

ENVIRONMENT SCAN 16-31 OCT 2018

KASHMIR

Col Harpreet Singh

Kashmir Local Elections Results. The BJP won the urban local body elections in four districts of militancy-infested south Kashmir on Saturday, winning 53 of the 132 wards, in the four-phased polls in the state that were marred by NC and PDP boycott. The unprecedented victory for the saffron party has given it control of at least four of the 20 civic bodies in the four districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian. Independents emerged as the single largest group in the elections in Kashmir by winning 178 wards across 42 municipal bodies in Kashmir division, including Leh and Kargil.

The Congress was ahead of the BJP in the valley by bagging 157 wards, while saffron party won in 100 wards.

While the BJP emerged as the single largest party in 12 municipal bodies, it has majority in five of these bodies. The Congress was the single largest party in 15 bodies, having majority in 11 of them.

In the prestigious Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), the Congress won 16 seats and the BJP won in four wards. Independents bagged the 53 seats in the 74-member body. The BJP, which had won the Ladakh constituency in 2014 Lok Sabha elections, got a drubbing from the Congress in Leh and Kargil civic bodies. The saffron party failed to open its account in the two bodies while Congress bagged all 13 seats in Leh and six seats in Kargil.

In Jammu, the Congress suffered a big loss in the election, winning only 14 seats in the 74-member house. Independent candidates won 18 seats in the JMC, they said. The party this time bettered its previous strength of 25 in the House.

In rest of the 446 wards spread across Jammu region covering a total of 36 municipal committees and councils, the BJP had an edge over its rivals in 15 bodies followed by Independents in 12 and the Congress in five.

The BJP won a total of 169 seats in these bodies followed by independents at 167 and the Congress at 96.

Comments. The boycott call by separatists, coupled with threats by militants, and non-participation of the National Conference and the PDP, helped both the BJP and the Congress in a major way as 76 and 78 candidates from the respective national parties were elected unopposed. The emergence of independents as a strong force was in view of the absence of the NC and the PDP, the key regional parties, but most of these candidates were propped up by NC/PDP.

The low turnout in the valley is a cause for concern as the alienation and fear of gun remains in the minds of the people.

Source. <https://www.news18.com/news/politics/jammu-and-kashmir-municipal-election-results-live-updates-bjp-poised-for-big-win-in-jammu-mixed-bag-in-kashmir-1914513.html>

NORTHEAST

Brig HS Cheema

Zia Orphanage Graft Case: Khaleda's Jail Term Raised to 10 Years. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia lost another legal battle on 30 Oct, as the High Court doubled her five-year jail term, handed down by a lower court in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. The HC verdict came a day after the same special court sentenced Khaleda to seven years in jail on charges of abusing power during her second term (2001-2006) to collect and spend Tk 6.52 crore for different purposes, including purchase of 42 kathas of land in the capital to set up a Charitable Trust after her late husband's name. The HC and the lower court verdicts come amid BNP's call for Khaleda's release before the general election due by the end of January. It also comes just two days before the long-demanded dialogue between the government and opposition parties. HC verdict has fuelled the ongoing debate about whether Khaleda can contest the upcoming election. Article 66 (2) (d) of the constitution says, "A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of Parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release." According to Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, the BNP chief cannot join the race unless her convictions are scrapped and she is acquitted.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/politics/zia-orphanage-trust-corruption-case-verdict-high-court-enhances-khaleda-zia-punishment-10-years-1653796>

Comments. BNP chances to give tough fight in the forthcoming elections in Bangladesh gets a setback with Mrs Khaleda extended jail term.

Barrier Lake of Yarlung-Tsangpo Starts Overflowing, Water Level in River Siang to 'Rise'. With water of Barrier Lake formed at Milin Section of Yarlung-Tsangpo in Tibet (China) starting to overflow from 30 Oct, and apparently, this will lead to rise of water level in river Siang, according to an official report. As the barrier lake was formed as a result of another landslide at Milin Section on 29 Oct, the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources in Beijing informed. Since the magnitude of landslides (1.7 Km) was less than the previous one (3.5 Km) which happened in first week of Oct, it is expected that the height of the debris is also lower than the previous one. Therefore, water of about 330 MCM is said to have been accumulated in the barrier lake.

echoofarunachal.in/2018/11/01/barrier-lake-of-yarlung-tsangpo-starts-overflowing-water-level-in-river-siang-to-rise/

Comments. There are some unconfirmed reports that China is constructing dams in general area of Great bend on Tsangpo River which could have caused some debris flow in this river earlier. This area is earth quake prone which may result in creating these landslides and caused floods like situation. Any construction activity in these areas should be a cause of concern for India as it can affect the flow of Brahmaputra river in lean season and may result into disaster in case of any breach. During Doklam crisis and there after China stopped providing Hydrological data which China agreed to share. China has no water sharing agreement with India there is a need to engage China to have the same.

