadre of the outfit were arrested by a team of East Garo Hills district police on November 11 near Dobu area of Meghalaya. The commander, Chekan N Marak (Bawang, 35), was arrested from a hideout along with another cadre, identified as Ronseng N Marak (25).¹⁴³ Earlier, on November 9, a Garo militant was caught and another, wanted for kidnapping and killing an Intelligence Bureau officer, escaped during an encounter with security forces in Meghalaya's East Garo Hills district.¹⁴⁴

A 'commander' of the banned NDFB(Songbijit) faction wanted by NIA for his involvement in the 2014 December carnage at Kokrajhar was killed in an encounter with a joint army and police team in Assam's Chirang district, a Defence spokesman said on November 14. The encounter took place when the Army launched a joint operation with Assam Police on November 13 in Chirang district following specific information about the presence of the

¹⁴⁰ "Militant Killed In Jammu And Kashmir Gunfight", *The Times of India*, November 15, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/srinagar/Militant-killed-in-Jammu-and-Kashmir-gunfight/articleshow/49787816.cms>

¹⁴¹ "UNLF Cadre Apprehended", *The Assam Tribune*, November 11, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov1115/oth051>

¹⁴² Barooah, Kalyan, "Bangladesh Hands Over Anup Chetia to India", *The Assam Tribune*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov1215/at050>

¹⁴³ "GNLA Area Commander In Police Net", *The Assam Tribune*, November 12, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov1215/oth053>

¹⁴⁴ "Garo Militant Arrested", *The Assam Tribune*, November 10, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov1015/oth052>

NDFB(S) 'commander' identified as Jaola Basumatary, he said.¹⁴⁵ Earlier on November 9, a hardcore NDFB(S) militant identified as Myanmar-trained Sanjiv Wari was apprehended during a joint operation by the army and police in Kokrajhar district of Assam. A 9mm pistol with magazines, some live rounds and a Chinese grenade were recovered from his possession.¹⁴⁶

Left-wing Extremism

(November 9-15, 2015)

- **Two Maoists killed in Odisha's Sundergarh district; Four Maoists killed in Bastar encounter; Two wanted Naxals arrested in Chhattisgarh.**

Two Maoists were gunned down in separate encounters between ultras and security personnel in Odisha's Sundergarh district on November 12. "A top ranking Naxalite was killed today in an operation jointly launched by Odisha Police and CRPF jawans in the forest range area of the district," said DGP K B Singh in Bhubaneswar. He was working as a self-styled platoon commander of CPI (Maoist), under Saranda division in Jharkhand, the official said. Another Maoist, yet to be identified, was killed on November 11 in another part of forest range of Sundergarh district, the official added. The DGP said four 304 rifles, 284 rounds of bullets, four grenades, gelatine sticks, Maoist literature and camping materials were also seized.¹⁴⁷

Four members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) were killed in an encounter in Bastar in south Chhattisgarh on November 13, police said. "An encounter took place between a team of the District Reserve Guard [DRG] and the Maoists near Hallur and Hakawa village under the Mirtur police station limits of Bijapur district on November 13. Four bodies of uniformed Maoists were recovered after a fierce gun battle. It is a major success for the Bastar police. Eight Maoists have been killed in last 10 days in Bastar," said S.R.P. Kalluri, Inspector-General of Police, Bastar range. The IG said one service pistol and three rifles were recovered from the encounter spot.¹⁴⁸

Two wanted Naxals were arrested in a joint operation by local police and BSF in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district, police said on November 15. The cadres, identified as Shatruram (39) and Saradu Ram Dhruv (31), were nabbed from Siksod police station area on November 14, a senior police official told *PTI*. The arrested insurgents were allegedly

¹⁴⁵ "Top NDFB(S) Militant Killed In Encounter in Assam", *The Economic Times*, November 14, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/top-ndfbs-militant-killed-in-encounter-in-assam/articleshow/49781282.cms>

¹⁴⁶ "NDFB(S) Militant Nabbed During Joint Operation By Army And Police in Assam", *The Economic Times*, November 9, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ndfbs-militant-nabbed-during-joint-operation-by-army-and-police-in-assam/articleshow/49724294.cms>

¹⁴⁷ "Two Maoists Killed In Odisha's Sundergarh District", *The Economic Times*, November 12, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/two-maoists-killed-in-odishas-sundergarh-district/articleshow/49756507.cms>

¹⁴⁸ Dahat, Pavan, "4 Maoists Killed In Bastar Encounter", *The Hindu*, November 14, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/4-maoists-killed-in-bastar-encounter/article7874507.ece>

involved in the recent torching of about 26 vehicles in Chargaon iron ore mines in the district, he said. Shatruram was wanted in at least 20 cases of Naxal-related offences, while around nine cases were registered against Saradhu, the police official said.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ "Two Wanted Naxals Held in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, November 15, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/two-wanted-naxals-held-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/49789825.cms>