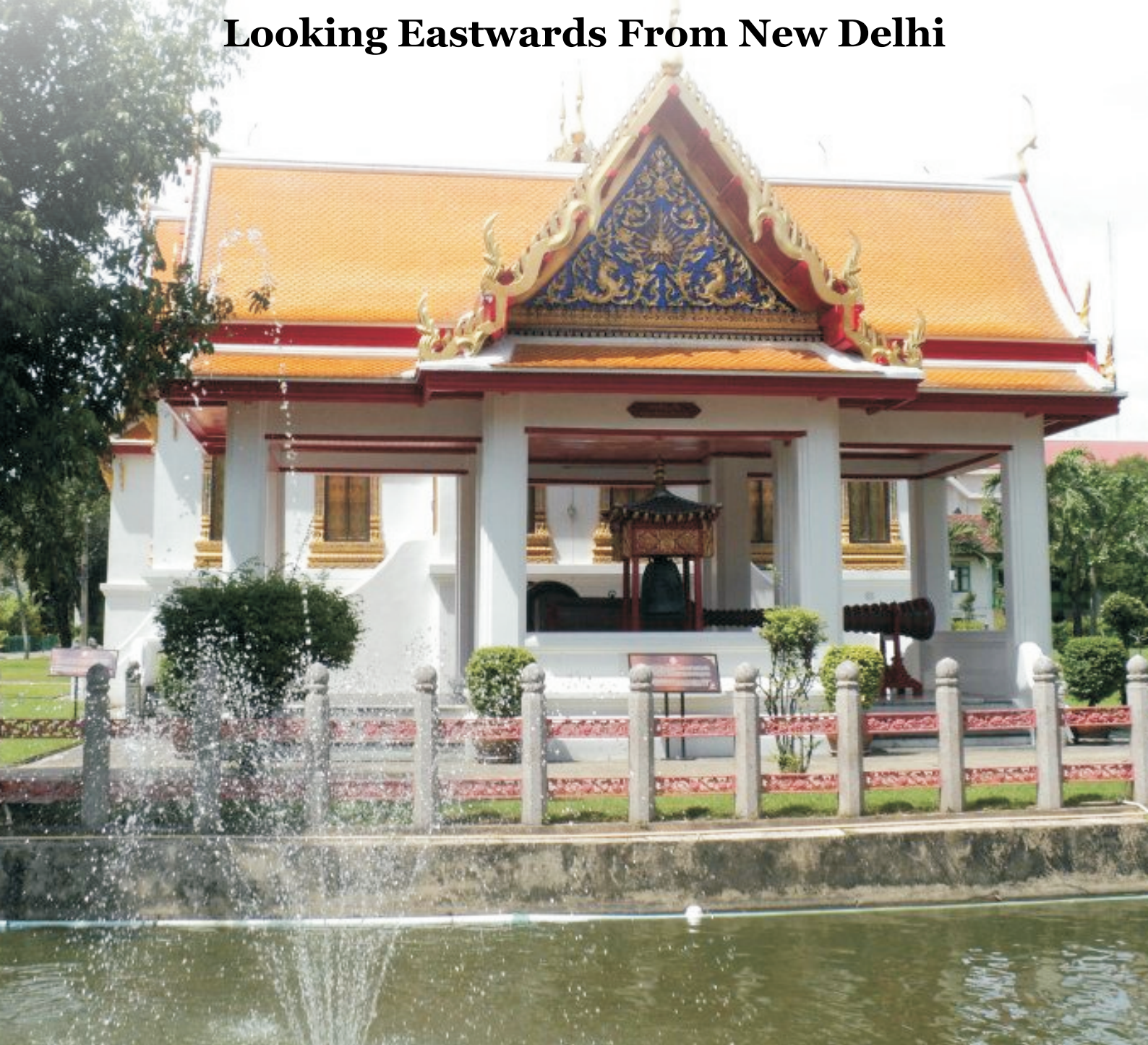


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INSIGHT SOUTHEAST ASIA

Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



A Pagoda Garden, Bangkok
Photo Courtesy : Sampa Kundu

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Centre Activities for November-December

The last two months of 2014 have been action-packed and noteworthy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Myanmar, Australia and Fiji to attend the ASEAN-India Summit, G-20 Summit and a state visit to the Oceanic nation. India has been benefitted as the prime minister could meet his counter-parts from ASEAN, East Asia as well as Pacific countries and successfully demonstrated many of his dreams. ASEAN received the prime minister wholeheartedly as India showed its willingness to implement Act East policy instead of only 'look'ing east. Not only on foreign soil, PM Modi marked the end of the year with his significant gesture of spending few consecutive days in Northeast India to reiterate the region's importance in India's Act East Policy. At the bilateral level, India's relations with countries like Vietnam received a major boost as Army Chief General Suhag undertook a visit to the Southeast Asian country to augment defence ties between the two.

Change has become a phenomenon in Southeast Asia as well. After almost one and half years of deadlock and protests, the opposition party in Cambodia finally agreed for a conciliation with the government and the opposition leader Sam Rainsy has accepted his legislative status which will rejuvenate the authoritarian political culture of Cambodia with a fresh air of democracy. In Myanmar, Nation-Wide Ceasefire Coordination Team and Union Peace-Making Working Committee have decided to resume negotiation on a nation-wide ceasefire agreement to end decades-old ethnic insurgency. In Myanmar, protests are still ongoing against China-funded copper mine project in Monywa.

Followed by Myanmar, Malaysia will be the next ASEAN Chair in 2015. Indonesia is expected to experience some changes under the new President Joko Widodo who is the first so-called non-elite president of the largest democracy in Southeast Asia. Human rights situation is likely to improve as fresh calls are being made against forceful land acquisition and other development-induced displacement in several countries. Vietnam and China have verbally assured each other of not taking any further aggressive posture on South China Sea. China continues to be a major security partner for many Southeast Asian countries despite disputes over South China Sea. In between, natural disaster proves to be a major source of destruction not only in Southeast Asia, but also in India. Cyclones in the eastern coast of India, Philippines and devastating floods in northern India, especially Jammu and Kashmir, Malaysia and Thailand once again proved the vulnerability of Asia-Pacific in view of natural disaster. The crash of AirAsia flight QZ8501 on December 28 was the third unfortunate incident in the aviation history of Southeast Asia which is still struggling to solve the mystery of MH 370 and the bombing down of MH 17 in the same year.

The present issue of *Insight Southeast Asia* has taken an attempt to highlight key developments shaped in November and December under its News Track section. The issue also carries a country profile on Malaysia and one commentary signifying prime minister's visit to Nay Pyi Taw. We hope that our readers will enjoy reading this issue.

With best wishes for 2015,

Sampa Kundu

MALAYSIA



Source: IDSA

CAPITAL: Kuala Lumpur

LAND AND GEOGRAPHY: Malaysia is a Southeast Asian nation that is located on the Malay Archipelago.¹ The total area occupied by Malaysia is 329,847 sq. Km² out of which land area is 328,657 sq. Km³ and water area is 1,190 sq. Km.⁴ The international borders of Malaysia is **2,742 KM⁵** in total and the length of international

borders of Malaysia with neighbouring countries are listed as follows:

Brunei: 266 km⁶

Indonesia: 1,881 km⁷

Thailand: 595 km⁸

POPULATION: According to the latest published Statistical Bulletin available on public domain as of October 2014⁹, the total

- ¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Malay Archipelago", Available on: (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/359679/Malay-Archipelago>), Accessed on December 30, 2014
- ² CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>) Accessed on December 30, 2014
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>) Accessed on December 30, 2014
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>) Accessed on December 30, 2014
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>) Accessed on December 30, 2014
- ⁹ Department of Statistics, Government of Malaysia, "Monthly Statistical Bulletin". Available on: (http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2581%3Amonthly-statistical-bulletin-malaysia-october-2014&catid=129%3Aonline-publications&lang=en) Accessed on December 30th 2014

population of Malaysia in the 2nd quarter of 2014 was 30,261.7 (approximately 30 million).¹⁰ The CIA World Factbook has estimated at 30,073,353 (July 2014 estimation)¹¹.

RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION: Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society. Islam is the state religion but religious freedom is allowed for other minorities.¹² Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Sikhism, and indigenous religions are practiced alongside Islam. Malays are the dominant ethnic group in the country. The country has a strong presence of ethnic Chinese group and also a sizeable diaspora of Indians. The national language is Malay but English is widely spoken.¹³ As per the 2010 Census, Malaysian citizens consist of the ethnic groups Bhumiputera (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.7%).¹⁴ According to the same census, Islam was the most widely professed religion in Malaysia with the proportion of 61.3 per cent. The proportion of other religions were Buddhism (19.8%), Christianity (9.2%) and Hinduism (6.3%).¹⁵

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT: Malaysia is a federated Constitutional Monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The Head of State is the King while the Head of Government is the Prime Minister. Malaysia's 13 states are: Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor and Terengganu. There are three Federal Territories: Labuan, Putrajaya and Wilayah Persekutuan. The capital, Kuala Lumpur, is located in Wilayah Persekutuan. Nine of the 13 states have a king who share the hereditary position of the king on a rotating basis for 5 years.¹⁶ Legislative power is divided between Federal (Bicameral) and State (Unicameral) Legislatures. The Federal Parliament consists of the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) and the Senate (Dewan Negara).¹⁷ The Members of the Senate are 46 in number and are appointed by the advice of the king and through election of State Legislative Assemblies for a term of 3 years. The House of Representatives has 222 members elected for a term of 5 years. Since the formation of the first elected government in 1955, the Barisan National Front has been the ruling front and it comprises of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese

¹⁰ Department of Statistics, Government of Malaysia. "Population estimates by quarterly ethnic group and sex", Available on: (http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/download/Buletin_Bulanan/files/BPBM/2014/OKT/MALAYSIA/02.Population.pdf) Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹¹ CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>), Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹² Michigan State University, "malaysia-religion". Available on: (http://asia.isp.msu.edu/wbwoa/southeast_asia/malaysia/religion.htm) Accessed on December 30th 2014

¹³ Commonwealth.org, "malaysia-society". Available on: (<http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/malaysia/society>) Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹⁴ Department of Statistics, Government of Malaysia, "Population Distribution and Basic Demographics Characteristics Report," Available on: (http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/index.php?option=com_content&id=1215) Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia, "Malaysia Country Brief," Available on: (https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/malaysia_brief.html), Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹⁷ Ibid.

Association, and the Malaysian Indian Congress among others. This coalition has the UNMO as the dominant political player.¹⁸ The Barisan National front, led by PM Dato Sri. Najib Razak, has been in power since it was re-elected in May 2013.

ECONOMY: Malaysia is an upper middle income country with an open economy that was identified by Commission of Growth and Development in its 2008 Growth Report to have recorded an average growth of 7% per year for 25 years¹⁹. Malaysia has recorded success in poverty reduction: the share of households living below the national poverty line (USD 8.50 per day in 2012) fell from over 50 percent in the 1960s to less than 2 percent at present²⁰. In 2010, Malaysia launched the New Economic Model (NEM)²¹, which aims for the country to reach high income status by 2020 while ensuring that growth is also sustainable and inclusive.

