

ENVIRONMENT SCAN: 16-30 OCT 2017

CHINA (CONTINENTAL)

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

Donald Trump Notes Xi Jinping's 'Extraordinary' Rise. US President Donald Trump has congratulated Chinese leader Xi Jinping on his "extraordinary elevation" after this week's Communist Party congress. Mr Xi cemented his hold on China when he had a second five-year term confirmed, with no clear successor, at the congress. His name and doctrine have been written into the party's constitution.

The two leaders are due to hold talks at a state visit to China next month, having met at the G20 summit in July. The pair also discussed North Korea and trade, President Trump said in a tweet. Hours later North Korean leader Kim Jong-un also congratulated Mr Xi.

China has the world's second-largest economy after the US, its biggest trading partner. However, relations have been strained by Beijing's territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea with Washington's allies in East Asia. Meanwhile North Korean state media agency KCNA reported that leader Kim Jong-un sent a congratulatory message to Mr Xi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a telegram in which he said the re-election showed Mr Xi's "political authority" and the "broad support" his policy to develop China and strengthen its international position enjoyed.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in congratulated Mr Xi on his re-election in a letter, writing that he looked forward to creating a "practical strategic partnership".

Mr Xi has assumed an unprecedented number of positions since coming to power in 2012, including the title of "core" leader of China. His first term has been marked by significant development, a push for modernisation and increasing assertiveness on the world stage.

Several major Western news organisations were barred from Wednesday's ceremony to reveal the new Politburo Standing Committee. Officially no reason was given for barring the BBC, Financial Times, Economist, New York Times and Guardian, but unofficially journalists were told that their reporting was to blame - another sign of Xi's determination to control the message at home and abroad.

Be Ready for War Always, Chinese President Xi Jinping Tells PLA. The focus for Xi Jinping will be to win wars. The Chinese President Xi Jinping has begun his second five-year term ordering the country's 2.3 million-strong military, the world's largest, to be absolutely loyal to the ruling Communist Party and intensify its combat readiness by focussing on how to win wars.

The once-in-a-five-year Congress of the Communist Party endorsed Xi's leadership of the party, the military and the presidency this week and approved his ideology to be written into its Constitution, elevating him on par with modern China's founder Chairman Mao Zedong and his successor Deng Xiaoping. Xi, 67, began his second tenure on Thursday by holding a meeting of top military officials, regarded as a main source of power base.

Xi, who heads the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) the overall high command of Chinese military, is the only civilian leader in the body which is otherwise packed with top most officials of the armed forces.

The new CMC line-up which was unveiled on Wednesday will be led by a group of seven, down from the 11 members who headed its operations before.

In the last night's meeting of top military officials, some high-ranking officials were conspicuously absent, Hong- Kong based South China Morning Post reported. It appeared from the state-run CCTV report that two top generals, the former chief of general staff General Fang Fenghui and director of the political work department, General Zhang Yang were absent. Both Fang and Zhang were CMC members in Xi's first term, but they were left off the list of PLA delegates to this month's party Congress. Earlier the two Generals were taken away on the same day last month as part of a corruption investigation.

Xi asked the PLA officers to learn and implement the spirit of the just-concluded 19th CPC National Congress by following the road of building a strong army with Chinese characteristics and promoting the modernisation of national defence and the army. He said that during the past five years, the CMC has endeavoured to build an army that follows the command of the CPC, capable of winning battles and has a fine style of work. During his previous tenure, Xi carried out widespread reforms of the military including reconfiguring the command structure, slashed three lakh troops from 2.3 million military, cut the size of the army to a million and made navy more powerful to push China's influence abroad.

PAKISTAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra

Nawaz Sharif and His Wife Indicted for Corruption. An anti-corruption court in Islamabad indicted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam

Nawaz and son-in-law for not declaring four expensive apartments in London to tax authorities. Sharif did not appear before the accountability court as he is in London where his wife Kulsoom Nawaz is being operated on for throat cancer and undergoing chemotherapy. His representative pleaded not guilty for all three.