China's Navy Could Eventually have Six Aircraft Carriers. China's first homemade aircraft carrier left Dalian port for her third sea trial on Oct. 28, 2018. The Type 001A flattop could commission into frontline service as early as 2019, according to the U.S. Defense Department -- growing Beijing's carrier force to two and giving China the world's second-biggest flattop fleet. The new trial will test the vessel's weapons system, control system and

communications system, Wang Yunfei, a retired Chinese navy officer, told Global Times. The 55,000-ton carrier, which Beijing reportedly will name Shandong, is a modified version of Liaoning, China's first flattop. Liaoning is the ex-Varyag, which the Soviet Union built in the 1980s but never commissioned. China acquired the incomplete vessel in 1998. Liaoning commissioned into the Chinese fleet in 2012. Carrying J-15 fighters and helicopters, Liaoning deployed to the western Pacific in April 2018 for her first realistic war game. Shandong, if that indeed is the new carrier's name, shares Liaoning's layout and limitations. Lacking catapults, she launches planes by way of a bow-mounted ramp. That arrangement places hard limits on how heavy Liaoning's aircraft can be -- and how much weaponry and fuel they can carry. The U.S. Navy's own carriers use steam catapults to launch aircraft weighing as much as 50 tons. By contrast, Liaoning's ramp layout probably limits aircraft to a maximum weight of 30 tons, a former Chinese navy source revealed. A J-15 weighs nearly 20 tons empty. Fuel accounts for most of the available 10-ton payload on most missions, limiting the fighter's weapons load out to just a few small missiles. But future carriers could be better as China's decades-long investment in naval aviation begins to pay off. "Observers speculate China may eventually field a force of four to six aircraft carriers, meaning Liaoning, the Type 001A carrier and two to four additional carriers," Ronald O'Rourke, a naval expert with the U.S. Congressional Research Service, reported in August 2018. A third Chinese carrier that's under construction in Shanghai reportedly features catapults. "China's next generation of carriers will probably have greater endurance and be capable of launching more varied types of fixed-wing aircraft, including [electronic warfare], early-warning and [anti-submarine warfare] aircraft," the U.S. Defense Department explained in the 2018 edition of its annual report on Chinese military power. With more and better flattops -- and new aircraft to fly from them -- China could greatly extend its influence across the Pacific and Indian Oceans. "By 2020, carrier-based aircraft will be able to support fleet operations in a limited air-defense role," Jesse Karotkin, the Office of Naval Intelligence's top China analyst, said in 2014. "These improvements would increase the striking power of a potential carrier battle group in safeguarding China's interests in areas beyond its immediate periphery," the Pentagon explained in its 2018 China report.

www.defencenews.in/article/Chinas-Navy-Could-Eventually-Have-Six-Aircraft-Carriers-581359

Comments. China is giving due importance to build its navy into blue water capable. It is ensuring to meet laid out timelines to itself to modernise PLA. Addition of three to four Air Craft carrier will considerably enhance China capability to fight away from its shores as also allow to fight integrated battle against Taiwan as and when it decide to use military for its reunification.

JAPAN, MALDIVES, SRI LANKA

Col Arvinder Singh

Prime Minister Modi Concluded Successful Japan Visit¹. PM Modi concluded successful visit to Japan, which promised to give \$35 billion to India over the next five years for developmental projects, as the two sides agreed to enhance their strategic cooperation to a new level. The two countries signed five pacts covering defense exchanges, cooperation in clean energy, roads and highways, healthcare and women while vowing to take their relationship to newer level. Japan also lifted ban on six Indian entities including Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) which had been imposed in the aftermath of 1998 nuclear tests. During the talks the two sides decided to speed up negotiations on civil nuclear deal that could not be concluded now. India and Japan concluded a \$75bn currency swap pact, a move intended to bring greater stability to the rupee and capital markets in India. The two countries

¹<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>

also agreed to '2+2' dialogue at the foreign and defense ministers' level as well as work together on infrastructure projects in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, giving substance to Indo-Pacific policies. Abe also went out of his way to receive Modi in Kyoto when he went there for the first leg of his tour. In Kyoto, a pact was signed under which Modi's Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi would be developed on the pattern of Kyoto 'smart city' with the help of Japan.