DEFENCE: Malaysia has 3 branches of Defence forces: The Malaysian Army, The

Royal Malaysian Navy, and The Royal Malaysian Airforce.²² The Three branches of Service of Malaysian Armed Forces (Angkatan Tentera Malaysia, ATM) are known as Malaysian Army (Tentera Darat Malaysia), Royal Malaysian Navy (Tentera Laut Diraja Malaysia, TLDM), Royal Malaysian Air Force (Tentera Udara Diraja Malaysia, TUDM) (2013)²³. Military Service is voluntary and the minimum age for military service is 17 years 6 months with parental consent. Females are also allowed for military service. The military expenditure stands out to be 1.55% of the total GDP in 2012.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: The Foreign Policy of Malaysia is based on the policy of respect of national sovereignty, respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression as its central tenets.²⁴ Malaysia was one of the founding members of ASEAN in 1967. Malaysia established its Ministry of External Affairs in the year 1956 which they renamed Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1966.²⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shifted from the capital of Kuala Lumpur to its current location at Putrajaya on 17 September 2001.²⁶ In order to achieve the

¹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia, "Malaysia Country Brief," Available on: (https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/malaysia_brief.html), Accessed on December 30, 2014

¹⁹ World bank, "Malaysia Overview", Available on: (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malaysia/overview>), Accessed on December 30, 2014

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ World Bank, "What is new in Malaysia's New Economic Model?" ,Available on: (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/what-is-new-in-malaysia-s-new-economic-model>), Accessed on December 30, 2014

²² Global Security, "Malaysia Armed Forces," Available on: (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/malaysia/maf.htm>) Accessed on December 30th 2014

²³ CIA Factbook. "Malaysia", Available on: (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>) Accessed on December 30th 2014

²⁴ history of ministry of foreign affairs. URL: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/history>) Retrieved on: 12.09.2014

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia, "Malaysia Country Brief," Available on: (https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/malaysia_brief.html), Accessed on 30th December 2014

objectives of foreign policy, the ministry has a total of 105 diplomatic missions in 83 countries of the world alongside 53 honorary consuls.²⁷ When the federation of Malaya was established in 1957, since then foreign policy has undergone significant transitions. The First Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman formed a policy that was markedly anti-communist and pro-western and seriously took into consideration the bipolar power struggle between Soviet Russia and West.²⁸ Malaysia has also participated in UN Peacekeeping and since 1960, it has committed troops in Republic of Congo, Bosnia Herzegovina, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Western Sahara, Iraq, Timor Leste and Lebanon.²⁹ After assuming office in April 2009, Prime Minister Najib Razak stressed the concept that the foreign policy of Malaysia would be guided by the principle of 1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now. He introduced the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) that also identified KRA (Key Result Areas) and KPI (Key Performance Indicators) of Foreign policy.³⁰ One of the KRA (Key Result Areas) of the Government at

present is realisation of ASEAN community by 2015.³¹ Developing good relations with neighbours is a high priority of foreign policy³². The establishment of Joint Commissions between Malaysia and Thailand, Laos, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam is an important aspect of foreign policy of Myanmar.³³ USA, Australia, Japan, EU, South Korea are traditional partners in terms of foreign trade.³⁴ Malaysia places great emphasis on foreign policy towards countries in Northeast Asia, but it does not engage in any form of diplomatic relationship with Israel.

RELATIONS WITH INDIA: India established diplomatic relations with the Federation of Malaya (Predecessor State of Malaysia) in 1957. India-Malaysia relations have been warm and friendly. There have been a number of bilateral visits between the two nations. PM Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Malaysia from 26th to 28th October 2010 while earlier in the same year, Prime minister of Malaysia Dato Sri. Najib Razak visited India. Indians' unprecedented emigration to the former British, French and Dutch Colonies has resulted today in the presence of a strong diaspora of Indian community in Malaysia.³⁵ During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Malaysia from 26th to 28th October 2010, India

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Policy Overview". Available on: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/overview2>) Accessed on 10th September 2014

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Policy Overview". Available on: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/overview2>) Accessed on 10th September 2014

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Policy Overview". Available on: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/overview2>) Accessed on 10th September 2014

³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy", Available on: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/bilateral>) Accessed on September 12th 2014

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy", Available on: (<http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/bilateral>) Accessed on September 12th 2014

³⁵ Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, "SOUTHEAST ASIA.CHAPTER 20". Available on: (<http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/diasporapdf/chapter20.pdf>) Accessed on 30th December 2014

and Malaysia agreed to work on a framework of strategic partnership which was marked with signing of 6 crucial agreements, such as the Agreement towards Implementing Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement among others. India-Malaysia Defence relations have grown over the years since the signing of a Memorandum of

Understanding on Defence Cooperation. Service Level talks are held between two Armies every year, India's Chief of Air Staff visited Malaysia in 2012. India has also participated in the Cooperative Mechanism on Straits of Malacca and Singapore and has also participated in other projects and events in the region.³⁶

³⁶ ASEAN, "india-malaysia relations". Available on: (http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/51/India_Malaysia_Relations.pdf) Accessed on December 30, 2014

Modi's Visit to Nay Pyi Taw: Implications for India

Sampa Kundu*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Nay Pyi Taw between November 11 and November 13 has been highly publicised. This was the second visit of an Indian prime minister to Myanmar in 2014. Dr. Manmohan Singh attended the third BIMSTEC Summit in Nay Pyi Taw in March. As a PM, this was Mr. Modi's first visit to the land of Buddha.

Commerce, connectivity and culture were three aspects on which the prime minister put emphasis in his two and half day visit. Security and India's potential as a regional leader too were focused. Overall, India showed its willingness to mature its Act East Policy.

After finalising and ratifying the free trade agreement (FTA) in goods, both India and ASEAN have recently signed the FTA in services and investment in September 2014. The free trade agreement will facilitate amongst many other things movement of the Indian professionals to ASEAN countries with much ease. In fact, this clause was one of the factors that helped India in convincing the critics about the benefits of the FTA between India and ASEAN. Otherwise, many policy makers as well as economics gurus were against the agreement as they feared that India will eventually be a loser as India's imports from ASEAN are much larger than India's exports to the region. PM Modi

during his bilateral meeting with the Filipino President Benigno Aquino III mentioned that Philippines should ratify the FTA in services as well as investment as soon as possible.

India's renewed thrust on connectivity was shown as Modi decided to bring it in the discussions with his counter-parts from ASEAN. In his bilateral meeting with Myanmar President Thein Sein he focused on the importance of Kaladan Multimodal Transit and Transport Project and India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway. As both these projects are delayed for several reasons including criticalities in land acquisition, underestimation of the road length inside Myanmar and issues like displacement of population, it is high time when three of these counties are thinking about a transit agreement to ensure maximum utilisation of the projects.

On the cultural front, India showcased its benevolence by inviting students from ASEAN to study at the Nalanda University. To facilitate tourism, it is important to initiate the open sky policy as well as introducing flights connecting the Buddhist tourist places across the region. Currently, not all Buddhist tourist places in India and ASEAN are connected to each other by direct flights.

On the security aspect, Modi, like his predecessors, mainly focused on the importance of the maintaining the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea so far as South China Sea disputes are concerned. He emphasised on maintaining the 2002

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Declaration on the Conduct and Code of Conduct between China and other claimant countries from the region. It was a strong indication that India views peace and stability in South China Sea as one of the important security issues of the region.

While visualising India as a regional leader, prime minister did not forget to invite the ASEAN and East Asian countries to send their companies to India for investments. As he is trying to portray India as a regional hub for manufacturing, his strategy of Make in India was something that was praised and noted by all leaders present in the 25th ASEAN Summit, 12th ASEAN-India Summit and 9th East Asia Summit.

As a pragmatic leader, Modi's vision of an Asia incorporates ASEAN as a core of India's Act East Policy as well as central of his dream of an Asian Century. This was evident as he pledged to fight the common challenges together with another very important regional player, Indonesia. The concept of regional integration came into forefront once again when he focused on the importance of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations.

In Myanmar, the prime minister spent

some time with Daw Aung Saan Suu Kyi too. While he called her as a 'symbol of democracy', Suu Kyi passionately remembered India as her 'second home'. Though no direct invitation was sent to the lady, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs made it clear that Suu Kyi is welcome in India at any point of time.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this commentary, it was the first time PM Modi got a chance to illustrate his Act East Policy. So far, a new level of enthusiasm can be seen at the policy makers' level to accelerate the change. To what extent, this enthusiasm can be converted into action is to be seen. Unfortunately, India still lacks a strategic vision regarding how to foster its relations with countries in Southeast and East Asia. India's bilateral relation with Myanmar is a fine example of this visionary dilemma faced by the Indian policy makers. As Myanmar is opening up and numerous foreign investors have started coming up, India is yet to decide how to compete with these foreign investors in Myanmar. Myanmar's energy sector is a prospective area where India should have more investments in terms of exploration rights. In the transport and connectivity sector too India's investments in Myanmar are not comparable with China. Hence, these issues need to be checked before India embarks on its journey of an Asian Century led by India.

India-New Zealand Track II Dialogue

Munshi Zubaer Haque*



India-New Zealand Track II Dialogue, held in IDSA.

On November 25, 2014, a delegation from Asia-New Zealand Foundation and New Zealand-India Research Institute visited IDSA to participate in a Track II Dialogue. The interaction was based on India- New Zealand relations. Deputy Director General of IDSA, Brigadier Rumel Dahiya (Retd.) delivered the introductory note where he highlighted on the emerging and growing importance of India's relations with New Zealand in the context of Prime Minister's recent visit to the Asia-Pacific with destinations including Australia and Fiji. He also spoke on the new shift in India's Look East policy in terms of Act

East. The significant number of Indian students who have chosen to pursue further studies in New Zealand provides another dimension to the bilateral relationship between India and New Zealand. New Zealand's recent election as a non-permanent member to the United Nations Security Council would hold the key to numerous issues in the future of the relationship. Following the introductory note, Adele Mason, Acting Executive Director, Asia-New Zealand foundation introduced her institute and the delegates.

Followed by it, the first session was commenced and chaired by Professor Shekhar Bandyopadhyay, Director, New Zealand-India

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Research Institute, Victoria University, Wellington. In this session, Commodore Abhijit Singh presented his views on the geo-politics of Asia-Pacific region. He interpreted the Indian Ocean as a region that is a theatre of strategic interests, an arena of cooperative endeavours and an arc of transnational challenges. He talked about India's maritime outreach in the Indian Ocean and also brought the recent activities of the Chinese PLA-N in the region. To talk about the maritime challenges further, he drew a proposition of internal and external challenges and understated the term Indo-Pacific which would slowly and gradually crystallize as a concept. The next presenter was Mr. Paul Sinclair, Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University, Wellington. He talked about China's rising power and its gradually expanding role in international system including China's rise in the International Monetary Fund, UN Peacekeeping missions and its decision to expand the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. He suggested that the USA and Japan need to play a definite role in the current international scenario. He also stated about the possible formation of a political and security community by the end of 2015. The next and last session was

chaired by Ambassador S.K Bhutani (Retd.). Dr. Manmohini Kaul focused on the important dynamics of the bilateral relationship between India and New Zealand with India's emerging role in Asia-Pacific hastened by global power politics and changing geopolitical realities. She underlined the importance of South Pacific in the eyes of the new government's strategic and security interests and expressed the importance that New Zealand carries in the strategic posture of India even though any Indian Prime Minister never visited New Zealand. The next presenter in the session was Brian Lynch, Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Studies, Victoria University. He spoke on New Zealand's foreign policy and its evolution and approach towards the international system. He specifically reiterated the importance of New Zealand's non-permanent membership in United Nations Security Council and its security interests. Following his presentation, the session was concluded. Both these sessions were followed by Q&A sessions separately. Some of the questions raised were; what was the role of New Zealand in the "Five Eyes" Spying Club? What were the prospects for Indian investments in Asia-Pacific? What was the role of Indian Diaspora in nation building? What was the position of New Zealand in the recent Small Islands Developing States Conference?

ASEAN

ASEAN Leaders Gather in Myanmar for a Summit

The Heads of State/Governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered in Myanmar's capital Nay Pwi Taw for the 25th ASEAN Summit on November 12, 2014. This is the first time in history that Myanmar chaired ASEAN. According to the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Le Luong Minh,

"2014 is the most important turning year deciding the achievement of the ASEAN Community by 2015 and Myanmar has played an important role in accelerating the implementation of the remaining action lines for the ASEAN Community building".¹

He added that 'Myanmar's chairmanship has also set the stage for the ASEAN Community's post-2015 vision as well as the work on reviewing and strengthening ASEAN institutions'. The theme for this year's ASEAN Summit was *Moving forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community*. Al Jazeera's Marga Ortigas, said, 'Myanmar is stepping into a diplomatic spotlight here, the largest

gathering of world leader it has ever seen'.²

US President Obama, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe and Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang joined ASEAN leaders in the capital Naypyidaw for the crucial meet that comes amid territorial disputes in the South China Sea. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also gave opening remarks, saying that the UN "looks forward to working with each ASEAN member nation in promoting human rights and the protection of minorities," noting the plight of the Rohingyas, a Muslim group denied citizenship in Myanmar for decades.³ One of the key issues in the region was the issue of sovereignty of South China Sea. Prior to the conference, Association of Southeast Asian Nations diplomatic sources told Kyodo News that at the 25th ASEAN Summit in Myanmar's administrative capital Naypyitaw on Nov. 12, the leaders would touch extensively on the South China Sea issue and push for early conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the area where tensions are rising over maritime disputes.⁴ ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Minh told news agency Reuters that "We are seeing a widespread gap between the political commitments and...the real situation at sea." Philippine President Benigno Aquino expressed the hope that progress could be made on the pressing security issue during the ASEAN talks.⁵

¹ ASEAN Secretariat News, ASEAN Leaders Gather in Myanmar for a 'Historic' Summit, November 12th 2014. Available at <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-leaders-gather-in-myanmar-for-a-historic-summit>, Accessed on November 13, 2014.