Comments. Sharif resigned as Prime Minister in July when a five-member bench of the Supreme Court declared him not truthful and honest while declaring his assets. His family was named in the Panama Papers released last year which named some ruling families around the world as having off-shore accounts to hide income from tax authorities.

Pakistan Govt to Monitor Social Media. Amid growing concerns over the alleged disappearance of a number of social media activists linked to the ruling party, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal announced plans to formulate a framework to monitor social media in order to prevent it from being used as a tool to malign national institutions and spread anarchy or extremism in the country. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has been directed to formulate a framework for social media monitoring in consultation with all stakeholders. Mr Iqbal termed social media an important weapon of fifth-generation warfare, which was being used to destabilize societies and create anarchy in countries, saying that even in the US and Germany, there was an ongoing debate over the misuse of social media in the recently-held elections in both countries.

Comments. This move is most likely in view of the forthcoming elections. The framework for monitoring social media needs to balance the democratic freedom as well as ensure that no foreign hand or saboteur can use social media to interfere in the national institutions.

Tillerson in Pakistan with A Tough Message on 'Safe Havens'. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Pakistan to deliver a tough message on the importance of fighting extremists and driving them from hideouts on Pakistani territory. Tillerson arrived in Islamabad a day after traveling to Iraq and Afghanistan in conditions of strict secrecy. He met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Foreign Minister Khwaja Mohammad Asif and the heads of the army and intelligence services. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged Pakistani leadership to step up their fight against terrorist groups on their soil and facilitate the Afghan reconciliation process. The secretary had just a day earlier told reporters at Afghanistan's Bagram airbase that Islamabad needed to have "a clear-eyed view" of terror safe havens on its territory and cautioned that bilateral ties would be conditions-based in terms of whether or not its leaders take the "specific" actions that were being required of them. The Trump administration has firmly told Pakistan that if it fails to take "decisive" actions against terror groups, the US will "adjust" its tactics and strategies to achieve the objective in a "different way",

Comments. Pakistan has struggled to shake off suspicion that it wields a malign and strategic interest in Afghanistan, on its western border. US officials have long

accused Pakistan of turning a blind eye or assisting the Afghan Taliban and the allied Haqqani network. Pakistan routinely denies colluding with the militants. In early October, Gen Joseph Dunford, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a congressional hearing that it was clear to him that Pakistan's intelligence service had connections to militant groups.

IRAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra_

Iran Nuclear Deal. Iran's top authority Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that Iran would not walk out of the multinational nuclear deal and welcomed backing given by its European signatories. But he warned that if the United States tore up the deal, "Iran will shred it". A day earlier the Iranian president in an address to the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution in Tehran echoed the same sentiments. President Rouhani said the Iranian nation's unity and hope on the one hand, and the international community's support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and cooperation with Tehran on the other hand would "force the US administration's political authorities to withdraw and reconsider their policies."

Comments. Iran's leadership reaffirms its commitment to JCPOA after US president Donald Trump refused to certify Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, the nuclear agreement between Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany).

US Imposes New Sanctions on Hezbollah. The US House of Representatives have backed new sanctions on Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, as the group tries to recover from its costly involvement in Syria. Backed by Iran, Hezbollah has been fighting on the side of the Syrian regime. Three Hezbollah-related measures passed, without opposition, by voice vote. The first of the Hezbollah-related measures passed on Wednesday would impose new sanctions on any entities found to support the group, such as by providing weapons to Hezbollah. The second imposed sanctions on Iran and Hezbollah for allegedly using civilians as human shields. The third was a resolution urging the European Union to designate Hezbollah as a "terrorist" organisation.

Comments. Hezbollah's resources have been drained by Syria's war, and are in need of a new raison d'etre to bolster their costly involvement. The move against an ally of Iran came as part of a US effort to hit at Tehran without immediately moving to undermine an international nuclear agreement. However, winning international support for an intensified campaign against Hezbollah could prove difficult. The powerful Shia organisation is part of Lebanon's fragile coalition government and commands enormous support for the social services it provides.