Comments. The India-Japan economic relationship is old and deep, but their bilateral trade continues to lack volumes. The visit is expected to further consolidate ties between India and Japan. India's economic growth is beneficial to Japan, given that New Delhi is viewed as a counterweight or balance to China. Both India and Japan have initiated moves to recalibrate ties with China in the wake of an uncertain global order, thanks to US President Donald Trump's unpredictable moves such as trade sanctions on friends (such as Japan) and foes (such as China). Abe was in Beijing recently, his first visit since 2012. In April, Modi visited Wuhan for a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping to reset ties. However, both countries are cautious about Beijing, due to its aggressive stance in the region.

Abe's Chinese Takeaway: Filling, But not a Feast². Japanese Prime Minister's Shinzo Abe three-day visit to China buoyed by good vibes and some promising agreements. But there was considerable vagueness hanging over free-trade deals and strategic issues. With China facing massive trade pressure that Japan is also subject to, albeit indirectly, there was good reason for the two leaders to focus on economic positives rather than geostrategic and political negatives. However, while much appears promising, there was a lack of detail on actual results regarding trade, China's controversial Belt and Road Initiative and territorial disputes.

Comments (the pluses). The optics were excellent being bilateral meeting in China in seven years, Xi rolled out the red carpet, with a military parade for Abe, a grand reception marking the 40th anniversary of the Sino-Japan Friendship Treaty. Despite straining relations in recent years – there are major policy differences over Pacific War history, the disputed territory, freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and North Korea policy – the fulsomeness of this reception was a plus. As the international situation changes, China and Japan are becoming increasingly dependent on one another, hence both the leaders made positive noises. The main takeaways from the summit appeared to be in economic stability and bilateral business. As of 2017, when bilateral trade hit \$300 billion, China returned to being Japan's leading trade partner, but Japan – like South Korea – will be hurt by US sanctions against China, as it supplies many of the components used in Chinese finished exports. They agreed on a \$30-billion currency swap and on setting up a yuan clearing bank in Japan. They also agreed to boost cooperation in securities markets and 52 deals worth \$18 billion were inked. **(Vague/Negative outcomes)** Chinese media said that Japan has also expressed its readiness to actively participate in the BRI but details are unknown. While the two agreed on the continuation of sanctions on North Korea to press the regime to denuclearize but there is suspicion over how stringently these sanctions are applied by Beijing, which is responsible for 80-90% of North Korean trade. Territorial issues were also discussed but no concrete outcome on stability in the East China Sea came out where Chinese fishing boats have aggressively challenged Japanese vessels.

Supreme Court Upholds Maldives Vote³. In a unanimous ruling, the Maldives Supreme Court denied outgoing President Yameen's petition to annul September's presidential election, won by an opposition coalition. Yameen's request for an inquiry into alleged vote-

²<http://www.atimes.com/article>

³<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018>

rigging and fraud, with extraordinary claims that the opposition used disappearing ink and chemicals to change the mark on voters' ballot papers, was also denied by the court.

India Helped in Restoration of Democracy in Maldives: Maumoon Abdul Gayoom⁴. Former Maldivian President Maumoon said that India played a positive role in restoration of democracy in Maldives by exerting pressure on the ruling regime, and the new government in the island nation would be sensitive towards New Delhi's concerns. He also said that we are concerned at the level of debt we have incurred in recent years and feel this needs to be carefully reviewed and managed and China would respect the will of the Maldivian people.

Maldives' Top Court Clears Way for Ex-leader's Return⁵. The Maldives' Supreme Court stayed exiled former president Mohamed Nasheed's 13-year jail sentence on terrorism charges, allowing his return in Maldives. Nasheed was sentenced to jail for ordering the abduction of a judge after a rushed and widely criticized trial in March 2015. He went into exile during a medical trip to Britain.