² Al Jazeera news, "Myanmar hosts world leaders for ASEAN Summit", November 12th 2014 Available on: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/11/myanmar-hosts-world-leaders-asean-summit-201411125444618438.html>, Accessed on: November 13, 2014

³ DuestcheWelle, "Economic highs and humanitarian lows at ASEAN conference." November 14th 2014 Available on: (<http://www.dw.de/economic-highs-and-humanitarian-lows-at-asean-conference/a-18058781>), Accessed on November 13th 2014

⁴ Kyodo News, "ASEAN leaders to discuss tension in S. China Sea at Nov. summit", October 31st 2014. Available on: (<http://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2014/10/320216.html>) , Accessed on November 10th 2014

⁵ DuestcheWelle, "Economic highs and humanitarian lows at ASEAN conference ." November 14th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.dw.de/economic-highs-and-humanitarian-lows-at-asean-conference/a-18058781>) Accessed on November 15th 2014

ASEAN Community being introduced to local communities in Indonesia by Foreign Ministry

Indonesian Foreign Ministry's director for ASEAN cooperation, Jehezkiel Stephanus George Lantu has taken a positive note recently on the gradual process of introduction of ASEAN Community to the local population of Indonesia. The ministry has continued to introduce the ASEAN Community to Indonesian people across the country by, among others things, sending officials to explain the issue to local communities in a number of areas, such as Morowali (Central Sulawesi), Mukomuko (Bengkulu) and Sanggau (West Kalimantan).

"We want to make Indonesian people across the archipelago understand that the ASEAN Community is an opportunity, not a threat. We hope that they can take benefits from it and face the resulting challenges,"⁶ he said.

ASEAN Official Document leaked prior to summit supports talks on South China Sea

ASEAN intention to resolve South China Sea Dispute was disclosed by a document prior to the Summit. An ASEAN document

which was leaked after it was given to a journalist by an unnamed ASEAN Official, a draft of the chairman's statement for November 12th summit, noted progress on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea and urged the group's members to peacefully resolve their maritime disputes with China.⁷ But the leaked statement is written in the past tense, as if the summit had already happened.

It said, "We expressed our concerns over recent developments in the South China Sea, which have increased tensions in the area. We reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation in maintaining peace and stability, promoting maritime security and safety, and the freedom of navigation, including in and overflight above the South China Sea."⁸

It went on to say, "We reaffirmed the collective commitments of ASEAN member states and China to peace, stability and maritime security and for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. We noted progress on negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) and underscored the importance of maintaining the momentum of negotiations and working expeditiously towards the early conclusion of the COC."⁹ Myanmar, which was chair of ASEAN this year, has not commented on the leaked document.

⁶ Jakarta Post, "ASEAN Community continuously introduced to local communities: Ministry", November 3rd 2014. Available on: (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/03/asean-community-continuously-introduced-local-communities-ministry.html>) Accessed on: November 14th 2014

⁷ Voice of America News, "ASEAN Document Pushes Talks on South China Sea", November 5th 2014. Available on: (<http://www.voanews.com/content/asean-document-talks-south-china-sea/2509714.html>), Accessed on November 19th 2014

⁸ Voice of America News, "ASEAN Document Pushes Talks on South China Sea", November 5th 2014. Available on: (<http://www.voanews.com/content/asean-document-talks-south-china-sea/2509714.html>), Accessed on November 19th 2014

⁹ Voice of America News, "ASEAN Document Pushes Talks on South China Sea", November 5th 2014. Available on: (<http://www.voanews.com/content/asean-document-talks-south-china-sea/2509714.html>), Accessed on November 19th 2014

ASEAN Leaders meet President of South Korea

ASEAN leaders from four nations, Myanmar President U Thein Sein, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Laotian Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong and Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha met President Park Geun-hye of South Korea on December 11 and 12 in Busan for ASEAN-South Korea Commemorative Summit.¹⁰ South Korea was eager to upgrade its relations with ASEAN - moving away from the energy and manufacturing areas to the service sectors - especially with the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. On the sidelines of this summit separately, at an event ahead of the meeting, hundreds of business leaders from South Korea and the ASEAN region met to find ways to enhance businesses between small and medium-sized firms.¹¹ President Park Geun-hye emphasised the need to increase economic cooperation between Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the ASEAN-Republic of Korea (ROK) CEO Summit in Busan on December 11.¹² The president mentioned the bilateral trade between Korea and

ASEAN which exceed USD 130 billion last year, growing from only USD 61 billion in 2006.

“Korea and ASEAN need to combine their strengths and create synergies to infuse new vitality into the economy of both regions,” she said.

South Korean Vice Minister of Trade Moon Jae-do, said,

“Korea will be able to tap into the ASEAN region as a future growth engine based on its massive consumer market and global production base. In this regard, it will be even more crucial for Korea to strengthen its economic cooperation with ASEAN as a key economic partner for the future,”¹³

ASEAN-INDIA

12th ASEAN-INDIA Summit held in Myanmar

The 12th ASEAN-India Summit was held in Nay Pwi Taw in Myanmar on 12th November. The meeting was chaired by President of Myanmar, H.E Thein Sein and was attended by all ASEAN Member states. The ASEAN leaders emphasized on their commitment to implement the ASEAN-India Vision Statement 2012.¹⁴ The ASEAN leaders welcomed inclusion of “Act East” in

¹⁰ Republic of Korea Headlines, President Park holds summits with four ASEAN nations, December 11, 2014 Available on: (http://english1.president.go.kr/activity/headlines.php?srh%5Bboard_no%5D=22&srh%5Bpage%5D=2&srh%5Bview_mode%5D=detail&srh%5Bseq%5D=8825&srh%5Bdetail_no%5D=362#sthash.NZpymMKQ.dpuf), Accessed on December 15th 2014

¹¹ ChannelNewsAsia, “ASEAN-Korea summit to boost trade & investment” ,11th Dec 2014. Available on: (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/international/asean-korea-summit-to-1524346.html>) Accessed on December 15th 2014

¹² Republic of Korea Headlines, “President proposes expanded Korea-ASEAN cooperation”, December 11, 2014, Available on: (http://english1.president.go.kr/activity/headlines.php?srh%5Bboard_no%5D=22&srh%5Bpage%5D=2&srh%5Bview_mode%5D=detail&srh%5Bseq%5D=8826&srh%5Bdetail_no%5D=363#sthash.v0eNsVuD.dpuf), Accessed on December 15th 2014

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, “Chairman’s statement of the 12th ASEAN-India Summit in Nay Pwi Taw, Myanmar”, November 12th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24243/Chairmans+statement+of+the+12th+ASEAN+India+Summit+in+Nay+Pwi+Taw+Myanmar>), Accessed on December 31st 2014

India's "Look East" Policy. The ASEAN leaders encouraged continued support of India for implementation of ASEAN Community and also of ASEAN-India Plan of Action (PoA) for implementation of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2010-2015).¹⁵ Discussions were done on the third ASEAN-India PoA (2016-2021) to serve as an action-oriented document to further deepen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.¹⁶

India's 'Act East Policy' to ASEAN was unveiled by Modi

Prime Minister officially unveiled India's "Act East" Policy to ASEAN Member States in the ASEAN Summit in Nay Pwi Taw. Modi said,

"A new era of economic development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become 'Act East Policy,'"¹⁷

The term "Act East" was first popularized by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech during her visit to India in July 2011, where she encouraged New Delhi "not just to look East, but to engage East and act East"¹⁸. Modi reiterated the same

point in his address at the East Asia Summit on November 13, pointing his Government's action oriented approach towards the region with increasing attention.

Northeast India- Look East Policy

PM Modi's Visit to Northeast India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a visit to Northeast India, which was a landmark one as after PM Deve Gowda's visit to the region in 1996-1997, Modi is the first Indian prime minister who spent several consecutive days in Northeast India. Mr. Modi started his visit on November 29 and spent four days where he addressed the country's top police chiefs, flagged off a train from Meghalaya to Guwahati, commissioned a power project in Tripura and inaugurated annual festivals in Nagaland and Manipur.¹⁹

He has flagged off the first train from Mendhipathar in Meghalaya to Guwahati in Assam. In the first budget of the present government, Rs. 28,000 Crore has been committed for the development of new rail lines across Northeast India. In his speech during the flagging off ceremony, Mr. Modi talked about

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, "Chairman's statement of the 12th ASEAN-India Summit in Nay Pwi Taw, Myanmar", November 12th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dt1/24243/Chairmans+statement+of+the+12th+ASEANIndia+Summit+in+Nay+Pwi+Taw+Myanmar>), Accessed on December 31st 2014

¹⁷ The Diplomat, "Modi Unveils India's 'Act East Policy' to ASEAN in Myanmar", November 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/modi-unveils-indias-act-east-policy-to-asean-in-myanmar/>) Accessed on December 31st 2014

¹⁸ Consulate General of United States in India, "Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton Speaks on India and the United States: A Vision for the 21st Century", July 20th 2011, Available on: (http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/secclintonspeechacl_110721.html), Accessed on January 7th 2015

¹⁹ Narendra Modi's northeast fare: Train line to Meghalaya, power unit and two fests, The Times of India, November 29, 2014, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Narendra-Modis-northeast-fare-Train-line-to-Meghalaya-power-unit-and-two-fests/articleshow/45315580.cms>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

horizontal (building more rail networks) as well as vertical expansion (capacity building, service improvement and technology up gradation) of railways in India. Connectivity is an important component of the NDA government's recently declared Act East Policy, which reinforces Northeast India's direct contribution in India's linkages with Southeast Asia. Act East Policy is a renewed form of Look East Policy, as claimed by the present government. However, the actual implementation of this policy will mark its success.²⁰

Modi government's 2014-2015 budget has earmarked \$8.6 billion for infrastructure and telecommunication projects in Northeast India. However, some disappointments could be seen as Mr. Modi did not announce any relaxation for the Armed Forces Special Power Act in Manipur, did not declare any budget deficit relief package for Nagaland and his lack of substance on issues like insurgency movements in Assam and the controversies around hydropower projects.²¹

Union Minister Rijiju Calls for Opening Up the Northeast

Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju has urged that the Stilwell Road that

connect Assam and Yunnan Province of China should be re-opened. The road was closed in 1962 and re-opening of the road would benefit Northeast India through enhanced connectivity and trade with East Asia. However, as government is looking for alternatives in the form of BCIM Economic corridor which will connect India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China, the future of Stilwell Road is still not clear. Also, the prevalent border tensions between China and India and India's fear of infiltration of cheap Chinese goods to Northeast India via these roads are major impediments working against these transport and connectivity projects.²² In the direction of opening up the region, on December 10, a trial bus service between Guwahati-Shillong-Dhaka was initiated. The regular bus service will be opened from February 2015. The bus will cross the international border at Dawki-Tamabil and halt at Sylhet before reaching Dhaka. The 500 km road of the journey is expected to take 2 days. Before starting the regular bus service, Bangladesh visa offices will be opened in Guwahati and Shillong. Shillong and Guwahati will then join Kolkata and Agartala as these two cities already have started direct bus service to Bangladesh.²³

India has Sought Help from Myanmar and Bhutan to Find Out Rebels

Union Home Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, his deputy, Mr. Kiren Rijiju and the Union Minister

²⁰ Modi flags off first train from Mendipathar, Meghalaya to Guwahati, NetIndian, November 30, 2014, available at <http://netindian.in/news/2014/11/29/00031647/modi-flags-first-train-mendipathar-meghalaya-guwahati>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

²¹ Narendra Modi's Northeast India Outreach, Edmund Downie, The Diplomat, December 14, 2014, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/12/narendra-modis-northeast-india-outreach/>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

²² Rijiju calls for reopening Assam-China road link, Suhasini Haidar, The Hindu, December 15, 2014, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rijiju-calls-for-reopening-assamchina-road-link/article6694960.ece>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

²³ Guwahati-Shillong-Dhaka bus flagged off; regular service from February, Samudra Gupta Kashyap, Indian Express, December 10, 2014, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/guwahati-shillong-dhaka-bus-flagged-off-regular-service-from-february/>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

for tribal affairs, Jual Oram have visited the communal violence affected areas in Assam where I K Sonbijit led National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), a Bodo militant group have massacred 76 tribal villagers. They Torched down several houses and then allegedly fled to either Bhutan or Myanmar. Sonbijit has connection with Paresh Barua led United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) group as well as their counter-parts in Myanmar. Henceforth the external affairs ministry of India has requested both Myanmar and Bhutan to help the Government of India in finding the militants. After the massacre, Mr. Rajnath Singh has announced that the government will not hold any peace talk with the NDFB and they will be tackled only militarily.²⁴

Brunei

Brunei-Singapore Signed Civil Aviation Cooperation Deal

On the sidelines of 20th ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting, Brunei and Singapore signed a civil aviation cooperation deal on November 27, 2014 at Mandalay. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Singapore's Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew and Brunei's Communications Minister Pehin Dato Abdullah Bakar. Under this MoU, Brunei and Singapore will cooperate with each other in areas including civil aviation

safety, security and training, aircraft accident and incident investigation, air traffic management, civil aviation and environmental protection and sustainable development. In a positive note, Mr Lui said, "Through greater cooperation, our two countries will be able to jointly address common challenges and harness the opportunities in the aviation arena and build on our many common aviation interests."²⁵

Cambodia

A Sudden HIV Positive Outbreak in Roka, Cambodia

In Roka village located in western Battambang province of Cambodia hundreds of people have been infected with HIV virus as a result of contaminated needles. The number of suspected cases has surpassed 100 by the end of November and Prime Minister Hun Sen has ordered for an investigation. The outbreak emerged in late November when an old man was tested positive in a health center. The villagers accuse an unlicensed doctor for using a contaminated needle which caused the outbreak of HIV in Roka village. The health minister Mam Bunheng has requested all residents to stay calm and protect the privacy of the infected people and their families to avoid any stigma on their part. In Cambodia an estimated 73,000 thousand HIV infected people stay and the country has earlier aimed for a 0% HIV-AIDs infection by 2020. In order to handle the recent outbreak, World Health Organisation and UNAIDS have been helping the government.²⁶

²⁴ India asks Bhutan, Myanmar to flush out militants, Prabin Kalita, Times of India, December 26, 2014, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-asks-Bhutan-Myanmar-to-flush-out-militants/articleshow/45645093.cms>, accessed on December 26, 2014.

