

ENVIRONMENT SCAN: 13 JUN 2016

MYANMAR

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

It is now clear that former dissident, Ang San SuuKyi is as a De facto leader. How has situation changed from the former regime? The former regime was veering away from dependence on China. It seemed sensitive to the public opinion who were against Chinese exploitation and stopped their dam project on Irrawaddy river in the western Myanmar. But, SuuKyi has allowed copper mining by the Chinese in the MONYWA valley off Chidwin river in the East despite public protests. Chinese now are hopeful that they would be able to resurrect the \$3.6 billion hydroelectric dam at Myitsone that was intended to supply power to China's underdeveloped southwest. Quite clearly, Chinese are succeeding as Ang San SuuKyi believes that China can deliver. In contrast, Indian diplomacy is lagging. The reason for their detached stance of Myanmar is our lack of attention on this important region which is gateway to our Act East policy and our slow delivery of the promised projects. The trilateral high ways and Kaladan multi-modal transit transport projects are still languishing. A more active diplomatic stance towards Myanmar is needed.

AMERICA

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

Navies of India and America have been participating in bilateral Malabar Exercise since 1992. Since last year it has converted to a trilateral exercise with entry of Japan. Japan and Australia have always been keen to participate but, considering Chinese concern and India kept the exercise at the bilateral level.

This year, the week long exercise is being conducted off East China Sea from 10 June onward with Japan exercising the overall control over the conduct of the exercise. Nearly 100 naval assets of three countries are participating in the exercise which includes American Nimitz class super aircraft carrier and Japanese helicopter carrier. The Indian ships include INS Sahyadri, INSSatpura, indigenously built missile stealth Frigate, INS Shakti, a tanker and support ship INS Kirch. The focus is on use of Special Forces and anti-submarine warfare. The main goal is to develop common understating of maritime security operations.

While the exercise is not targeted against any country but, China perceives that exercise is aimed against it. China's own assertive behavior has led to this perception. India is set to have geostrategic gains. Apart from real-time experience it and standing in the region, it will help in its journey towards a true blue water navy and power projection.

WEST ASIA

Brig Ranjit Singh

IRAQ

Battle for Fallujah. A major offensive by the Iraqi forces to retake Fallujah from ISIS is underway since 23 May. The operations have progressing slowly but steadily. The Iraqi forces have laid siege around the town, achieved success in several fronts to include liberation of Albu Sanaa area south of city, liberation of Sen al Zaban area, al Nisaf area

and Abu Elwan Bridge in western part of the city. The security forces are closing in on the central part of Fallujah. ISIS is believed to be holding defensive line south of Fallujah, where Iraqi forces are facing fierce resistance from ISIS. The fall of Fallujah appears to be imminent.

ISIS Attacks Military Barracks in Fallujah. ISIS attacked military barracks east of Fallujah, killing 50 security forces personnel including Shia militia.

Operations for Retake of Mosul Province. In the ongoing operations to retake Mosul, security forces have been making slow but steady progress. 20 ISIS elements were killed in central Mosul and 18 ISIS elements were killed in north-west Mosul in Coalition air strikes. Peshmerga forces have advanced 20 km into al Kkazir north of Mosul, liberating four villages from ISIS. They were also able to retake two villages east of Mosul.

ISIS executes 8 of its fighters for refusing to join combat in Mosul.

Baghdadi Injured in Coalition Air Strikes. It has been reported that Baghdadi has been injured in coalition airstrikes at al Rabiya near Iraq – Syria border, during a meeting. It is reported that other leaders of ISIS too have been injured in the air strikes.

Saudi Arabia Support to ISIS. There has been a recent report from Interior Ministry, Saudi Arabia regarding collection of financial donations for ISIS within the Kingdom. Iraqi Foreign Ministry has sought clarification from Govt of Saudi Arabia on the matter and expressed its concern on fight against terror.

Comments.