NEPAL

Brig HS Cheema

On 19 Oct hackers mounted a cyber-attack on NIC Asia Bank using the SWIFT system (the most common system used to transfer money across banks globally) to steal millions of rupees. Though Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) and NIC Asia are keeping mum on the largest cyber theft in Nepal until they conduct an investigation, sources peg the amount to be around Rs460 million. It has come to light that the Information Technology (IT) department of the bank allowed employees to perform personal tasks, such as checks their personal e-mails, via computers that were supposed to be used specifically to conduct SWIFT transactions and access to the server on which the SWIFT system was installed. All this points to a serious laxity in the way this bank, which handles assets valued over Rs101 billion, manages its IT department—a sector that is proving increasingly crucial with the rise of global banking transactions, e-commerce and e-banking. This attack mirrors a similar one in February 2016, when Bangladesh Bank (BB)—the central bank of that country—was robbed of \$81 million. The damage in this case could have been much worse; BB was able to block transactions worth \$850 million from going through.

The modus operandi in the NIC Asia attack, as with the others, seems to be the exploitation (at the user's end) of the SWIFT inter-bank money transfer system, which counts in its membership more than 11,000 banks worldwide and is used to transfer billions of dollars a day. The hackers seem to have gained access to the SWIFT system using credentials of NIC Asia, thereby issuing 31 unauthorised instructions to transfer money from NIC Asia to banks around the world.

Bangladesh, India and Nepal to Enforce Transport Deal. Bangladesh, India and Nepal are preparing to implement the Motor Vehicle Agreement signed by four countries after Bhutan's parliament failed to ratify the BBIN agreement. The MVA agreement was signed in June 2015 with an aim to implement it within a year. Subsequently, Bangladesh, India and Nepal endorsed the agreement from their national parliaments but Bhutan has officially notified the three countries of its inability to endorse the agreement right now. The kingdom also said the matter is up to the next government which will be formed after the 2018 elections.

The BBIN agenda figured in meetings when Indian Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj visited Bangladesh in third week of Oct. A joint bilateral statement issued after Swaraj's visit says the three countries will move ahead with the motor agreement. "We agreed that BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement will be implemented between Bangladesh, India and Nepal through exchange of letters keeping provisions for Bhutan to join later," the joint statement reads. The pact signed in 2015 allows member states to operate their cargo and passenger vehicles in each other's territories without having to clear customs at the borders. Bhutan's main opposition party and transporters argue that free movement of foreign vehicles will add to pollution and affect tourism and local culture in the country.

During Swaraj's visit, Bangladesh also urged India to facilitate the process of importing electricity from Nepal. "India also agreed to facilitate import of electricity to Bangladesh from hydropower projects in Nepal," the joint statement reads. Bangladesh, which grapples with power outages, wants to purchase power directly from Nepal. For that, Bangladesh seeks Delhi's support for electricity transmission through the Indian Territory. Bangladesh also wants to sign a power deal with Bhutan. Currently, Bangladesh is importing 660 megawatt electricity from India.

NORTH EAST

Brig HS Cheema

Assam Chief Minister Sonowal Meets Rajnath Over National Register of Citizens (NRC). Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on 25 Oct met the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to discuss situation that may arise in the state once the draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is published in the state by end of December as per the directive of the Supreme Court. The NRC updating process was being carried out in Assam under the supervision of the Supreme Court. Once the NRC is updated till March 25, 1971, it would become easier to detect illegal migrants as per the clauses of Assam Accord that holds March 25, 1971 as the cut-off date for the purpose. There has been an undercurrent of tension in certain minorities-dominated areas in the state after the state coordinator for NRC updating process Protik Hazela submitted before the Supreme Court recently that about 17 lakh people out of the total 47 lakhs who had submitted documents procured from panchayats with their application for enrolment in the NRC were suspected to be not genuine citizens in Assam. He also submitted that there was possibility of escalation tension in the state after NRC draft was published. However, the ruling BJP in the state maintains that those suspect citizens would be given a chance to submit genuine documents other than those procured from respective panchayats. The chief minister Sonowal has also reiterated that genuine Indian citizens do not need to worry about being excluded from NRC and the state government is committed to prepare a flawless draft NRC. The issue of Nagalim as demanded by Naga rebel groups NSCN-IM also came up for discussion in the meeting with Rajnath Singh who assured Sonowal that territorial integrity of Assam would not be compromised at any cost and the central government was committed to maintain peace and harmony in the Northeast region. It was also decided at the meeting that the international Indo-Bangla border at Karimganj-Cachar and Mankachar-South Salmara sectors of the state would be sealed at an early date to check illegal migration across the border.