²⁵ Singapore, Brunei sign civil aviation cooperation deal, Channel News Asia, November 28, 2014, available at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-brunei-sign/1498352.html>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

²⁶ Cambodia investigates suspected mass HIV infection, The Guardian, December 18, 2014, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/18/cambodia-suspected-hiv-infections>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

Encouraging Developments in Cambodian Political Culture

Cambodia's opposition leader Sam Rainsy has been elevated to the rank of minority leader with legislative rank equivalent to the prime minister in the mid of December. This is a rare case in Cambodia believed to have taken by the prime minister to preserve his political leadership. Since July 2013, Cambodia has been facing a political mess as the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party under the leadership of Sam Rainsy has decided to boycott the parliament. They demanded for reforms in the national election council which was partially done by the government. In their due course of protest, Sam Rainsy and his party led several street movements, factory strikes and sporadic unrests which often became violent as the government appointed forces tried to stop them. The new development has been welcomed by Sam Rainsy who hoped that he would initiate a new culture of dialogue in Cambodian government which has been rare in the authoritarian country.²⁷

EAST TIMOR

American woman detained in East Timor prison eventually gets her release

Last week, an American woman was released from prison in East Timor after a lot of controversy. She has started staying as a guest at the home of former East Timorese President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta.²⁸

Stacey Addison, a veterinary doctor by profession was detained in September after a man with whom she was traveling was arrested for possession of drugs.²⁹ Released five days later without her passport, she was re-arrested and sent to prison in late October after appearing in a court hearing to retrieve her travel documents. After diplomacy by US, even though she was released, but her passport was withheld.³⁰

Timor-Leste orders passenger ship from Portugal

Portuguese Ship Company Atlantic Shipbuilding was due to start building a ship to carry 377 passengers and cargo. The government of East Timor has commissioned the construction of ships.³¹ Though the cost of passenger ship was

²⁷ Cambodia parliament elevates opposition boss Sam Rainsy to shore up truce, The Straits Times, December 19, 2014, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/cambodia-parliament-elevates-opposition-boss-sam-rainsy-shore-truce->, accessed on December 19, 2014.

²⁸ Reuters, "Oregon woman's U.S. return stalled after East Timor prison release", December 29th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/29/us-usa-timor-traveler-idUSKBNOK71FG20141229>), Accessed on December 31st 2014

²⁹ ABC News, "US woman released from prison stays with East Timor's former president Jose Ramos-Horta." 31st December 2014, Available on: (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-30/us-womans-return-stalled-after-east-timor-prison-release/5993310>) Accessed on December 31st 2014

³⁰ Reuters, "Oregon woman's U.S. return stalled after East Timor prison release", December 29th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/29/us-usa-timor-traveler-idUSKBNOK71FG20141229>), Accessed on December 31st 2014

³¹ Macau hub, "Timor-Leste Government orders passenger ship from Portugal." 2nd December 2014, Available on : (<http://www.macauhub.com.mo/en/2014/12/02/timor-leste-government-orders-passenger-ship-from-portugal/>) Accessed on: 4.12.2014

unknown, but it has been known that ship which would be 72 metres long – would have the capacity to carry 377 passengers and 22 vehicles, as well as cargo.³² The ship would connect the Timorese capital, Dili, to the island of Atauro and the Oecussi enclave.

INDONESIA

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Indonesian Air Force (TNI-AU) forge closer ties

The Chief of Air Staff of Australian Air Force, Geoff Brown has reopened a C-130 Hercules Hangar for the Indonesian Air Force (TNI-AU) at Bandung, Indonesia. Speaking at the ceremony, Air Marshal Geoff Brown said, "These projects are aimed at information exchanges between our two Air Forces and to further develop safety and airworthiness systems. He also said, "Safety needs our constant attention. This work is important to continue our longstanding Air force relationship by building mutual trust and understanding."³³ Bandung was the main maintenance base for the Indonesian Air Force's C-130 Hercules aircraft. The refurbished hangar would be used for the

maintenance of the C-130H Hercules that were being transferred from Australia to Indonesia.

Currently, Australia is in the process of transferring four C-130H Hercules to Indonesia. To date, two of these aircraft have been refurbished at RAAF Base Richmond, before their transfer to the Indonesian Air Force. Indonesia has expressed an interest in purchasing an additional five C130H aircraft.³⁴ Together these aircraft will contribute to Indonesia's increasing capacity to respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crisis.

Indonesia sinks illegal fishing vessels on its water

Indonesia has taken tough action against vessels illegally fishing in its territorial waters this month. On December 5, Indonesian Navy captured 3 Vietnamese³⁵ fishing vessels fishing on its territorial waters and subsequently sank them after reporting the incident to the president.³⁶ The move has been seen as the strongest measure yet taken by Joko Widodo, who has vowed to stop this practice that costs billions of dollars of economic losses to the archipelago nation.³⁷ The Indonesian Navy captured the boats in the remote Anambas Islands, which were located between Malaysia and the Indonesian part of Borneo islands, navy spokesman Manahan Simorangkir told AFP.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ministry of Defence Australia Press Release, "Media Release – Air Force and Indonesia Forge Closer Ties", 4th December 2014, Available on: (<http://news.defence.gov.au/2014/12/04/media-release-air-force-and-indonesia-forge-closer-ties/>), Accessed on December 8th 2014

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Agence France Presse(AFP), "Indonesia sinks Vietnamese boats to stop illegal fishing", 5th Dec 2014, Available on: (<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/indonesia-sinks-vietnamese-boats-stop-illegal-fishing-114124144.html>), Accessed on December 8th 2014

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Agence France Presse(AFP), "Indonesia sinks Vietnamese boats to stop illegal fishing", 5th Dec 2014, Available on: (<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/indonesia-sinks-vietnamese-boats-stop-illegal-fishing-114124144.html>), Accessed on December 8th 2014

Few days back from present, again, for the second time in a row, Indonesian Navy sank two more fishing vessels caught fishing on its territorial waters at Laha, Teluk Ambon, Maluku. Indonesian Navy Spokesman Commodore Manahan Simorangkir said,

“The ships have gone through legal procedures at the court in Ambon and their owners were found guilty of stealing fish from Indonesian waters. We must sink these ships so that other foreign ships will think twice before fishing illegally in our territory”.³⁸

These vessels would be the fourth and fifth ships sunk by Indonesia in the three months since President Joko Widodo took office. President Jokowi has said in this regard,

“Therefore I instructed the ministry, the military commander, that this couldn't continue. I instructed them three or four weeks ago to sink ships involved in illegal fishing. Sink them! No more!”³⁹

Susi Pudjiastuti, the Fisheries and Maritime Affairs minister, said the move has caused a dramatic drop in foreign ships operating near Indonesia's Natuna islands without harming relations with neighbouring countries. She added that in the future, the plan would be to

permanently confiscate the ships.⁴⁰

Indonesian Army chief claims big brother role in ASEAN

Indonesian Military (TNI) Commander General Moeldoko has spoken recently in a press conference that ASEAN member states have acknowledged TNI leadership and has also added that Indonesia deserves the position of a big brother in ASEAN Regional Grouping. He said, “We have a forum of ASEAN military commanders [and defence chiefs]. All of them have recognised our greatness.”⁴¹ In an apparent reference to the ASEAN regional forum, he said, “We have a cooperation agreement between the TNI, ASEAN and Asia-Pacific countries. We are trying to make TNI the big brother in Asean.”

New Indonesian President makes first time visits to APEC, ASEAN and G20 Summit

For the first time, President Joko Widodo attended (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), ASEAN and G20 Summits in the month of November. Joko Widodo received an official invitation from Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend APEC Summit.⁴² Referring to his meeting with Xi Jinping prior to the APEC meeting, he told the reporters in a press conference,

“I spoke about the [planned] construction of ports and railroads, as well as the ocean highways in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua, and the most urgent [projects]

³⁸ The Jakarta Post, “Navy to sink two more illegal fishing boats”, December 21st 2014, Available on : <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/12/21/navy-sink-two-more-illegal-fishing-boats.html#sthash.Ubm3GXAA.dpuf>, Accessed on December 24th 2014

³⁹ Voice of America news, “Indonesia Touts Sinking of Illegal Fishing Ships”, December 10th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.voanews.com/content/indonesia-touts-sinking-of-illegal-fishing-ships/2554087.html>), Accessed on December 13th 2014

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The Nation, “Indonesian army claims Asean ‘big brother’ role,” December 24th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/aec/Indonesian-army-claims-Asean-big-brother-role-30250493.html>), Accessed on December 26th 2014

⁴² The Jakarta Post, “Jokowi to meet Xi Jinping at Beijing APEC Summit”, November 4th 2014, Available on: (<http://m.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/04/jokowi-meet-xi-jinping-beijing-apec-summit.html>), Accessed on November 13th 2014

related to power plants.”⁴³

According to Jokowi, infrastructure cooperation between China and Indonesia, Indonesia’s “maritime axis” strategy and China’s “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” were also on the table during the meeting.⁴⁴ His attendance at APEC summit in Beijing was his first international appearance. During the APEC Summit on November 10, he was the keynote speaker at the APEC CEO Summit and also met US President Barack Obama and also Russian President, Vladimir Putin.⁴⁵ The President also visited Myanmar to attend ASEAN Summit which took place on November 12 and 13. During the 2 days of summit, he attended ASEAN – India Summit, ASEAN- Japan Summit, ASEAN- UN Summit, ASEAN-US Summit, ASEAN-China Summit, ASEAN plus three Summit (China, South Korea and Japan) and 9th East Asia ASEAN Summit among others.⁴⁶ During the G 20 Summit on November 15 and 16, he introduced his concept of “Blusukan” during the G-20 Summit in Brisbane and said, “I only introduce the heart-to-heart dialogue approach to the people. That’s what I call ‘*blusukan*’.”⁴⁷ President Jokowi also said that with *blusukan*, the working

programs formulated by the government would be adjusted to what the people need and it is also aimed to bring an efficient, transparent and accountable system.