Comments. Gayoom had ruled Maldives for 30 years till he was defeated in the country's first multi-party elections in 2008. The Maldives, located near key shipping lanes, has become a battleground for China and India as they compete for influence in the region. Concerned countries that criticized Yameen's all-out assault on democracy should now encourage the Solih government to undertake much-needed reforms, including by building stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure judicial independence.

Political Crisis in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is facing an acute political crisis, with potentially menacing overtones. The crisis burst into open when President Sirisena sacked PM Wickremesinghe along with the Cabinet on 26 October claiming there was rampant corruption and even a plot to assassinate the president. He further appointed strongman and former president Rajapaksa as PM and pushed the country into constitutional limbo by suspending parliament till 16 November. Though not traditional allies, Sirisena and Wickremesinghe formed a coalition in 2015 to oust Rajapaksa, a charismatic and popular politician, who was then president. But the coalition has been inherently unstable and unpopular with most Sri Lankans. Wickremesinghe is not leaving without a fight. He has refused to move out of the official PM residence and his supporters have reportedly formed a protective ring around the house. But Sirisena has piled up the pressure. Wickremesinghe no longer has access to his official cars, his office and most of his security detail. Meanwhile, Rajapaksa is doing all he can to give the appearance of being the PM. Rajapaksa has expressed confidence that his new cabinet, once formed, will be backed by a majority of more than 113 in the 225-member Assembly. The army is already out in parts of Colombo as the fast-changing events could prove to be overwhelming for the police to handle.

Comments. The re-entry of former Sri Lankan president Rajapaksa into domestic politics could have wide-ranging consequences for India and the economy, foreign policy and democracy of Sri Lanka. According to a conspiracy theory doing the rounds, the all-powerful Rajapaksa is pulling the strings and Sirisena is a willing accomplice. The island nation is still recovering from the scars of a bloody civil war and there is genuine fear that clashes could break out between supporters of Sirisena and Rajapaksa and activists of Wickremesinghe's United National Party. The countries having clout in the region – India, China and the US are adopting a wait and watch approach. While China's business ties with Sri Lanka have several complex angles to them including the row over infrastructure loans and a port lease, India,

⁴<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>

⁵<https://www.channelnewsasia.com>

given its deep involvement in the island nation during the initial phase of the disastrous civil war, will be especially wary of taking a very strong stance amid the political flux in Sri Lanka.

TELECOM & IT

Brig Navjot Singh Bedi

MTNL may Issue Preferential Shares to Float Tender to Select Vendors for 4G. MTNL operates in Delhi and Mumbai metropolitan areas and is planning to launch high-speed data services on the 1800 Mhz and 2100 Mhz spectrum bands. MTNL has sought a preferential capital issuance of Rs 6292 crore from the government to launch 4G services and would soon release a tender to select a gear vendor partner for the ambitious rollout.

Comments. MTNL is a listed company and the government has a 56% stake in the service provider, while LIC holds 19% with the rest 25% with the public. MTNL is yet to deploy high-speed data networks despite its presence in top two urban locations. Reliance Jio's foray into India's telecom sector in September 2016 led to intense rivalry & losses at the state run MTNL mounted. MTNL posted standalone net loss of Rs 900 crore in the quarter ended March 31, 2018, and it rose to Rs 2,973.03 crore from Rs 2,941.08 crore for the full year. If approved, the move to issue equity shares to the government for required airwaves would not add to the debt burden of the telecom service operator which already has Rs 18,000 crore of loans outstanding. It would help to turn a corner for MTNL. 4G spectrum would help MTNL to compete in the market & MTNL is reportedly already in a process to finalise the tender to select the equipment vendor and could commercially rollout 4G services within six to eight months once spectrum is allocated. An economically viable MTNL will be good for stabilising the telecom sector.