MYANMAR

Brig HS Cheema

Myanmar and Bangladesh Reach 10-Point Agreement on Refugees. Myanmar and Bangladesh reached a 10-point agreement on Rohingya refugees at a meeting held in Naypyitaw and attended by representatives of the Home Ministries of the two countries. The agreement includes, "Stopping immediately entry by Myanmar nationals into Bangladesh and repatriation of refugees at the earliest date and restoring normalcy in Rakhine Region for their resettlement." Both sides also agreed to form a joint working committee this coming November to arrange resettlement.

Other issues discussed included strengthening border security, law enforcement cooperation, counter-terrorism, establishing border liaison offices, identification for entry and exit, illegal border crossing, verification of citizenship, narcotic drugs control and repatriation after the verification process for refugees.

Solving Rohingya Crisis: After India, it's China's Turn Bangladesh View. When Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said during her Dhaka visit that Bangladesh-India relation “goes far beyond a strategic partnership”, that certainly created a ripple across many fronts – from global politics, to the Myanmar generals to the hapless Rohingyas. Her following words were even more decisive, clearer and a turning point in India's stance on the Rohingya issue, removing the cloud that gathered after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Myanmar. While Modi remained silent on the plight of the Rohingyas, Sushma has maintained that India is “deeply concerned at the spate of violence in Rakhine State” and normalcy will only be restored with the return of the displaced persons to Rakhine state.

It was the Chinese President Xi Jinping, who during his visit last year to Dhaka, used the term of endearment for Bangladesh as a “strategic partner”. But that partnership came to nada when the Rohingya crisis unfolded. China, instead of honouring that “strategic partnership”, sided with Myanmar. Not only did it not raise any voice against the violence against the Rohingyas, it placed two vetoes at the UN Security Council on a Myanmar resolution. Because of its opposition in September, the Security Council failed to take any resolution on Myanmar. And then this week, China spoke out against any foreign interference in Myanmar. China, whose investment in Myanmar reached \$18.53 billion up to January 2017 and considers Myanmar an important tool in its One Belt, One Road initiative, ignored the fact that its “strategic partner” is suffering because of the ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. But China should not forget the strategic importance of Bangladesh. China and Bangladesh signed three dozen deals worth around \$25 billion for infrastructure development during Xi's visit, not to mention Bangladesh's importance in the implementation of One Belt, One Road project. A peaceful region is needed for such an ambitious scheme to go through. China, that champions many globally crucial areas including climate change, should not ignore the ongoing humanitarian crisis and should come forward like India to resolve the situation.

AFGHANISTAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra

[Muscat Moot Breaks the Ice on Stalled Afghan Talks.](#) Representatives of Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US gathered in Muscat to rejuvenate the stalled Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) working to restore peace in Afghanistan. No official statement was issued after the meeting, the sixth such session of the QCG process, which was stalled after Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour was killed in a drone strike in May last year. Although bringing the Afghan government and insurgents to the negotiating table was one of the main objectives of the QCG, the Taliban had already indicated that they would not participate in the Muscat meeting.

Comments. The summit was a “symbolic gathering” that was meant to set the ball rolling for the four-state forum that has been inactive for over a year now. The resumption of four-way talks also underlines the US interest in reviving the stalled mechanism for engaging the Taliban. In Washington, the talks are being viewed as significant not because they could lead to an immediate truce with the Taliban, but rather because they provide an opportunity to Islamabad and Washington to iron out their differences over a political solution to the Afghan conflict.

[Death Toll in Week of Afghanistan Attacks Tops 250.](#) A suicide bomber killed 15 Afghan army cadets as they were leaving their base in the capital, Kabul, taking the death toll from attacks this week across the war-torn country to around 250. The suicide bombing was the second such incident in Kabul in 24 hours, and the seventh major assault in Afghanistan in a week.