Laos

Don Sahong Dam and MRC

Mekong River Commission (MRC), an intergovernmental body of four riparian countries of the Mekong River, namely Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Cambodia met on December 11 to hold public consultations on Don Sahong Dam, to be built on the river by Lao PDR. Environmentalist groups and members of MRC (other than Laos) are unhappy with the plan of the dam and they fear that massive damage would be caused by the dam in the ecosystem. They are mostly concerned about the migration of fish if the dam is built. The Vietnamese delegation claimed that they would like to take five to ten years of time to study the impact of the dam on migration of fish. According to the MRC rules, each member country needs to consult with other members before taking up any infrastructural project on the Mekong River. However, MRC being a toothless organization, is not in a position to legally force any member country and despite the criticisms against the plan of Don Sahong

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The Jakarta Post, “Jokowi to meet Xi Jinping at Beijing APEC Summit”, November 4th 2014, Available on: (<http://m.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/04/jokowi-meet-xi-jinping-beijing-apec-summit.html>), Accessed on November 13th 2014

⁴⁵ SEKRETARIAT KABINET REPUBLIK INDONESIA, “Arriving in Beijing, President Jokowi Joins Immediately Preparatory Meeting of APEC Summit,” November 11th 2014, Available on: (<http://setkab.go.id/en/arriving-in-beijing-president-jokowi-joins-immediately-preparatory-meeting-of-apec-summit/>), Accessed on November 16th 2014

⁴⁶ SEKRETARIAT KABINET REPUBLIK INDONESIA, “Arriving in Myanmar, President Jokowi prepares to attend ASEAN Summit,” November 12th 2014, Available on: (<http://setkab.go.id/en/arriving-in-myanmar-president-jokowi-prepares-to-attend-asean-summit/>), Accessed on November 16th 2014

⁴⁷ Tempo.co, “Jokowi Introduces ‘Blusukan’ During G-20 Summit”, November 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://en.tempo.co/read/news/2014/11/17/055622476/Jokowi-Introduces-Blusukan-During-G-20-Summit>), Accessed on November 23rd 2014

dam, Laos has signaled no sign of suspending the work. In fact, they have already started constructing a road towards the proposed dam and the construction work of the dam will begin by early next year. Laos has already started constructing Xayaburi Dam in its northwestern part, which is a much larger project. However, the country has undertaken several initiatives to mitigate damage including fish ladders, bypass channels, fish-friendly turbines etc. In the case of Don Sahong dam too similar approach can be taken. Laos has many other plans as it wants to be a major hydro-power country in the region with the capacity to export electricity to other countries.

UN Urges Laos to Investigate the Missing Human Rights Activist Case

Mr. Sombath Somphone, a leading human rights activist, who was last seen in December 2012 at a police checkpoint, is still missing and the United Nations has been urging the Laotian government to carry out an independent, credible, thorough and effective investigation into the matter to shed lights on his sudden disappearance. Mr. Sombath Somphone was working on land confiscation and was helping the victims of such practices before he disappeared. The United Nations experts have said that the Laotian government should seek help from the international community to solve the mystery. The Universal Period Review

Process of Laos will be published by the UN member states in the next month after a thorough investigation into the human rights situation in the country takes place.⁴⁸

Malaysia

Malaysia-China Defence Cooperation Enhanced

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Malaysian Armed Forces initiated their first-ever bilateral joint military exercise on December 22 as a gesture to mark 40 years of diplomatic relationship between two countries. 20 men from the Malaysian Armed Forces joined their 21 counterparts from the PLA to develop a common framework to work on humanitarian and disaster relief operations. In 2015, many field exercises will be taken up as a follow up of this tabletop exercise to enhance cooperation with the PLA, cited the Malaysian source. As Malaysia and China share common strategic interests in the region, improved defence cooperation will be of great benefit to both the countries. Malaysia had signed a bilateral defence cooperation MoU with China in September 2005, the first of its kind signed between China and a Southeast Asian country. The MoU was followed by the establishment of working groups under the Security Defence and Strategic Consultation in September 2012, reciprocal high-level visits involving PLA's deputy Chief of the General Staff and Malaysia's Defence Minister, and a Defence Working Group Meeting in March 2012.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Laos: UN experts appeal for help to probe two-year-old disappearance of rights defender, Un News Centre, December 23, 2014, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49679#.VJ00xcGUc>, accessed on December 26, 2014.

⁴⁹ 'Malaysia and China hold first-ever joint military exercise', Nicholas Cheng, Asia One Malaysia, December 23, 2014, available at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/malaysia/malaysia-and-china-hold-first-ever-joint-military-exercise>, accessed on December 23, 2014.

Monsoon Flood in Malaysia

Northern parts of Malaysia have been hit by a devastating monsoon flood and nearly 103,412 people have been displaced in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Perak and Perlis. The annual north-east monsoon generally hit northern peninsula of Malaysia every year. However, this year's rain has been devastating. As of December 26, 60 foreign tourists have been rescued from a resort located in Malaysian national park. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has shortened his vacation in the US in view of the worst monsoon flood in decades for the country. According to flood monitoring centers, around 105,000 people have taken shelter in schools, community halls and other relief centers. Bad weather and high floodwater have made the relief operations more difficult, mentioned the PM.⁵⁰

Myanmar

Peace Talk between NCCT and UPWC

The Union Peace-Making Working Committee (UPWC) and the Nation-Wide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) have decided to meet on December 22 to discuss the possibility of a nation-wide ceasefire agreement between the government and all armed ethnic groups represented by the NCCT. However, at the talk the NCCT is expected to raise the topic of Myanmar army's firing on a Kachin rebels's training camp near Laisa, capital

of the Kachin Independence Army, an area bordering China. The attack happened on November 19 and according to the rebels it showed the unwillingness of the government for ceasefire agreement. However, the government claimed it as a warning strike against the Kachin rebels. In December also the Kokang rebels initiated an attack against the government forces in Kunlong, Shan state. The December 22 meeting is an important one as if both the parties reach to an decision, then only a nation-wide ceasefire agreement would be signed and political dialogue can be started in February-March 2015 as planned. At present most of the armed ethnic groups have bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government with the exception of Kachin Independence Army and Ta'ang National Liberation Army. However, sporadic clashes between the government forces and ethnic rebels have been very common and that's why a nation-wide ceasefire deal is important to help Myanmar grow politically and economically.⁵¹

Fresh Protest against Letpadaung Mine

A woman has been killed by the Myanmar police while protesting against the copper mine Letpadaung, owned by a Myanmar mining company Myanmar Winbao, a unit of China North Industries Group Corp, a weapon manufacturer. The mine is located in Monywa, 100 km west of Mandalay. As the local people were protesting against the copper mine as it caused confiscation of land by the government at a large scale, the police fired on them leaving at least 20 wounded and one dead. In November 2014, Amnesty International had requested

⁵⁰ Malaysia PM cuts holiday to deal with floods, Associated press and Fox News, December 26, 2014, available at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/12/26/malaysian-premier-cuts-short-vacation-after-floods-kill-5-displace-over-100000/>, accessed on December 26, 2014.

⁵¹ Myanmar Government and Armed Rebel Groups to Resume Peace Talks, Radio Free Asia, December 17, 2014, available at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/peace-talks-continue-12172014145729.html>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

Myanmar government to stop the project work as confiscation of land has been done in a flawed way and social as well as environmental issues were not addressed properly. Earlier also at least 100 people including 67 monks were injured as riot police tried to stop the protest movement against the same project. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said "China's government has consistently required Chinese enterprises with investments abroad to respect other countries' laws and regulations, exercise social responsibility, and place importance on protecting the environment". She also mentioned that China and Myanmar were friendly countries and such ventures should support both parties' interests.⁵² Followed by the death of Khin Khin Win in Letpaduangtaung, several protesters tried to gather in front of the Chinese Consulate in Mandalay to request China for a fair investigation into the case. However, the Myanmar authority stopped them from entering into the premises of the Consulate. Though the authority has made it clear that they will not charge the protesters under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, minimum action was required to protect the security of a foreign consulate in the country.⁵³

PHILIPPINES

Philippines commended by UN and ASEAN for disaster management in face of Typhoon Hagupit

Philippines, which faced the devastating Typhoon Hagupit (Ruby) in early December, was recently commended by UN and ASEAN for its disaster management. Philippines evacuated more than a million people, thanks to evacuation and national preparedness strategies that saw aid and government agencies deliver provisions ahead of the storm.⁵⁴ The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) said the Philippines' "zero casualty" approach to managing Typhoon Hagupit was further evidence of Asia's leadership role in reducing mortality and tackling economic losses from disasters

UNISDR Chief Margareta Wahlström said:

"UNISDR believes that the Philippines government has done an excellent job of putting into action the lessons learned from Typhoon Haiyan. All arms of government, including PAGASA and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, and municipalities like Tacloban have pulled together to save lives and minimize the damage being inflicted by this disaster event."⁵⁵

This disaster prone nation which witnesses

⁵² China expresses concern after protests at Myanmar mine, Reuters, December 24, 2014, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/24/us-china-myanmar-idUSKBNOK20GT20141224>, accessed on December 29, 2014.

⁵³ Myanmar protesters demand answers from China over mine death, Eleven Myanmar and Asia News Network, December 28, 2014, available at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/myanmar-protesters-demand-answers-china-over-mine-death>, accessed on December 29, 2014.

⁵⁴ The Guardian, "Typhoon Hagupit: at least three dead and a million evacuated in Philippines", December 7th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/typhoon-hagupit-three-dead-million-evacuated-philippines>), Accessed on December 12th 2014

⁵⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction News Archive, "UN lauds Philippines handling of Typhoon Hagupit (Ruby)," December 8th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.unisdr.org/archive/41031>), Accessed on December 12th 2014

around 20 typhoons a year was able to save itself from the level of damage impacted last year by Typhoon Haiyan, a typhoon that claimed more than 6000 lives.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the ASEAN (Association for Southeast Asian Nations) Secretary General Le Luong Minh also commended the risk reduction work and other works done by Philippines in his Twitter account. The ASEAN official statement said, "ASEAN Chief commended Philippines for its early warning efforts and disaster preparedness plans which mitigated losses and damages."⁵⁷

Criminal Charges against US Marine accused of murdering Filipino transgender woman causes diplomatic tussle

A US marine was charged with murder of a transgendered woman in Philippines by the prosecutors of the country, an incident that caused diplomatic tussle between Philippines and USA. Pfc. Scott Pemberton, an anti-tank missileman assigned to 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines was accused of killing Jennifer Laude, a

transgendered woman.⁵⁸ Pfc. Joseph Scott Pemberton, 19, could face up to 40 years in prison when convicted of murder, prosecutors said on Monday. Though the incident happened in October and Pemberton had been in detention since then at a US facility at A Philippines Army Base, the murder charges were filed by the prosecutors in December.⁵⁹ Prosecutor Emile De los Santos told reporters, "Its murder...it was aggravated by treachery, abuse of superior strength and cruelty."⁶⁰ Following the news of charge, United States Embassy in Manila refused to entertain the request of Philippines Govt. authorities to hand over the custody of Pemberton. The embassy statement said,

"The United States will retain custody of Pemberton as provided by the United States-Philippine Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)."⁶¹ This created controversy and activists in the country demanded the government terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement between USA and Philippines, an agreement which was signed in 1998.⁶²

"The US embassy refusal to turn over Pemberton is an insult to our nation and our people," said

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ GMA News Online, "ASEAN chief commends PHL for early warning efforts on Ruby", December 8th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/391679/news/nation/asean-chief-commends-phl-for-early-warning-efforts-on-ruby>), Accessed on December 12th 2014

⁵⁸ CNN News, "U.S. Marine charged with murder in death of transgender woman in Philippines," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/15/world/asia/philippines-transgender-slaying/>), Accessed on December 18th 2014

⁵⁹ The guardian, "US refuses to hand over marine accused of killing transgender Filipino," December 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/17/us-refuses-hand-over-marine-transgender-filipino-philippines>) Accessed on December 18th 2014

⁶⁰ FoxNews, "Philippine prosecutors charge US Marine with murder of transgender woman," December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/12/15/philippine-prosecutors-charge-us-marine-with-murder-in-transgender-woman-death/>), Accessed on December 18th 2014

⁶¹ The guardian, "US refuses to hand over marine accused of killing transgender Filipino," December 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/17/us-refuses-hand-over-marine-transgender-filipino-philippines>) Accessed on December 18th 2014

⁶² Ibid.

Renato Reyes, leader of the left-wing Nation movement.⁶³

Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) suffers losses in clashes with Abu Sayyaf insurgents

The Philippine Army, a service branch of the Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) suffered losses in counter-insurgency warfare against Abu Sayyaf, an insurgent group, in the past 2 months. In an incident in early November, Six soldiers, including one junior Army officer, were killed.⁶⁴ Here, a team of soldiers from the 64th Infantry Battalion was on security patrol when they were caught in a firefight with about 20 heavily-armed militants. In another incident in early December, a firefight occurred in the vicinity of Sitio Limbo Casa in Barangay Magcawa during the conduct of law enforcement operations of the Army's 18th Infantry Battalion⁶⁵. Three Abu Sayyaf insurgents were killed and two AFP soldiers were wounded in the clash. In mid-November, in another clash, between the military and Abu Sayyaf at Talipao, 5 soldiers were killed while 26 others were injured⁶⁶. 74 soldiers and 4 Army officials were involved in this clash,

where according to one version of a military report, 300 Abu Sayyaf insurgents were involved in the confrontation⁶⁷.