(<https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/mtnl-seeks-rs-6000-crore-equity-to-launch-4g-services-to-float-tender-for-vendors/66148237>)

Telecom Sector Overview: IMC 2018. During the India Mobile Congress 2018, Bharti Airtel chairman Mr Sunil Mittal said consolidation in the Indian telecom industry hasn't happened in an orderly way and had come at a heavy price with a \$50 billion (over Rs 3.66 lakh crore) having been wiped off from the sector. He added that the sector was among "the most heavily taxed like the tobacco industry", and called for an early resolution both to this issue as well as to the spate of litigation between telcos and the government. However RJio chairman Mr Ambani, said that India would rise to the No 1 spot in mobile data consumption in under two years from the 155th position and that the country had witnessed the "fastest transition" from 2G/3G services to 4G anywhere in the world. He also said that by 2020, "every phone in India will be 4G enabled, and every customer will have access to 4G connectivity", and India would soon be counted among the world's "top three nations in fixed broadband".

Comments. In what could be considered as a transformational year for the Indian telecom sector, 2018 saw telcos consolidate like never before, leaving just four major players in the market by the end of the year. It only proved that telecom sector has become a money guzzler where only those with deep pockets can survive. India is set on the path to a major telecom revolution but the journey is not likely to be easy for few telcos.

(<https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/sunil-mittal-mukesh-ambani-paint-different-pictures-of-telecom-sector/66371811>)

India Supports Digitisation but won't Compromise on Data Integrity. At the inaugural session of India Mobile Congress 2018, the IT Minister, Mr Prasad highlighted the

exponential growth in mobile manufacturing in the country, backed by the rising base of Smartphone users and internet penetration. He remarked that India is in the process of finalising data protection law and supports digitisation without any compromise on data integrity.

Comments. This is a welcome step because data is the oil of the digital economy of the future. The Indian market represented a large footfall for social media companies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter and India's mobile story is finding global resonance. Thus these social media companies should comply with our Data Protection Regulations. Indians have appetite for content in local languages and more solutions need to be focused on regional languages.

<https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india-supports-digitisation-but-wont-compromise-on-data-integrity-it-minister-prasad/66360817>

Nokia Begins Manufacturing of 5G Equipment in India. Nokia's Chennai manufacturing plant is making New Radio (NR) based on the 3GPP 5G New Radio Release 15 standard. 5G NR will support very data consumption by providing significantly more network capacity, higher user throughput and lower latency with increased network reliability. It may also begin manufacturing of IP and Optics product lines in India. Nokia may explore manufacturing of fixed networks products in India if it sees enough demand coming from Indian telecom operators.

Comments. Nokia had started manufacturing telecom networks equipment in the country in 2008, and has developed the local supply chain for various components. Nokia's Chennai plant is one of the largest telecom equipment manufacturing plant in the country, recently reaching the 4 million unit annual production milestone of 2G, 3G and 4G units. It serves both domestic as well as global customers, shipping to over 100 countries. This is another big leap towards the Make in India vision as this factory continues to contribute to the Indian economy and to the country's growing profile as a manufacturing and engineering hub.

<https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/nokia-begins-manufacturing-of-5g-equipment-in-india/66358792>

Govt-Industry Partnership To Boost Investments To \$100 Billion By 2022. The telecom secretary, Smt Aruna Sundararajan said that industry-government alliance could help country to attract investment worth \$100 billion by 2022. She added that the National Digital Communication Policy 2018 approved by the Union Cabinet would leverage strong sectoral foundation and propel India to digital leadership and dividends. The NDCP seeks to pump in \$100 billion of investment over the next four years and create 4 million new jobs. She also added that issues of rationalization of levies, more quantum of spectrum, creating Intellectual Proprietary Rights and removing manufacturing bottlenecks would be looked into.

Comments. The government wants India to become \$1 trillion economy in next five years and the telecom department has taken numerous steps that led to key reform in the sector. Some of these reforms include doubling of infrastructure including fibre and base trans receiver stations, declaring universal RoW policy, allowing 650MHz of spectrum for Wi-Fi services, Public Data Office (PDO) framework, removal of cascading taxation etc. India has emerged as a fastest growing digital society has grown to a largest telecom market worldwide, which we should capitalise upon.

<https://telecom.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/government-industry-partnership-to-boost-100-billion-investment-by-2022-aruna-sundararajan/66359849>

RUSSIA

Col Harpreet Singh

US Ditches Arms Control Treaty with Russia. US President announced that he intended to withdraw the country from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), signed by the Soviet Union and United States in 1987 during the final years of the Cold War. Trump said he was pulling out of the treaty because Russia has "been violating it for many years." US and NATO officials have long criticized Russia for testing a cruise missile that they say is banned under the accord. The Cold War agreement saw thousands of missiles with ranges between 300 and 3,400 miles destroyed, and banned the development and testing of such weapons.