The operations to retake Mosul are progressing well but slowly. The Iraqi forces have made significant gains, inching closer to central part of the city and fall of Fallujah appears imminent, possibly in few days time.

In the ongoing operations to retake Mosul, the security forces have been exerting pressure from all fronts and significant gains have been made.

Execution of members of its own cadre for refusal to join combat at regular intervals is indicative of low morale of its members.

SYRIA

Deadly Airstrikes Continue in Aleppo. Govt airstrikes supported by Russia continue in Aleppo resulting in large civilian casualties and damage to property.

Deadly Airstrikes by Govt Forces in Deir Az Zor. The Syrian Air Force supported by Russia has been carrying out deadly airstrikes in the town of Deir Az Zor in eastern Syria, targeting busy market places, causing large civilian casualties.

Syrian Army Crosses into Raqqa Province fo the First Time Since Capture by ISIS. The forces are approx 40 km away from the ISIS locations.

SDF Lays Siege on Manbij Town Under ISIS Control. SDF has laid siege around Manbij Town held by ISIS, which is the heart of last stretch of ISIS controlled territory along Turkey border. This has severed key supply route for money and weapons from Turkey to the ISIS capital of Raqqa.

Govt Forces Bomb Daraya After Delivery of Food Aid by UN. The Govt forces bombed the town of Daraya, on the outskirts of Damascus under rebel control immediately after food aid was delivered by UN for the first time since 2012.

Comments.

UN sponsored peace talks in Geneva have failed to resume.

The situation in Syria remains grim with intense fighting in large parts of the country, due to failure of peace process.

Despite lack of coherent approach to fight ISIS by Russia and US led forces, ISIS would remain under immense pressure on various fronts and is gradually losing ground. Capture of Manbij by SDF would be a severe blow to ISIS in Syria due to cutting off supply routes from Turkey. Russia and US led forces are now competing to retake Raqqa, which could hasten its liberation.

YEMEN

UN Sponsored Peace talks stalled in Kuwait. Hadi Govt has rejected the proposal put up by Houthi rebels, who are asking President Hadi to step down and install a unity Govt as a precondition for their forces to move out of capital city of Sana'a. Houthis also want to locate their forces in a strategic location close to the capital city. The proposal has been turned down by Hadi Govt.

Four Point Plan by Saudi Arabia. In the ensuing peace talks, Saudi Arabia has proposed a four point plan for resolving Yemen crisis. The plan has received acceptance from all parties. The plan includes establishment of organization structure of truce committees and begin ceasefire, setting up of field teams on all fronts, connecting all truce committees and identify buffer zones on ground.

Fighting Rages in City of Taiz. Intense fighting has been witnessed in the city of Taiz, large number of civilian casualties has been reported due to rockets being fired by Houthi rebels into populated areas.

Comments.

UN sponsored peace talks have been ongoing in Kuwait without any breakthrough. The proposal of Houthi rebels demanding stepping down of President Hadi as a pre-condition for resolution of Yemen crisis has been turned down by the Hadi Govt.

Four point proposal put by Saudi Arabia, generally acceptable to both the parties could be a way forward to resolve the crisis in Yemen.

RUSSIA

Col Anadi Dhaundiyal

NATO Exercises. The largest war games in Europe since the Cold War called Anaconda 2016 started in Poland. They involve over 31,000 troops and thousands of combat vehicles from 24 countries, and it is for the first time since the Nazi invasion of Poland that German tanks have crossed the country eastwards.

As per reports, the scenario so far included an airdrop of 1,130 parachutists over the northern Polish city of Torun on 13 Jun, involving 500 US and 230 British troops, as well as engineers building a bridge to carry 300 vehicles over the Vistula River and a night-time helicopter "assault" of 35 aircraft.

Comments. As part of the Eastern European deployment, NATO plans to station four battalions of up to 1,000 troops each in Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. The US is likely to command two battalions, with Britain and Germany taking another each. The German contribution would also include setting up command structures as well as providing logistical support and cyber defense.