Philippine Navy looking forward to build additional naval bases

Officials from Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) were seeking to construct two additional naval bases in addition to the existing naval base in Palawan to deploy various types of vessels required to secure West Philippine Sea⁶⁸. Defence Contractors based outside Philippines were expected to deliver the vessels from 2015 onwards. Aside from the guided missile boat Pohang Class corvette that South Korea was giving to the Philippine Navy (PN) for free, the Navy was also expecting delivery of two brand new frigates from the South Korean government and two strategic sealift vessels (SSV) and other vessels it procured from Indonesia. The Navy was rapidly developing the Ulugan Bay Naval Base where they would be the future base of Naval Forces West (Navforwest) and this Bay directly faced the West Philippine Sea where tension has been mounting in recent times due to the massive maritime claim by China in line with its "creeping invasion" of almost the entire South China Sea.⁶⁹

⁶³ The guardian, "US refuses to hand over marine accused of killing transgender Filipino," December 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/17/us-refuses-hand-over-marine-transgender-filipino-philippines>) Accessed on December 18th 2014

⁶⁴ Inquirer.NET, "6 soldiers killed in clash with Abu Sayyaf in Basilan", November 2nd 2014, Available on: (<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/648319/6-soldiers-killed-in-clash-with-abu-sayyaf-in-basilan>), Accessed on November 14th 2014

⁶⁵ GMA News, "3 Abu Sayyaf members killed, 2 govt soldiers wounded in Basilan clash," December 5th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/391127/news/regions/3-abu-sayyaf-members-killed-2-govt-soldiers-wounded-in-basilan-clash>), Accessed on December 10th 2014

⁶⁶ GMA News, "Five soldiers fall in clash with Abu Sayyaf in Sulu," November 14th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/388146/news/regions/five-soldiers-fall-in-clash-with-abu-sayyaf-in-sulu>), Accessed on November 21st 2014

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ The Philippine Star, "Military eyes 2 more naval bases in Palawan", December 26th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/12/26/1406636/military-eyes-2-more-naval-bases-palawan>), Accessed on December 30th 2014

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Singapore

Tata Sons Joins Singapore Airlines

After its joint venture with AirAsia Bhd, Malaysia, Tata Sons has now collaborated with the Singapore Airlines which will launch flight services between India and Singapore named Vistara from January 2015. In the proposed Tata SIA Airlines Ltd., Tata Sons hold 51% share and Singapore Airlines (SIA) hold the rest of it. Air Asia India Ltd., which is Tata Sons' venture with the Malaysian AirAsia launched flight services in June, 2014 and is now a known and considerable carrier service. As private airlines like Spice Jet and Kingfisher have been undergoing financial problems and either reduced or stopped flight services, it is expected that Vistara will be able to do pretty good business. However issues like high jet fuel price and airport charges are likely to harm their interests as because of high competitive regime, airlines cannot raise the fare beyond certain limitations. Right now only a fraction of Indian tourists avail flight services. So the Chief Executive of Tata Sia Airlines Ltd. Mr. Phee Teik Yeoh mentioned that "We believe strongly in the immense potential that the Indian aviation market has to offer." They are planning for expansion of operations in near future as well as buying Boeing planes if the Government of India removes the restrictions of not operating on overseas basis before an airline complete five years in business.⁷⁰

THAILAND

Thailand Government top brass visits Cambodia

Thai military commanders left for Phnom Penh this week under leadership of Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Gen Pravit Wongsuwan on a two-day official visit to the Cambodian capital to meet with Hun Sen and their Cambodian counterpart Gen Tea Banh. They were scheduled to talk about plans to promote daily trading of goods between the Thais and Cambodians along the common border and to participate in a General Border Committee meeting, which would touch on subjects surrounding earlier border disputes and mutual border demarcation efforts, among other bilateral issues.⁷¹ Accompanying the Thai deputy premier to Phnom Penh were Army chief Gen Udomdet Sitabut, Navy chief Admiral Kraisoron Chansuvanit, Air force chief ACM TritodSonjaeng, Police chief Pol Gen Somyod Pumpandmoung, supreme commander Gen Vorapong Sa-nganet and undersecretary of defense Gen SirichaiDithakul. The Thai government has planned to turn Thai-Cambodian border markets into "special economic areas" to accommodate next year's opening of an ASEAN Economic Community. Deputy Premier Gen Prawit, who led the chiefs of the armed forces and the police to attend a meeting of the General Border Committee (GBC) in Cambodia expressed his optimism at a press conference after returning from visit. Gen Prawit said the GBC discussed cooperation along the border, on public safety, narcotics,

⁷⁰ Singapore Airlines, Tata Venture to Start Flights in January, Santanu Choudhury, The Wall Street Journal, December 22, 2014, available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/singapore-airlines-tata-venture-to-start-flights-in-january-1419309060>, accessed on December 23, 2014.

⁷¹ Shanghai Daily, "Thailand government top brass members visits Phnom Penh" December 24th 2014, Available on: (http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=260517) Accessed on December 29th 2014

alien labor, human trafficking and economic zones in Trat and Sa Kaeo provinces⁷².

Thai PM Prayuth meets Chinese President Xi Jinping

Thailand PM Prayuth went to visit Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing and met him on December 23. Thai PM also met the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on the previous day.⁷³ Apart from the bilateral talks, this visit was marked by a signing in ceremony which caused the renewal of a currency swap agreement between the two nations, worth 70 billion yuan (\$11.25 billion) and enhanced technology cooperation in water resources and irrigation, and cooperation between Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) and the People's Bank of China⁷⁴. The current currency swap agreement between the two countries was due to expire on December 22.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visits Thailand

Chinese premier Li met Thai PM Prayuth on December 19. Chinese premier Li's visit was expected by Chinese administration to upgrade economic ties between China and Thailand because Thailand has been

a member of the Greater Mekong Subregion economic area since 1992 till present⁷⁵. The trip was part of Li Keqiang's three nation trips to Serbia, Kazakhstan and Thailand.

Thailand and China to jointly develop new rail lines

During Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Thailand, Thailand and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop new railway tracks. The railway tracks could eventually link the two nations⁷⁶. Construction was expected to commence in 2016. The two lines would cost an estimated US\$12.18 billion and would serve as a new cargo route between Thailand and Laos, and eventually China⁷⁷.

Vietnam

General Suhag Visited Vietnam

Indian Army Chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag visited Vietnam between December 17 and December 20 to enhance India's defence ties with Vietnam. The visit came few months after PM Narendra Modi assured his Vietnamese counterpart about India's continued support in Vietnam's military requirements. So far India and Vietnam have focused on Navy-to-Navy cooperation. General Suhag's visit will enhance Army-to-Army cooperation between these two

⁷² Pattaya Mail, "Thai Deputy PM sees good ties between Thailand, Cambodia", December 26th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.pattayamail.com/news/thai-deputy-pm-sees-good-ties-between-thailand-cambodia-43948#sthash.Ax5UT2Mc.dpuf>), Accessed on December 29th 2014

⁷³ Voice of America News, "Chinese President Xi Meets Thai PM Prayuth," December 23rd 2014, Available on: <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-chinese-president-xi-meets-thai-pm-prayuth/2570311.html>, Accessed on December 30th 2014

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ CCTV.COM, "Premier Li Keqiang visits Thailand," December 19th 2014, Available on: <http://english.cntv.cn/2014/12/19/VIDE1418992680382688.shtml>, Accessed on December 23rd 2014

⁷⁶ ChannelNewsAsia, "Thailand, China to jointly develop new railway lines," December 19th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/thailand-china-to-jointly/1539400.html>), Accessed on: 23.12.2014

⁷⁷ Ibid.

countries. Defence ties between India and Vietnam are significant as India has invested in oil exploration in the disputed South China Sea region which is a major sea lanes of communication world-wide. It is strongly believed that India's presence in the region is helpful for ASEAN to keep a check on China. Recently after China deployed oil rigs in the disputed waters of South China Sea, relationships between China and Vietnam and China and Philippines got a set back and Philippines has approached for an international tribunal to resolve the issue. However, China has made it clear that it will not participate in any international tribunal process and rather still prefer to solve those issues on a bilateral basis with the countries concerned and will depend on historical facts.⁷⁸

President of Vietnam Visited Cambodia

Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang visited Cambodia on the invitation of the King Norodom Sihamoni between December 23 and 24. This was President Sang's first visit to Cambodia since he

became the head of the state. Both sides reiterated the importance of bilateral cooperation. Both the parties agreed to implement the earlier commitment of boosting two-way investment and reach to the level of \$5 billion worth of bilateral cooperation. Bilateral trade may reach \$3.5 billion this year. Vietnam is Cambodia's sixth largest trading partner and has invested more than \$3 billion in 130 projects including rubber, fertilizer, banking, aviation and telecommunications. They also agreed to demarcate 700 mile long common border. People-to-people contacts and cultural ties were focused during the discussion too. However, some argue that this was just a ceremonial visit by the Vietnamese president as no serious issue was discussed.⁷⁹ The President invited PM Hun Sen and King Norodom Sihamoni.

AUSTRALIA

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop declares first no go zone in Syria's Al Raqqa Province

Australia has recently taken stringent counter-terrorism measures and has also amended certain existing counter-terrorism laws⁸⁰⁻⁸¹,

⁷⁸ Army Chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag in Vietnam to boost defence ties , The Economic Times, Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, December 19, 2014, available at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/army-chief-general-dalbir-singh-suhag-in-vietnam-to-boost-defence-ties/articleshow/45568479.cms>, accessed on December 19, 2014.

⁷⁹ Cambodia, Vietnam Vow to Boost Bilateral Ties, Prashanth Parameswaran, The Diplomat, December 25, 2014, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/12/cambodia-vietnam-vow-to-boost-bilateral-ties/>, accessed on December 29, 2014.

⁸⁰ The Sydney Morning Herald, "Terror laws clear Senate, enabling entire Australian web to be monitored and whistleblowers to be jailed," September 25th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.smh.com.au/digital-life/consumer-security/terror-laws-clear-senate-enabling-entire-australian-web-to-be-monitored-and-whistleblowers-to-be-jailed-20140925-10m8ih.html>), Accessed on September 29th 2014

⁸¹ The Guardian, "Committee calls for counter-terrorism law amendments and expiry date", October 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/17/committee-calls-for-counter-terrorism-law-amendments-and-expiry-date>), Accessed on October 23rd 2014

⁸² The Guardian, "Australia's counter-terror laws will restrict our free speech and free press," September 21st 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/22/australias-counter-terror-laws-will-restrict-our-free-speech-and-free-press>), Accessed on September 25th 2014

raising serious concerns⁸². Al Raqqa province has been declared as “no go zone” to warn Australian citizens that they could face up to 10 years of jail for traveling to the region without any legitimate purpose as the region has also become the de-facto capital of ISIS/Islamic State (IS)⁸³.

Australia visited by Prime Minister Modi

In the month of November, Prime Minister Modi visited Australia from November 16 to 18. He attended the G20 Summit in Brisbane. Following the G20 Summit, he addressed the Indian expatriate community in Australia⁸⁴ in Sydney⁸⁵ and also addressed the Parliament of Australia (the first time address by a Prime Minister of India)⁸⁶ as an official guest of Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott⁸⁷. He met President

of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Leader of the Opposition in Canberra. During his address to the Federal Parliament of Australia, he talked about Australia’s importance as an economic power and also highlighted the two countries’ shared military history, democratic systems and sporting rivalry⁸⁸. He said, “Australia has become more engaged in this part of the world.