Kremlin strongly denied Russia was in violation of the treaty and said that it was the United States that "dilutes" the agreement by deploying anti-missile systems that can also be used to launch short- or medium-range missiles. "If you read President's statements [Putin], he was saying that the breach in the INF treaty forces Russia to take measures in order to ensure its security. What does the INF breach mean? It means that the US not only covertly but also directly begins to develop these systems. If these systems are in development, action from other countries is required. In this case it's Russia, in order to restore the balance in this area," Kremlin spokesperson Peskov said. The Russian government has effectively said it would be forced "to take measures" if the United States began developing new missile systems.

Putin in March used a concept video of unlimited range nuclear warheads apparently raining down on Florida to tout his country's new firepower. Moscow also threatened to shoot down US missiles in Syria, and Trump responded on Twitter with threats of "nice and new and 'smart!'" US missiles.

Comments. The agreement has helped eliminate thousands of land-based missiles from the US and Russia, and Trump's plans have raised concerns of a renewed arms race between the two nations. Suggestions of a new arms race between the US and Russia have been brewing over the past two years, since Russia deployed a cruise missile.

Russia agrees that treaty has problems and both countries may have something to gain by ditching the agreement. Withdrawing from the treaty would allow the US to develop a missile similar to the one that Russia has tested. Conversely, the announcement could also allow Russia to blame the United States for the treaty's demise, while pursuing an arsenal of nuclear missiles more freely.

The two countries also share some grievances over the treaty. China's missile arsenal is another reason for scrapping the accord as it is not covered by the INF.

Source. <https://in.reuters.com/video/2018/10/23/us-to-quit-arms-control-treaty-with-russ?videoid=476235562>

NATO Military Exercises. Last week NATO officially kicked off Trident Juncture, its largest exercise in years. The exercises include some 50,000 troops from 31 countries, including all 29 NATO members and Sweden and Finland, preparing for drills on land, sea, and in the air from the Baltic Sea to Iceland. As a NATO Article 5 exercise, Trident Juncture "will simulate NATO's collective response to an armed attack against one ally," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said earlier this month. "And it will exercise our ability to reinforce our troops from Europe and across the Atlantic."

Russian officials have warned Finland and Sweden. Shoigu, the defense minister, said earlier this year that a deal between Stockholm, Helsinki, and Washington to ease defense

cooperation would "lead to the destruction of the current security system, increase mistrust and force us to take counter-measures." Moscow has specifically reproved Finland, with which it shares an 830-mile border and a history of conflict. In mid-2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested he could move troops closer to the border if Finland joined the alliance.

Moscow has carried out "cyber attacks and threatening aircraft manoeuvres around Sweden. Both Sweden and Finland have mulled NATO membership with varying intensity in recent years.

Comments. NATO has increased deployments and readiness in Europe since Russia's 2014 incursion in Ukraine, as countries there have grown wary of their larger neighbour. Russia is not happy about the drills but may be most irritated by the involvement of Finland and Sweden, two neighbours who are increasingly close to the alliance.

Sweden and Finland, both wary of their larger neighbour, have sought to boost defense spending and upgrade their forces. Sweden and Finland, both members of NATO's Partnership for Peace, have joined NATO exercises in the past and invited NATO members to their own exercises. At the end of last year, 19,000 Swedish troops were joined by NATO members in the Baltic region as well as France and the US for Aurora 17, Sweden's largest exercise in 23 years. In May, Finland hosted Arrow 18, an annual multinational exercise, in which US Marine Corps tanks participated for the first time.

Source. <https://www.businessinsider.in/NATOs-biggest-military-exercise-in-years-just-started-but-Russia-may-be-more-worried-about-2-countries-that-arent-members-of-the-alliance/articleshow/66370504.cms>

ASEAN

Col Shyamji Yadav

12th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the 5th ADMM-Plus. The 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the 5th ADMM-Plus was held in Singapore and attended by the defence ministers from the ASEAN countries.

The two day conference began on 19 Oct and was also attended by defence ministers from Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the US. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held a series of bilateral meetings with her counterparts from ASEAN nations and US defence secretary James Mattis on the sidelines of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meet and spoke on terrorism at the Fifth ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus). A joint statement was issued by the ADMM-Plus Defence Ministers on 'Preventing and Countering the Threat of Terrorism'. It said "We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations given that it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security."