Comments. The spate of deadly attacks underscores deteriorating security across Afghanistan as the resurgent Taliban step up their attacks on security installations with devastating effect and the ISIS continue to target Shia mosques. The latest attacks comes as [four-way talks](#) between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China were held in Oman with the aim of ending the Taliban's 16-year insurgency.

WEST ASIA

Col Sumit Rana

ISIS

Philippines Marawai Hostage Crisis:-

- (a) Marawai was captured by lightning ISIS offensive in May.
- (b) More than 1,000 people have died in subsequent battle.
- (c) City was declared liberated from terrorists last week.
- (d) Images reveal scale of reconstr.

Police were trying to arrest leaders from both groups when they joined forces and attacked, then pledged loyalty to ISIS. More than 900 jihadis, including foreigners, were killed in the fighting while 165 government soldiers and 45 civilians died. Last week President Rodrigo Duterte declared the city 'liberated' from the terrorists, and said reconstruction could begin

IRAQ

Canadian Special Operation Forces soldiers are halting their “advise-and-assist” cooperation with Iraqi and Kurdish troops under Operation Impact, the U.S.-led multinational coalition that has recently made significant inroads against ISIS strongholds in the region.

Canada’s decision to stand down comes amid escalating tensions between Erbil and Baghdad following the Kurdish “yes” vote on autonomy from Iraq last month. The controversial independence referendum has caused a rift between the one-time allies against ISIS, and put foreign coalition partners in the awkward position having to navigate regional politics.

Canada has worked with Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in an “advise-and-assist” capacity as part of Operation Impact since joining the coalition to defeat ISIS in 2014. The mission was to train both to be more effective against ISIS, and provide them with real time battlefield strategy.

On Friday, al-Abadi issued a 24-hour suspension of the movement of troops deployed in Iraq’s north to bring territory held by Kurdish forces back under federal control.

Canadian special operations troops will remain on base in the region until the situation stabilizes. Fraser said the question of who will claim the territory abandoned by retreating ISIS fighters is not one to be answered by Canadian soldiers. He called the decision to temporarily sideline the Special Forces “quite reasonable and not unanticipated.” “When they figure it out, we’ll be back,” he said. “They’ve got to figure out how they are going to sort themselves out, and we don’t want to get in the middle of that.” Offering tactical training and assistance is only part of Canada’s broader mandate under Operation Impact. The rest of the anti-ISIS mission, including a field hospital in northern Iraq, tactical helicopters, refueling for coalition jets, and intelligence contributions, will continue without interruption. The mission is slated to run until 2019.

Cease Fire With Kurds. Erbil (IraqiNews.com) The Ministry of Peshmerga has denied being informed about the ceasefire agreement between the Iraqi and Kurdish troops, saying the latter has always been ready for ceasefire. “Peshmerga troops have always been ready for ceasefire with Iraqi troops. However, It was clear that the

ceasefire was rejected by al-hashd al-Shaabi [Popular Mobilization Forces] and Iraqi troops,” Brig. Gen. HelkurdHekmat, head of the ministry’s media office said in a translated statement. “The evidence is that the Kurdistan Region Government proposed ceasefire,” he said. “So far, we know nothing about such agreement.”

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi ordered “halting operations by military troops for 24 hours,” at the areas disputed on between Erbil and Baghdad. In a statement, Abadi said that halting operations targets allowing a joint technical team, formed of both federal and Kurdish troops, to deploy Iraqi troops at all disputed regions.

The U.S.-led Coalition denied reaching an agreement on ceasefire between Baghdad and Erbil, hours after declaring an agreement was reached on Friday. However, Ghayyath al-Surji, of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, said earlier today, after an agreement was announced to have been reached, that the ceasefire will last for 24 hours only.

Iraqi troops have reportedly given the Peshmerga troops two-hour ultimatum to withdraw from FayshKhabur border crossing on Iraqi-Turkish-Syrian borders.

Baghdad had declared intentions to retake areas disputed on with Erbil following the Kurdistan Region’s vote for independence from Iraq in September, urging Peshmerga to cooperate with federal troops.

SYRIA

Claim: The Syrian Army, backed by Russian air support, has recaptured more than 500,000 sq km of territory from so-called Islamic State (IS) militants.