He made an address to the Indian diaspora community in Australia in the city of Sydney which was attended by thousands of Indian expatriates living in Australia and here he urged the diaspora community to invest back at their home, an appeal which he also made elsewhere⁸⁹. For the first time, Australian and Indian Prime Ministers have made reciprocal visits in the same year, underscoring the growing depth of the Australia-India strategic partnership and building on converging interests, shared values and common

⁸³ The Guardian, “Julie Bishop declares Australia’s first no-go zone: Syria’s Al-Raqqa province”, December 4th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/04/julie-bishop-declares-australias-first-no-go-zone-syrias-al-raqqa-province>), Accessed on December 8th 2014

⁸⁴ The Dailymail, “Sydney’s Modi moment: Australia goes wild for Indian PM as he urges NRIs to ‘live and struggle for India”, November 17th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2838474/Sydney-s-Modi-moment-Australian-capital-goes-wild-PM-urges-NRIs-live-struggle-India.html#ixzz3NfY3vNnC>), Accessed on: November 25th 2014

⁸⁵ Prime Minister of India, “Joint Statement during Prime Minister’s visit to Australia (November 16-18, 2014),” November 18th 2014, Available on: (http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/joint-statement-during-prime-ministers-visit-to-australia-november-16-18-2014/), Accessed on November 25th 2014

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Prime Minister of India, “Joint Statement during Prime Minister’s visit to Australia (November 16-18, 2014),” November 18th 2014, Available on: (http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/joint-statement-during-prime-ministers-visit-to-australia-november-16-18-2014/), Accessed on November 25th 2014

⁸⁸ ABC news, “Narendra Modi, Indian prime minister, tells Federal Parliament he sees Australia as major economic partner”, November 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-18/narendra-modi-addresses-parliament/5899262>), Accessed on December 10th 2014

⁸⁹ Business Today, “Narendra Modi urges Indian expatriates in Australia to invest back home,” November 18th 2014, Available on : (<http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/narendra-modi-australia-sydney-make-in-india-clean-india/1/212459.html>), Accessed on November 25th 2014

democratic institutions⁹⁰. It needs to be pointed that during his meeting with Tony Abbott, they both directed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement be brought to an early conclusion and the Australia-India CEO Forum to utilize the potential of commercial relations between the two nations⁹¹.

Café in Sydney sieged by terror attack

On the morning of 15th December, a gunman entered Martin Place Lindt Café in Sydney and took hostages. This terror siege lasted for 16 hrs after the Commandos stormed the building and shot dead the gunman. Three hostages were also killed⁹². Police commissioner

Andrew Scipione has said that a total of 17 hostages were there in the Café, including the five who escaped during the siege⁹³. During the siege, police was able to establish contact with the gunman⁹⁴, who has been identified as Sheik Man Haron Monis, who was later found to be an individual who was an Iranian refugee having political asylum in Australia and a controversial criminal background⁹⁵. The three victims of Sydney siege were Katrina Dawson, a prominent lawyer from New South Wales Bar⁹⁶, Tori Johnson, the manager of café and the gunman himself. Tributes were paid to the victims after the ending of siege⁹⁷. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has condemned the incident apart from praising the professionalism of police and appealing to the Australian people and their society to be calm⁹⁸. India's diplomatic staff

⁹⁰ Prime Minister of India, "Joint Statement during Prime Minister's visit to Australia (November 16-18, 2014)," November 18th 2014, Available on: (http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/joint-statement-during-prime-ministers-visit-to-australia-november-16-18-2014/), Accessed on November 25th 2014

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The Guardian, "Sydney cafe siege: a timeline of events," December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/15/sydney-cafe-siege-timeline-of-events>), Accessed on December 19th 2014

⁹³ The Daily Telegraph, "Sydney siege: Gunman among three dead as gunfight brings an end to Martin Place drama," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/sydney-siege-gunman-among-three-dead-as-gunfight-brings-an-end-to-martin-place-drama/story-fni0cx4q-1227157293613?nk=3fa064cd129e799e02a2066105b4266a>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

⁹⁴ FirstPost, "Sydney live: Contact established with gunman, 3 hostages escape from Lindtcafé," December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.firstpost.com/world/sydney-live-3-hostages-escape-from-lindt-cafe-australian-media-reports-1849493.html>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

⁹⁵ CNN, "Sydney hostage-taker called himself a cleric — and had a criminal record," December 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/15/world/asia/australia-hostage-taker/>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

⁹⁶ The Daily Telegraph, "Sydney siege: Gunman among three dead as gunfight brings an end to Martin Place drama," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/sydney-siege-gunman-among-three-dead-as-gunfight-brings-an-end-to-martin-place-drama/story-fni0cx4q-1227157293613?nk=3fa064cd129e799e02a2066105b4266a>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ News.co.au, "Prime Minister Tony Abbott on siege at Lindt Cafe in Sydney's Martin Place," December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.news.com.au/national/prime-minister-tony-abbott-on-siege-at-lindt-cafe-in-sydneys-martin-place/story-fncynjr2-1227156491358>), Accessed on December 28th 2014

members, at its consulate in Melbourne, were all evacuated during the siege because of the proximity of the diplomatic mission to Lindt Café⁹⁹.

Australia arrests citizens suspected for terror links

Australia has made a number of arrests in December of individuals suspected of serious crimes such as plotting of terror against government, terror financing among other charges. Following sweeping counter-terrorism raids in mid-December, Sulayman Khalid, 20, who also went by the name Abu Bakr, was arrested and was found in possession of documents, a rifle, and two shotguns. The Documents were claimed by the police as "... Documents designed to facilitate a terrorist attack".¹⁰⁰ Another man was arrested with him for violating prohibitory orders on telephone calls. A 25 year old man was also arrested from Sydney after assessment of information obtained by largest ever counter-terrorism raids¹⁰¹ in September on charges of terror financing with another 22 year old man, Omarjan Azari who was already in police custody and was expected

to face trial soon.¹⁰² Police has alleged that these two men, including the man in police custody already, made \$15,000 available to ISIS in August 2014, and that they were "key facilitators in the movement of funds" that paid for Australians to travel to Iraq and Syria to fight with the group¹⁰³. Police have denied the existence of evidence linking these arrests to Sydney Café Siege.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand will train Iraqi forces to combat ISIS

In November, Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key, announced that New Zealand Defence Forces would train Iraqi Forces to combat ISIS. According to the reports available, NZ Defence Force personnel already left for the Middle East to seek out a role for New Zealand forces to help train Iraqi forces fight ISIS¹⁰⁴. The New Zealand Defence Personnel that could help train Iraqi forces would not be involved in any missions, but might require security from additional NZSAS (New Zealand Special Air Service) troops¹⁰⁵, a special forces unit of New Zealand

⁹⁹ Business Standard, "Sydney terror: Indian Consulate in Sydney evacuated, says govt," December 15th 2014, Available on: (http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/indian-consulate-in-sydney-evacuated-staff-safe-govt-114121500234_1.html), Accessed on December 20th 2014

¹⁰⁰ Agence France Presse, "Australian charged over terrorist plot targeting govt," December 24th 2014," Available on: (<http://news.yahoo.com/anti-terror-police-arrest-two-australia-224055469.html>), accessed on December 27th 2014

¹⁰¹ Sydney Morning Herald, "Terror raids: 800 police and two men charged," September 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/terror-raids-800-police-and-two-men-charged-20140918-10iwwh.html>), Accessed on November 19th 2014

¹⁰² The Guardian, "Two Sydney men charged with funding travel of Australians fighting with Isis," December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/15/two-sydney-men-charged-funding-australians-fighting-isis>), Accessed on December 17th 2014

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ The New Zealand Herald, "John Key: Kiwi forces will help train Iraqis fight ISIS," November 5th 2014, Available on: (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11353573), Accessed on November 17th 2014

¹⁰⁵ NZ Army, "NZSAS: Who we are," Available on: (<http://www.army.mil.nz/about-us/who-we-are/nzsas/default.htm>), Accessed on December 30th 2014

Army¹⁰⁶. The forces who would train troops would not be SAS soldiers. Regarding training of Iraqi forces, John Key has also talked about a possible partnership with Australia, "We are talking to our longstanding partner Australia about what they are doing to help train the Iraqi forces and how we might help."^{107 108}

New Zealand Defence Minister visits Fiji to rebuild ties

In December, New Zealand Defence Minister Gerry Brownlee visited Fiji to rebuild relations between the two nations. New Zealand had previously imposed sanctions against Fiji which were lifted up following successful elections in September¹⁰⁹ and election of Voreqe Bainimarama as president¹¹⁰. Mr Brownlee

said, "Following their successful elections on 17 September, Cabinet has agreed to lift the last remaining targeted measures against Fiji¹¹¹." Mr Brownlee was scheduled to meet Fiji's defence minister, Timoci Natuva, and the foreign minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, to discuss rebuilding the defence relationship¹¹². Mr Brownlee indicated that Fiji wanted to resume its officer training program in New Zealand and he would not consider engaging with the people involved in the 2006 military coup as problematic anymore¹¹³. Mr Brownlee's trip to Suva was followed by a series of recent visits to Fiji by top military representatives from France, United Kingdom, Australia and the USA¹¹⁴.

New Zealand visited by Xi Jinping

On November 19th, Xi Jinping arrived in New Zealand with a large delegation following his trip to Australia where he attended the G20

¹⁰⁶ TVNZ One News, "Government's ISIS plan - what you need to know," November 5th 2014, Available on: (<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/government-s-isis-plan-you-need-know-6123368>), Accessed on November 12th 2014

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The New Zealand Herald, "John Key: Kiwi forces will help train Iraqis fight ISIS," November 5th 2014, Available on: (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11353573), Accessed on November 12th 2014

¹⁰⁹ SBS News, "Commonwealth reinstates Fiji after 'credible elections'", September 27th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/09/27/commonwealth-reinstates-fiji-after-credible-elections>), Accessed on September 29th 2014

¹¹⁰ Pacific.Scoop, "Bainimarama sworn in as Fiji's Elected PM after 8 years in control," September 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2014/09/bainimarama-sworn-in-as-fijis-elected-pm-after-8-years-in-control/>), Accessed on September 21st 2014

¹¹¹ Voxy.co.nz, "Minister visiting Fiji to renew Defence ties," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.voxy.co.nz/politics/minister-visiting-fiji-renew-defence-ties/5/210316>), Accessed on December 18th 2014

¹¹² Radio New Zealand International, "New Zealand seeks renewed Fiji defence links," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/261918/new-zealand-seeks-renewed-fiji-defence-links>) Accessed on December 20th 2014

¹¹³ Radio New Zealand International, "NZ Defence Minister says Fiji keen on officer training," December 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/262101/nz-defence-minister-says-fiji-keen-on-officer-training>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

¹¹⁴ Radio New Zealand International, "New Zealand seeks renewed Fiji defence links," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/261918/new-zealand-seeks-renewed-fiji-defence-links>) Accessed on December 20th 2014

Summit¹¹⁵. Mr Jinping previously visited New Zealand as Vice President in 2010¹¹⁶. During the visit, China and New Zealand agreed to expand their trade relationship and agreements were signed on food traceability scheme and a deal that would allow production of New Zealand television companies to be aired on Chinese TV¹¹⁷. A number of protestors protested outside the venue¹¹⁸ and warnings and possibilities of such protests from Chinese expatriate community in New Zealand were there from before¹¹⁹. It is noteworthy that currently New Zealand has a Free Trade Agreement¹²⁰ with China and China has overtaken Australia as largest exporter to New Zealand with bilateral trade amounting to \$22 billion¹²¹.

ISIS fighter from New Zealand tweets his location to the public

Mohammad Daniel, a citizen of New Zealand, who was also known as Abu Abdul Rahaman and was fighting for ISIS in Syria has revealed his exact location by Twitter. He forgot to turn off a tracking function in his phone by mistake and has now deleted 45 posts from Twitter after discovering that he had been revealing his location to intelligence agencies and others keeping tabs on him¹²². Daniel's tweets showed that in October he was in Kafar Roma, then he moved to Al Tabqah¹²³, an ISIS stronghold when his exact location got pinpointed by iBRABO, a Canadian Open Source Intelligence agency¹²⁴. Experts say such information would be invaluable in helping investigators establish links that foreign fighters have with terrorist groups.