"We reaffirm that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever committed, and remain determined to contribute further to enhancing the effectiveness of the overall effort to fight this scourge on a global level," it said.

The ministers emphasised the importance of cooperation between states and their competent bodies who bear the primary responsibility in preventing and combating terrorism. "We call upon all states to fulfill their international counter-terrorism obligations, including

taking lawful steps to prevent the commission of terrorist acts, eliminating the financing of terrorism and other material support there to, suppressing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and preventing the recruitment and movement of terrorists, it said.

Comments. The ADMM and ADMM-Plus serves as key Ministerial-level platforms in the regional security architecture, promoting strategic dialogue and practical cooperation between ASEAN and its partners. The joint statement reaffirmed the grouping as a key component of a robust, effective and open regional security architecture that promotes mutual trust and confidence among the defence establishments.

World's First Multilateral Air Encounter Code. Southeast Asian countries agreed on guidelines to manage unexpected encounters between their military aircraft, with host Singapore calling the pact a world first. The agreement, signed by defense ministers of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a conference in Singapore, United States and China agreed "in principle" while Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea tentatively joined the agreement, The voluntary, non-binding guidelines on air encounters build on an existing code to manage sea encounters adopted last year by ASEAN and its "plus" partners - Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and the United States. They are meant to help manage unintentional encounters in flight between military aircraft over the high seas to avoid potential safety hazards. The ASEAN states also agreed to adopt the "our eyes" initiative as a platform to exchange information on "terrorism, radicalism, and violent extremism, and other non-traditional threats". They also agreed to set up a "virtual" network of chemical, biological and radiological defense experts to "better share best practices and make quick contact during crises".

Comments. A pact was needed to mitigate risks as Asia's rising growth and prosperity has spurred an increase of maritime and air traffic in the region. The existing sea guidelines were not really working, and tensions remain, especially in the hotly contested South China Sea. Though a voluntary, nonbinding set of measures, designed as a practical confidence-building measure for militaries to improve operational safety in the air we need to make such pacts legally binding to make it effective and worthwhile. The adoption represents a significant step towards confidence-building measures in this realm by ASEAN. The effectiveness of GAME (Guidelines for Air Military Encounters) will lie in the willingness of states to actually adopt and then use the guidelines in practice over time.

WEST ASIA

Col Sumit Rana

SYRIA

ISIS Kills 41 US-Backed Fighters in Eastern Syria: Report. IS late on Friday used suicide bombers as part of a counter-attack against the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the US-led coalition against the jihadists, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human rights.

The Islamic State group has killed 41 US-backed fighters in Syria battling to oust the jihadists from their eastern holdout of Hajin on the Iraqi border, a war monitor said on Saturday.

IS late on Friday used suicide bombers as part of a counter-attack against the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the US-led coalition against the jihadists, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human rights.

Russia's New Game in Syria. *Russia is focusing its efforts on blackmailing Europe into paying for reconstruction and pushing the US out.*

(a) After several delays, the Istanbul summit finally took place on Saturday, bringing together the leaders of Turkey, Russia, France and Germany to discuss peace in Syria. The four-way meeting was originally scheduled for early September, but major differences between the four led to its postponement.

(b) The summit brought together parties from the Astana process group (Russia, Turkey and Iran) and the Syria Working Group (the US, the UK, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt), but it failed to mend differences between and within each of the two groups.

(c) Apart from a very broad joint statement that emphasised the need to initiate "an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process" to end the Syrian conflict, no agreement was reached on how to achieve it. The main divisive issues continue to be the political fate of Bashar al-Assad, foreign military presence, the question of the refugees and reconstruction, and the future of the Kurdish areas in the northeast.

ISRAEL

Pittsburgh Killing Aftermath Bares Jewish Rifts in Israel and America. BEIT SHEMESH, Israel — The slaughter of 11 Jews in Pittsburgh elicited responses in Israel that echoed the reactions to anti-Semitic killings in Paris, Toulouse and Brussels: expressions of sympathy, reminders that hatred of Jews is as rampant as ever, reaffirmations of the need for a strong Israel.

But Saturday's massacre also brought to the surface painful political and theological disagreements tearing at the fabric of Israeli society and driving a wedge between Israelis and American Jews.