Media Law in Russia. Members of the Russian State Duma on 10 Jun 16 approved the third reading of a law regulating the work of news aggregators which holds news aggregators accountable for the dissemination of false information. The law has fines fine of 600,000 rubles (\$9,200), the first for individuals now 100,000 rubles (\$1,500).for failing to comply with the orders. The law requires aggregators to save the information they disseminate for six months after publication.

Comments. For info only.

Russian Sanctions. Germany would back the gradual lifting of European Union sanctions against Russia if there is progress in implementing the Minsk peace agreement to end the conflict in east Ukraine. In a German Foreign Ministry communiqué Martin Jaeger said that "Sanctions are no end in themselves. An all or nothing approach doesn't bring us closer to our goal." German Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel has also said in an interview published on 10 Jun that the Group of Seven (G7) leading industrial nations should quickly allow Russia to rejoin the economic organization.

Chancellor Angela Merkel had however said that it was too early to talk about lifting the sanctions on Russia. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will also meet Russian President Vladimir Putin during St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg on 16/ 17 Jun, an EU spokeswoman said on 10 Jun 16.

Comments. It appears to be an EU/ Merkel's carrot and stick policy while dealing with Russia.

Syria. Syrian government troops backed by Russia and fighters backed by the United States made separate advances against Islamic State on 10 Jun 16, gaining ground in new offensives that have put unprecedented pressure on the self-declared caliphate. Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), have surrounded the main city in the area, Manbij. Further south, government troops and their allies, backed by Russia, captured a crossroads in Raqqa province that controls a highway leading to Tabqa, an Islamic State-held city on the Euphrates River, and Raqqa city itself. Reuters

terms it as a "race to Raqqa" - to take territory in Islamic State's heartland before the U.S.-backed militia get their first. Meanwhile Reuters also reported air strikes carried out by Syrian or Russian warplanes killing more than 20 people in the northwestern city of Idlib home to al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front.on 12 Jun 16

Comments. For info. Decimation of ISIS is critical for our regional stability also.

Economy. The Russian Central Bank lowered its key interest rate by 0.5 percentage points to 10.5 percent on 10 Jun 16, the TASS state news agency reported. The last time the bank lowered the interest rate was in August 2015. This followed the recent perceived positive trends in inflation patterns. This is also in light of positive GDP trends in Q1 of this year, as well as macroeconomic indicators in April. The Brent has risen from Jan 2016 onwards from a \$30 to \$50/bbl. It has been seeing net capital inflows over the past few quarters. The ruble continued to fall to 64.7 and 73.2 rubles, respectively for the dollar and euro.

Comments. For info.

Arctic. Russia floats out 1st military ice-breaker Ilya Muromets which will, in 2017, be transferred to the Russian Navy. More ships are expected in the autumn of 2016 for their use in the Arctic zone over half-century. Russia has almost finished equipping six new military bases throughout the Arctic in a move to recreate the country's military presence.

Comments. The Arctic is set to become a geopolitical battleground in the future. The warming of the polar ice cap will likely reveal large untapped natural resources. The US estimates that about 15% of the world's remaining oil, up to 30% of its natural gas deposits, and about 20% of its liquefied natural gas are stored in the Arctic seabed. Additionally, receding Arctic ice would enable faster global shipping routes. By 2030, the WSJ notes, the Northern Sea Route will be passable to shipping for nine months a year. The route could cut down travel time between Europe and East Asia by as much as 60% compared to current routes through the Panama or Suez Canals. Russia, Denmark, Norway, Canada, and the US all have partial claims to the Arctic Circle.