¹¹⁵ .3 News, "Tight security for Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to NZ", November 19th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.3news.co.nz/nznews/tight-security-for-chinese-president-xi-jinpings-visit-to-nz-2014111905#ixzz3NkQxSxYQ>), Accessed on November 25th 2014

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Business Insider, "China's President Xi Visited New Zealand And Got A Very Warm Greeting," November 20th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.businessinsider.in/Chinas-President-Xi-Visited-New-Zealand-And-Got-A-Very-Warm-Greeting/articleshow/45217063.cms>)|, Accessed on November 26th 2014

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Radio New Zealand News, "Chinese president Xi Jinping visits NZ, " November 19th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/259686/chinese-president-xi-jinping-visits-nz>), Accessed on November 26th 2014

¹²⁰ New Zealand –China Free Trade Agreement, "The Agreement," January 14th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.chinafta.govt.nz/1-The-agreement/index.php>), Accessed on 1st January 2015

¹²¹ Business Insider, "China's President Xi Visited New Zealand And Got A Very Warm Greeting," November 20th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.businessinsider.in/Chinas-President-Xi-Visited-New-Zealand-And-Got-A-Very-Warm-Greeting/articleshow/45217063.cms>)|, Accessed on November 26th 2014

¹²² The New Zealand herald, "Kiwi jihadist mistakenly broadcasts his location," December 31st 2014, Available on: (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11380705), Accessed on 1st January 2015

¹²³ Al Monitor, "After Tabaqa airport, what is IS' next target?", August 25th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/08/taabaqa-military-airport-falls-to-is.html#ixzz3NjxZrP9s>) Accessed on 1st January 2015

¹²⁴ The New Zealand herald, "Kiwi jihadist mistakenly broadcasts his location," December 31st 2014, Available on: (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11380705), Accessed on January 1st 2015

FIJI

Fiji visited by PM Modi

On 18th November, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi visited Fiji. This visit by PM Modi to Fiji was a visit by an Indian PM in Fiji after 33 years.¹²⁵ Before leaving for Fiji, Modi said, "We also owe them a debt of gratitude for hosting our scientists on the island in support of our Mars Mission. I am excited about visiting Fiji as also with the opportunity I will have of meeting leaders and representatives of 12 Pacific Island nations."¹²⁶ He was scheduled to hold bilateral talks with PM Voreqe Bainimarama of Fiji, address the Parliament of Fiji and to meet the representatives and leaders of 12 Pacific Island nations¹²⁷. On November 19th, he

held bilateral talks with PM Bainimarama and a number of agreements were signed by representatives from India and Fiji¹²⁸. Referring to the visit, PM Bainimarama said at the Head of Missions consultations,

PM, Bainimarama has said that the importance of these visits lay on the strengthening of Fiji's position as a regional power¹²⁹. "On the same day on his arrival at the Parliament in Suva, he was welcomed by the Speaker of Fiji Parliament, Dr. Jiko Luveni¹³⁰. His address to the parliament was boycotted the opposition because the government did not allow it to give vote of thanks¹³¹. The speaker of Parliament termed it as an esteemed occasion¹³². During his address to the Parliament, he promised financial packages to Fiji and other Pacific Island nations in a move that was seen apparently to emerge as a power in the Asia-Pacific region by strengthening defence cooperation and a way to counter China

¹²⁵ The Indian Express, "Narendra Modi arrives in Fiji, first visit by a PM in 33 years," November 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/narendra-modi-arrives-in-fiji-first-by-a-pm-in-33-years/>), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ The Indian Express, "Narendra Modi arrives in Fiji, first visit by a PM in 33 years," November 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/narendra-modi-arrives-in-fiji-first-by-a-pm-in-33-years/>), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹²⁸ Sarkaritel.Com, "The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama giving joint statement," November 19th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.sarkaritel.com/the-prime-minister-narendra-modi-and-the-prime-minister-of-fiji-frank-bainimarama-giving-joint-statement/>), Accessed on: 21st November 2014

¹²⁹ The Indian Express, "Narendra Modi arrives in Fiji, first visit by a PM in 33 years," November 18th 2014, Available on: (<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/narendra-modi-arrives-in-fiji-first-by-a-pm-in-33-years/>), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹³⁰ Sarkaritel.Com, "The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi being welcomed by the Speaker of Fiji Parliament, Dr. Jiko Luveni on his arrival at Parliament, in Suva," November 19th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.sarkaritel.com/the-prime-minister-narendra-modi-being-welcomed-by-the-speaker-of-fiji-parliament-dr-jiko-luveni-on-his-arrival-at-parliament-in-suva/>), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹³¹ The Economic Times, "Fiji's opposition boycotts PM Modi's speech; Bainimarama apologises," November 19th 2014, Available on: (http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-19/news/56265642_1_pm-modi-bainimarama-prime-minister-narendra-modi), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹³² Zee News, "Indeed an esteemed occasion: Fiji's Parliament Speaker on PM Modi addressing Parliament," November 19th 2014, Available on: (http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/indeed-an-esteemed-occasion-fijis-parliament-speaker-on-pm-modi-addressing-parliament_1501219.html), Accessed on 21st November 2014

whose presence was already strong in the Pacific region¹³³.

Fiji visited by Chinese president Xi Jinping

Shortly after PM Modi of India, President of China Xi Jinping visited Fiji on November 21. There he met PM Bainimarama and leaders of the Pacific Islands nations having diplomatic relations with China¹³⁴. During the bilateral talks, Xi Jinping pointed out that Fiji was the first among Pacific Island nations to establish diplomatic relations with China¹³⁵. He said,

“I expect to discuss with the leaders of Fiji about cooperation in various fields and paint the blueprint for the bilateral relations. I will also hold a group meeting in Nadi with the leaders of eight Pacific Island countries to discuss the great cause of deepening mutually beneficial cooperation and promoting common development. I believe that this visit will

promote China’s friendly relations with Fiji and other Pacific Island countries to a new level¹³⁶.”

After his meeting with Bainimarama, five Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) were signed between China and Fiji which covered increased economic and defence cooperation, the “provision of goods to address climate change”, visa exemptions for Fijians travelling to China and one of the MOUs included the establishment of a Chinese cultural centre in Fiji¹³⁷.

Republic of Fiji Military Force (RFMF) meets Vice Chief of Australian Defence force (ADF) to rebuild defence ties

On 8th December, the Vice Chief of Staff of Australian Defence Force (ADF), Vice Admiral Raymond James Giggs visited Fiji and met with officials of RFMF (Republic of Fiji Military Force) at Berkeley Crescent.¹³⁸ This was the first time a senior ADF representative has visited the island nation since 2006 and was seen an important step in rebuilding defence relationship between Australia and Fiji.¹³⁹ The Republic of Fiji Military Forces Spokesperson

¹³³ The Economic Times, “Fiji’s opposition boycotts PM Modi’s speech; Bainimarama apologises,” November 19th 2014, Available on: (http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-19/news/56265642_1_pm-modi-bainimarama-prime-minister-narendra-modi), Accessed on 21st November 2014

¹³⁴ Embassy of The People’s Republic of China in Australia, “Xi Jinping Arrives in Nadi for State Visit to Fiji and Meeting with Leaders of Pacific Island Countries Having Diplomatic Relationship with China,” November 21st 2014, Available on: (<http://au.chineseembassy.org/eng/xw/t1214284.htm>), Accessed on 25th November 2014

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Embassy of The People’s Republic of China in Australia, “Xi Jinping Arrives in Nadi for State Visit to Fiji and Meeting with Leaders of Pacific Island Countries Having Diplomatic Relationship with China,” November 21st 2014, Available on: (<http://au.chineseembassy.org/eng/xw/t1214284.htm>), Accessed on November 25th 2014

¹³⁷ ABC News, “Chinese president Xi Jinping signs five agreements with Fiji as part of China’s Pacific engagement strategy,” November 22nd 2014, Available on: (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-22/chinese-president-xi-visits-fiji-to-strengthen-economic-ties/5911144>), Accessed on November 25th 2014

¹³⁸ The Fiji Times Online, “Australia, Fiji Defence forces meet,” December 8th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=288544>), Accessed on December 12th 2014

¹³⁹ Marine Link.com, “Australia & Fiji Close Ranks on Defense,” December 9th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.marinelink.com/news/australia-defense-close381970.aspx>), Accessed on December 12th 2014

Lieutenant Sitiveni Qiliho has said in regards to the rebuilding of ties, "We do appreciate that something has happened in the past eight years. That is why RFMF is cautious about this re-engagement and this is the first step and we will start from here and see how things progress."¹⁴⁰ He also reminded in his speech,

"Our relationship has been broken off since 2006 with the aggressive posture taken with their naval deployment in the Kadavu waters in our territorial waters in 2006 and also statements by the Australian Defence Force chief at that time where there was talk of threat to our commander at that time of the possible beating of Australian troops against the RFMF."¹⁴¹

Fiji visited by Deputy Commander of US Army, Pacific (USARPAC)

On 15th December, Major-General James Pasquarette, Deputy Commander of USARPAC paid a courtesy visit to the RFMF Commander, Brigadier-General Mosese Tikoitoga at the RFMF Strategic Headquarters at Berkley Crescent, Suva. RFMF spokesperson, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Qiliho said although no offer was made in the meeting, the meeting with General Pasquarette was again the renewing of military ties with the USA which was good prior to 2006¹⁴².

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) commissions new vessel from Australia

The Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) has commissioned HMPNGS Lakekamu, a new landing craft heavy (LCH) vessel, at a ceremony in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. HMPNGS (Her Majesty's Papua New Guinean Ship) Lakekamu was the Royal Australia Navy's (RAN) Balikpapan-class LCH vessel, HMAS Labuan, which was decommissioned after almost 40 years of service for the Royal Australian Navy.¹⁴³ The vessel was gifted as a training vessel by Australia to develop mariner skills and a seaworthiness culture in the Maritime Element's growing workforce was renamed after the Lakekamu River located in Gulf Province, south-western Papua New Guinea.¹⁴⁴

Papua New Guinea visited by Australian Foreign minister

In December, Australian Foreign minister Julie Bishop visited Papua New Guinea along with Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, Defence Minister David Johnston and Justice Minister Michael Keenan. She was scheduled to have talks on defence and policing co-operation, the resettlement of asylum--seekers and help for

¹⁴⁰ Fiji Broadcasting corporation, "First step to strengthen defense ties successful: Qiliho," December 8th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/25125/first-step-to-strengthen-defense-ties-successful-qiliho#sthash.B5SIQ7CY.dpuf>) Accessed on December 12th 2014

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Fiji Sun Online, "US Army Pacific Head in Fiji," December 16th 2014, Available on: (<http://fijisun.com.fj/2014/12/16/us-army-pacific-head-in-fiji/>), Accessed on December 20th 2014

¹⁴³ Naval Technology.com, "Papua New Guinea Defence Force commissions HMPNGS Lakekamu," December 4th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.naval-technology.com/news/newspapua-new-guinea-defence-force-commissions-hmpngs-lakekamu-4459708>), Accessed on December 8th 2014

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

PNG in providing security when it would host the 2018 APEC (Asia Pacific Economic cooperation) summit.¹⁴⁵ Prior to her visit, she said while PNG had been seen largely by Australia as an aid recipient, it was poised for a major source for energy and resources boom with annual economic growth of up to 20 per cent – the fastest in Asia.¹⁴⁶ She told,

“Huge revenues are going to be coming into PNG. We want to work with them

as partners, as economic partners, to make sure PNG has in place sovereign wealth funds, so that the money they are receiving from these massive energy projects can be spread throughout PNG.”¹⁴⁷

She also said that Papua New Guinea and Fiji, among others, had signalled support for a summit that could establish a new “regional architecture” by next year.

¹⁴⁵ The Australian, “Julie Bishop urging PNG to establish a sovereign wealth fund, “December 15th 2014, Available on: (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/julie-bishop-urging-png-to-establish-a-sovereign-wealth-fund/story-fn59nm2j-1227155894241?nk=3fa064cd129e799e02a2066105b4266a>), Accessed on December 18th 2014

¹⁴⁶ The Sydney Morning Herald, “Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to back summit to plan new “regional architecture in Pacific,” December 14th 2014, Available on: |(<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/foreign-minister-julie-bishop-backs-summit-to-plan-new-regional-architecture-in-pacific-20141214-126wh0.html>), Accessed on December 17th 2014

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Centre Activities for November and December

1. A Delegation of 75 officials from the New Zealand Command and Staff College visited IDSA and they were briefed on various regional as well as international issues concerning India and its neighbourhood by the IDSA experts on November 3, 2014
2. Prof. Baladas Ghoshal spoke on 'Indonesia under Joko Widodo: Challenges Ahead' on November 13, 2014.
3. Ms. Sampa Kundu presented her views as internal discussant at Dr. Namrata Goswami's fellow paper on China's Neighbourhood: Implications for Northeast India on November 14, 2014.
4. Ms. Sampa Kundu spoke on Modi's visit to Nay Pyi Taw on November 17, 2014 during Monday morning meeting.
5. Dr Udai Bhanu Singh participated in a discussion on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Australia in Public Forum on Lok Sabha TV. The programme was aired on November 18, 2014.
6. A New Zealand-India Track II dialogue was conducted with the help of Asia New Zealand Foundation and the New Zealand India Research Institute on November 25, 2014.
7. Ms. Sampa Kundu presented her views on India's security role in Myanmar at BSF Academy, Tekanpur on November 26, 2014.
8. A briefing meeting was organized for Delhi Dialogue VII on December 17, 2014 which was attended by the JS AML, MEA.
9. A delegation came from the Indonesian Defence University to interact with the IDSA scholars on December 18, 2014.
10. A Delhi Dialogue VII coordination committee meeting was conducted on December 22, 2014 with all Delhi based partners and associates along with outstation partners and associates joining via video conferencing.

ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

Contributions are invited for:

Book Review (800 words)

Commentary (900 - 1300 words)

Photo Essay (10-12 photographs, each with a caption,
accompanied by a 1000 words essay)

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