Israel's Ashkenazi chief rabbi took pains to avoid the word "synagogue" to describe the scene of the crime — because it is not Orthodox, but Conservative, one of the liberal branches of Judaism that, despite their numerous adherents in the United States, are rejected by the religious authorities who determine the Jewish state's definitions of Jewishness.

And the attacker's anti-refugee, anti-Muslim fulminations on social media prompted some on the Israeli left — like many American Jewish liberals — to draw angry comparisons to views espoused by the increasingly nationalistic leaders who now hold sway in their governments

SAUDI ARABIA

Khashoggi BOMBSHELL. Britain 'KNEW of kidnap plot and BEGGED Saudi Arabia to abort plans' murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi was about to disclose details of Saudi Arabia's use of chemical weapons in Yemen, sources close to him said last night. The revelations come as separate intelligence sources disclosed that Britain had first been made aware of a plot a full three weeks before he walked into the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

By MARCO GIANNANGELI, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

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PM'S STATEMENT ON SECURITY

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

Gains of Indo-Japanese Summit on 29 and 30 Oct 18. This was the 13th meeting of PM Modi and PM Shinzo Abe. This shows existence of good chemistry between the two leaders which also translates in bringing further closeness and cooperation between two countries.

Following are the gains of the meet:-

- (a) Raise the relationship to the strategic level by commencing annual 2+2 meet at the minister level in the foreign affairs and defence.
- (b) Signed several Key pacts -Defence cooperation with bilateral and multilateral exercises, Maritime exercises- In particular, engagement between Indian navy with Japanese maritime defence Forces. Memorandum of cooperation between Indian and Japanese IT industry. artificial intelligence, health care, cooperation in third country, research partnership in electronics, sensors, high speed vision robotics and advanced manufacturing etc.
- (c) Information exchange on projects being made in India with Japanese loans such as high speed bullet train, Delhi mass rail tpt, North east road connectivity etc.
- (d) The most important part of the meeting was co-operation of both countries in projects in a third country with an aim to counter the Chinese BRI. The projects were also identified such as housing, education and electrification in Myanmar's Rakhine state, Widening of road and rail bridges in Dhaka, building a cancer hospital in Kenya and LNG related infrastructure in Srilanka are important.
- (e) Signing of Acquisition and cross servicing Agreement (ACSA) similar to Lemoa. This agreement will allow both India and Japan to use each other's naval facilities for refuelling and other support. This is a very vital step for building close cooperation between maritime forces of both nations.
- (f) Swap of \$ 75 billion value of their currencies. This expected to boost our foreign reserve and give stability to the stock market and control fall of Indian currency.

During this visit, PM Modi and PM Shinzo Abe had one long day informal summit similar to his earlier summits with Chinese and Russian leaders at Wuhan and Sochi respectively. The agenda of the summit is not in public domain. The biggest gain of the meet that PM Shinzo Abe has agreed with PM Modi view that Indo- pacific concept should not be seen antagonistic to Chinese interests. Its focus should be peaceful coexistence by all maritime littoral states including China with ASEAN holding the centrality to the region and all following rule based global order.

NUCLEAR

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

North Korean Denuclearisation. The urgency displayed by United States and its allies to denuclearise North Korea since June summit between President Trump and the North Korean leader at Singapore has slackened. Except for symbolic destruction of the face of a cave where presumably North Korean nuclear facility existed, nothing concrete has been

done to indicate that it is destroying its nuclear facilities. President Trump conforming to his reputation continues to be unpredictable. He does not seem to be pursuing the North Korean denuclearisation as vigorously as before. This is strange. Earlier, United States showed urgency after North Korean showcased their capacity to target American main land as well as its allies. This capacity still remains. In fact, unverified sources confirm that North Korean have as a nuclear arsenal between 30 – 60 nuclear bombs. Besides, it has an annual capacity to produce 6 kg of Plutonium and unspecified amount of enriched uranium. Hence, an early action by the international community is called for. United States must take the lead and maintain pressure or else, it could lose credibility after taking earlier proactive action against North Korea. Meanwhile, President Kim continues to maintain a conciliatory stance without doing anything substantive on the subject and China as a supporter has reverted to earlier position of assisting North Korea though trade or by extending moral support.