Beijing to build 10,000ft deep underwater lab in South China Sea. China plans to continue to develop the South China Sea. This time, Beijing has set a goal to build an oceanic 'space station', as deep as 3,000 meters underwater, Bloomberg reports, quoting a Science Ministry presentation. If successful, this will be the first project for long-term human habitation at such depths. Manned submersibles have gone to those depths for almost 50 years. The challenge is operating it for months at a time. Chinese President Xi Jinping had stated at a national science conference in May 2016 that the deep sea contains treasures that remain undiscovered and undeveloped, and in order to obtain these treasures we have to control key technologies in getting into the deep sea, discovering the deep sea, and developing the deep sea.

Comments. For Info.

AFRICA

Brig Jai Singjh Yadav, VSM

Libyan Forces 'Retake Sirte Port from IS Militants'. Libyan forces say on 11 Jun that they have retaken control of the port in the city of Sirte, after fierce fighting with militants from so-called Islamic State.

Sirte is the most significant IS stronghold outside Iraq and Syria. Air and missile strikes have hit IS positions this week. The forces, aligned to the UN-backed unity government in Tripoli, began the battle to retake the city last month. IS forces had weakened, but "not totally broken down". The troops were encircling part of the city.



Sirte was the hometown of ousted ruler Muammar Gaddafi. The unity government was formed in Tripoli more than two months ago. The US said the unity government should be allowed to arm itself against IS. Secretary of State John Kerry has said this would be "the only way to generate the cohesion necessary" to defeat the militants.

Analysis. Officials in the capital are hoping that a victory in Sirte will narrow the political divide still plaguing the country. The anti-IS forces fighting in Sirte are largely made up of militia brigades from Libya's third largest city, Misrata.

This operation started last month, initially only by the armed groups there which felt a growing threat when it appeared the extremist group was edging closer to their city. But they are also allied to the UN-backed government in Tripoli, and are now believed to be jointly-commanded by figures appointed by the government from Libya's traditional army. Although UK and US Special Forces are known to have been advising and possibly training forces there in recent months, it is not clear if this latest operation is getting any outside help.

Nigerian Army Officials Fired: Accused of Corruption. Nigeria is firing dozens of senior officers accused of corruption and the theft of billions of dollars meant to buy arms to fight the Boko Haram Islamic insurgency, the army and an officer privy to the list said Saturday. The officer said more than 50 officers have been sacked. He spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the matter is sensitive and he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Army spokesman Col. Sani Kukesheka Usman said only that "quite a number" were sacked Friday, mainly major generals, brigadier generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels and one major. Some already have been handed over to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for allegedly diverting billions meant to buy weapons, Usman said in a statement.

Others were found to have played partisan roles in the 2015 elections in the south of the country that favored former President Goodluck Jonathan. He lost to former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari, who made fighting endemic corruption and Boko Haram a cornerstone of his campaign.

Among officers on trial for corruption are two former chiefs of defense staff. The more recent chief, Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, is in court for allegedly stealing some \$20 million to build a shopping mall and buy property in Abuja, the capital. Also on trial is the former national security adviser, retired Col. Sambo Dasuki, who said he diverted \$2.1 billion on Jonathan's orders to bribe officials to win Jonathan his party's presidential nomination.

Buhari blamed corruption for failures to curb Boko Haram and blamed those involved for the deaths of an unknown number of civilians and troops in the uprising.

ASEAN

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

With China on its Mind, India set to Export BrahMos Cruise Missile to Vietnam.

NEW DELHI: India has stepped up efforts to sell an **advanced cruise missile system to Vietnam and has at least 15 more markets in its sights**; a push experts say reflects concerns in New Delhi about China's growing military assertiveness.

The Narendra Modi government has ordered BrahMos Aerospace, which produces the missiles, to **accelerate sales to a list of five countries topped by Vietnam**, according to a government note viewed by Reuters and previously unreported.

The others are **Indonesia, South Africa, Chile and Brazil**.

The **Philippines is at the top of a second list of 11 nations including Malaysia, Thailand and United Arab Emirates, countries which had "expressed interest but need further discussions and analysis"**, the undated note added.