Reality Check Verdict: This is not possible - since it's far more territory than there is in the whole of Syria.

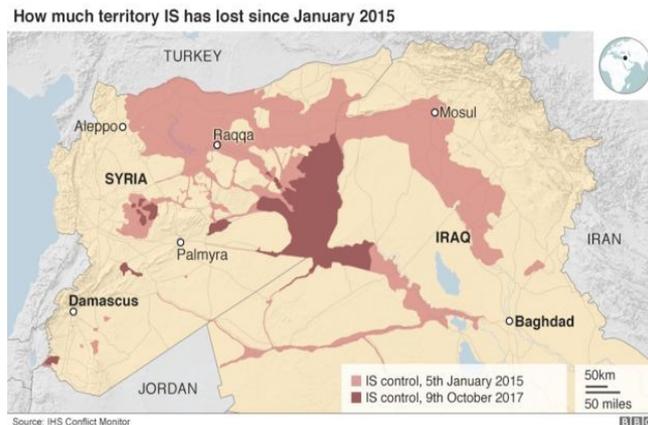
"Some 998 towns and villages have been freed, with the liberated territory covering 503,223 sq km. Most of the militants have been eliminated," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said during a speech in the Philippines on 24 October.

However, Syria's total area is just over 185,000 sq km according to the UN - meaning that, for Mr Shoigu's figures to be correct, Syrian troops must have taken back territory amounting to more than two-and-a-half times the country's size.

It is unclear how and why Mr Shoigu gave such an exaggerated figure for the recaptured territory. Reality Check asked the Russian defence ministry to explain the discrepancy, but it had not replied by the time this article was published.

The defence ministry provides regular updates on the progress of the Syrian Army's operation to recapture the country's territory, and the figures it gives are usually somewhat more plausible.

On 30 June, for example, Mr Shoigu announced that government troops had taken back more than 12,000 sq km over the preceding month.



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September the UK- **an Observatory for Rights accused causing at least 69** r the course of only 72

Sanctions on Syria. Britain on Friday urged the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions on Syria after a UN-led investigation found that government forces were responsible for the sarin gas attack on Khan Sheikhun.

A joint UN-Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) panel said the Syrian air force had dropped a bomb on the opposition-held town on April 4, releasing the deadly nerve agent that killed more than 80 people.

"A robust international response is now essential to hold those responsible for the Khan Sheikhun attack to account," British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft told reporters.

IOR

Capt Ranjit Seth

Seychelles and Mauritius Strengthen Relations. During his State visit to Mauritius, President Faure met with the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnaught in Port Louis Mauritius on 27 Oct 2017. President Faure described the relations between the two countries as one that are dynamic and evolving. "The relationship between the Seychelles and Mauritius is one based on shared culture,

values and on strong bonds of friendship and excellent bilateral ties. The relation between our two countries is one, which is holistic covering a wide array of areas: diplomacy, culture, trade and commerce, education amongst others. There are few relationships as strong as that.... Whilst we may be geographically destined to cooperate, there has always been a strong commitment at all levels for our countries to work as partners focused on unlocking their shared potential”.

Both countries agreed to continue to extend their mutual support for one another in the international arena. The two leaders also agreed to strengthen their collaboration at the regional level through the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Indian Ocean Region Association (IORA). They expressed their wish to engage in discussions prior to important forums at regional level, so as to ensure that they enter into those meetings with one voice and a common position.

CAMBODIA

Col Harpreet Singh

Cambodia Trending Towards Dictatorship? Western powers and institutions trying to halt Cambodia’s slide into outright dictatorship are looking at desperate last ditch options as anti-foreign sentiment becomes an increasing focus of the country’s state media. The president of Cambodia’s main opposition party was formally charged with treason, after being accused by the country’s government of plotting to overthrow its leaders with the backing of the United States.

The charge comes amid a wider crackdown on dissent ahead of parliamentary elections next year, with a particular focus on groups linked to Washington. If convicted, the opposition leader, KemSokha, could be jailed for up to 30 years and his Cambodia National Rescue Party could be dissolved, under the terms of a law amended this year. U.S. Senator Ted Cruz threatened consequences if jailed opposition leader KemSokha is not released.