New Delhi had been sitting on a **2011 request from Hanoi for the BrahMos for fear of angering China**, which sees the weapon, reputed to be the world's fastest cruise missile with a top speed of up to three times the speed of sound, as destabilising.

Indonesia and the Philippines had also asked for the BrahMos, which has a range of 290km and can be fired from land, sea and submarine. An air-launched version is under testing.

Wary eye on China unlike Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, India is not a party to territorial disputes in the South China Sea, a vital global trade route which China claims most of.

But India has an unsettled land border with China and in recent years has grown concerned over its powerful neighbour's expanding maritime presence in the Indian Ocean.

It has railed against China's military assistance to arch-rival Pakistan and privately fumed over Chinese submarines docking in Sri Lanka, just off the toe of India.

"Policymakers in Delhi were long constrained by the belief that advanced defence cooperation with Washington or Hanoi could provoke aggressive and undesirable responses from Beijing," said Jeff M Smith, director of Asian Security Programs at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington.

"Prime Minister Modi and his team of advisers have essentially turned that thinking on its head, concluding that stronger defence relationships with the US, Japan, and Vietnam actually put India on stronger footing in its dealings with China."

India's export push comes as it emerges from decades of isolation over its nuclear arms programme. On June 7, India cleared all hurdles to become a member of the 34-member Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), a non-proliferation regime of which China is not a member. June 6 was the deadline for any member to object to a new entrant, and none had.

BrahMos's range means it falls short of the 300km limit set by the MTCR. India's accession to the MTCR may also strengthen its case for joining another non-proliferation body, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, a move China has effectively blocked. Both groups would give India greater access to research and technology.

Getting Closer to Vietnam India has been steadily building military ties with Vietnam and is supplying **offshore patrol boats under a \$100 million credit line**, its biggest overseas military aid.

This week defence minister ManoharParrikar held talks with his Vietnamese counterpart General Ngo Xuan Lich in Hanoi and both sides agreed to exchange information on commercial shipping as well as expand hydrographic cooperation, the Indian defence ministry said in a statement on Monday.

A source at the defence ministry said India was hoping to conclude negotiations on the supply of BrahMos to Vietnam by the end of the year.

The Indian government is also considering a proposal to offer Vietnam a battleship armed with the BrahMos missiles instead of just the missile battery.

"A frigate integrated with the BrahMos can play a decisive role, it can be a real deterrent in the South China Sea," the source said, adding New Delhi would have to expand the line of credit to cover the cost of the ship.

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Indian warships are armed with configurations of eight or 16 BrahMos missiles each, while sets of two or four would go on smaller vessels.

A Russian official said exports of BrahMos to third countries was part of the founding agreement of the India-Russia joint venture. Only now India had armed its own military with the BrahMos was there capacity to consider exporting, he added.

Coast Guard to sign MoU to conduct joint exercises with Lanka, Myanmar



CHENNAI: Indian Coast Guard will be signing a memorandum of understanding to conduct joint exercises with Sri Lanka and Myanmar Coast Guards, according to Director-General of Indian Coast Guard Rajendra Singh.

Addressing reporters on board Indian Coast Guard Ship SamudraPahredar after overseeing the joint exercise by Indian and South Korean Coast Guards, Singh said that **Coast Guard had already signed MoUs with six countries and was planning to have MoUs with Sri Lanka and Myanmar..**

Indian Coast Guard fleet along with South Korean Coast Guard ship conducted a joint exercise 'Sahyog-Hyeoblyeog-2016'. The Coast Guard fleet consisted of five surface units and two aircraft. Coast Guard ships Sagar, SamudraPahredar, Rajtarang, Anagh, one Dornier and one Chetak helicopter along with Korea Coast Guard ship 3009 participated in the exercise.