As evidence of the supposed plot, the government produced a video from 2013 showing Mr. KemSokha speaking to a group of Cambodians in Melbourne, Australia, about his desire to bring about political change. In it, he describes taking advice from American experts on his political career, including a suggestion that he take a break from politics to set up the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, which still receives funding from the United States government although he left the group in 2007.

The United States already placed visa restrictions on a number of Cambodian Foreign Ministry officials and their families in September, though officially in response to a separate concern.

Comments. Although Cambodia is nominally a democracy that holds regular elections, it has been led for 32 years by Hun Sen, a self-proclaimed “strongman” who has methodically consolidated his power. He has a favourable view of China and views it as a power to stay. Beijing, which has become Cambodia’s most prolific donor in recent years, was the only foreign government to issue a statement

supporting the arrest. Hun Sen has been held in check partly by international donors, including the United States, that have poured billions of dollars of aid into Cambodia, including in health care for the poor and an international tribunal to try the remnants of the Khmer Rouge leadership.

The Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) is relatively new, having been formed in 2012, but it stunned the government by nearly winning parliamentary elections a year later, with support from a generation of youths seeking greater political and social freedom. The US supports the opposition CNRP and is accused by Hun Sen as a third hand trying to overthrow his government.

The next step by US could be to impose global Magnitsky-type sanctions that would target top members of the ruling CPP and the military. The Magnitsky Act is a punitive U.S. mechanism that allows the executive branch to freeze the assets of suspected human rights abusers held in United States banks, block their access to the financial system and ban them from entering the country. It was originally passed in 2012 to punish Russian officials and a businessman related to the murder of a corruption investigator but was expanded globally in 2016. The entire game appears to be a turf war between China and US.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

Purpose of US Secretary's Visit of the South Asia. U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson visit of India on 23 Oct 17, in the backdrop of visit of U.S. Defence Secretary's James Mattis visit just one month before, indicates to the level of US strategic interest in the region. U.S. major concern is Afghanistan which he also visited before Pakistan. During a press meet India, he stated that he told Pakistani political and military leadership to tackle terrorists of all hues (in particular the Haqqani group and Afghan Taliban) without any distinction or else America will itself act against the terror groups. This action has brought in some sense of satisfaction in India but, success of this move remains doubtful as Pakistani's have denied having any influence on the terror groups operating in Afghanistan.

The India visit was also a sort of follow up of President Trump wish to seek India's greater role in Afghanistan affairs. This was stressed by the Defence Secretary James Mattis during his visit. It may not be coincidence to have President Ashraf Ghani visiting India soon afterward. What has transpired is not in public domain other than that India would be sending wheat to Afghanistan though Iran's Charbahar port. Some Indian strategists talk of military involvement in Afghanistan. One is not sure of the advantage it will bring in particularly after seeing Russian and US involvement. May be it is better to stay away from Afghanistan quagmire and remain involved in its development work as before.

Rex Tillerson also talked of a crucial role that India could play in maintaining in stability of the Asia Pacific region along with Japan and Australia besides, the US. Possibly, it hinted at establishing a Quadrilateral which was also considered in nineties but, was dropped on Australian instance which did not want China to misunderstand. Now their objection seems to have been dropped. India too would not like to act in the manner that could be seen as ganging up against china but is

prepared to discuss it. As per a media report, the talks at the first place would need to be at the Joint secretary's level. Such moves are necessary to blunt Chinese aggressiveness. In any case china is not mindful of India's concerns which are well known to china. Such moves will keep alive India's options.

Last but not the least, the aim of the visit was also to give push to the F-16/18 deal. America is prepared to transfer the technology to India with this deal but, before that it would want some foundational agreements with India which would facilitate transfer of technology. It may want India to sign the Communication and Information Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic exchange Agreement (BECA). We have already signed Logistic support agreement with US after its tweaking for Indian concern. We may also sign CISMOA and BECA after these take in account India's point of view. With transfer of technology the IPR issue is likely to get resolved which the major concern with these deals. It is however, another matter whether services would want F16/18 on ground their vintage.