Coast Guard is also planning to **boost its air surveillance and will be inducting 14 Eurocopters** by next financial year. "Chetak helicopters do not have the ability to go deep over the sea and last only for one or two hours. The twin-engine Eurocopters can make longer trips and can last in air up to six to seven hours," said Singh. He said orders were also being placed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for 16 advanced light helicopters. Coast Guard has **122 ships in its service and plans are on to have 66 more.** "The 66 ships are being built in various shipyards," said Singh. The new ships are likely to have cabins for women. This could also mean that women would be patrolling with the men in deep seas. Coast Guard is the only force which has an intake of 10 per cent women officers. Meanwhile, **plans are on to set up hover ports in Puducherry, and Mangaluru** and land has been acquired in this regard.

India Seeks info on Female IS Online Recruiter from Philippines.



NEW DELHI: **Karen Aisha Hamidon of the Philippines**, the woman **Islamic State online recruiter** who is learnt to have **radicalized several Indian youths and probably arranged their travel to the IS territory, is under the radar of Indian agencies.**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has approached the Philippines' government seeking details and evidence on Karen, who was in touch with recently indicted Indian IS members, including Mohammad Sirajuddin and Mohammad Naser. In its letter rogatory (judicial request), NIA has provided her address in Diego Shilang village in Taguig City, Metro Manila, along with her phone numbers. It has provided her identity as Karen Aisha Al-Muslimah with her ID as @KarenAishaHamidon. Karen reportedly influenced many Indians through Facebook, telegram channels and WhatsApp groups meant for IS supporters in countries like the **US, the UK, India, the UAE, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh etc.**

One of the largest groups she ran was "Islam Q&A", where IS members shared caliphate's ideology and **jehadi material** with several of them, including Indians, expressing desire to travel to the IS territory.

Her name is mentioned in NIA's two charge sheets filed against IS last week. TOI has exclusively accessed the details of these charge sheets.

NUCLEAR

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

India has embarked to seek membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) a grouping of 48 members. To win over the opposition, the Prime Minister Modi himself travelled to Switzerland and Mexico to seek their support. Led by China, possibly some other countries such as Turkey, Ireland, New Zealand, Austria, South Africa are opposing the induction of India in this elite group on the ground that India has not signed the NPT. Chinese local daily in its prognosis even claimed that this could even lead to nuclear arms race in the region.

Both Arguments are puerile .India has consistently maintained that NPT is a discriminatory regime since it perpetuates the nuclear weapons with five nuclear states and is against the spirit of disarmament. As regards to the arms race, one fails to understand the logic of this. The entry to the grouping is sought to facilitate nuclear trade for efficient generation of civil nuclear energy to meet our goal of generating 40% of overall need of the energy through renewal and clean energy sources. This will also help India to commit positively towards the world's climate change effort. How it will lead to nuclear arms race is beyond comprehension?

The examination of the NSG guidelines clarify that signing of NPT is not a prerequisite. Even earlier there is a precedent of France joining the grouping before it signed NPT. Even otherwise, India is under self-imposed moratorium from further testing of nuclear weapons. If, this assurance was adequate to get one time exception in 2008 from NSG for concluding nuclear deals with America and several other countries then why same assurance could not be accepted now .Moreover, India track record on nuclear proliferation has been immaculate. In contrast, China track record of nuclear proliferation despite its NSG membership is questionable as it has indulged in illegal nuclear and missile proliferation to Pakistan and North Korea. Essentially, whole issue of denial of membership to NSG has emerged from Chinese strategic aim to contain India. It wants to keep India embroiled in the region that is why, it has propped up Pakistan who is also not signatory of NPT and has deplorable record on nuclear proliferation, to apply for NSG membership to counter India's application. This move itself defeats China's argument that India is not eligible for membership of NSG for want of its compliance to NPT.

India's recent induction to MTCR will give voice to India in its forum as well as engage in missile trade with friendly countries. This will give leeway to play tit for tat game with China if required, as with China speaking from the position of strength alone works.