

ENVIRONMENT SCAN: 19 SEP 2016

PAKISTAN

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

With Blood on its Hands, Pak Heads to UN to Talk Kashmir.



PM Nawaz Sharif arrives in New York on Sunday intent on **raising the Kashmir issue at the United Nations**, where he is scheduled to address the general assembly on Wednesday.

Just a few problems with that effort: Pakistan has plenty of blood on its hands, not just in terrorist attacks on India but also in the US, and on the very city where it is seeking to raise the Kashmir issue. Besides, Islamabad is in violation of the very resolutions of the UN where it is seeking to raise it; and the **Uri terror attack** will be fresh in the minds of the international community.

"The United States strongly condemns the terrorist attack on an Indian army base in Kashmir during the early morning of September 18. The United States is committed to our strong partnership with the Indian government to combat terrorism," the State Department said in a swift reaction to the Uri attack, which New Delhi has blamed on Pakistan-based Jaish e-Mohammed.

Preparatory to the **Sharif's push on Kashmir**, Pakistani mandarins launched their familiar diatribe about Indian "violations" in Kashmir, which were similarly responded to by Indian diplomats even as the UNGA members watched on with visible boredom. But unlike the public tutored by official narratives, they are rather more familiar with the UN Resolution on Kashmir, which enjoins Pakistan to withdraw from the Kashmir territory it has occupied before a plebiscite can be held.

According to Indian diplomats, Pakistan has rendered even that non-binding resolution infructuous by gifting a large part of that territory to China to buy Beijing's support, in addition to contaminating the dispute with multiple wars, infiltrations, and terrorist attacks.

Ahead of the diplomatic push at UN, **Sharif dispatched 22 Pakistani Parliamentarians** to various world capital to make the case on Kashmir. But nothing has been heard of their efforts, described a useless, multi-crore junkets in the Pakistani media, even though the media itself has been lathering up the "Kashmir masla" over the past few days.

Efforts to draw Washington into the matter have also drawn a blank. "Nothing is changed about our view that we want to see India and Pakistan work this

out bilaterally," State Department spokesman John Kirby intoned when asked to define the US policy on Kashmir.

The way the Indian side sees it, Pakistan has forfeited its Kashmir position at the UN by repeatedly committing to resolve it bilaterally with India through the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, both of which are outcomes of the Pakistani military trying to settle the issue militarily -- and losing on every occasion.

Despite the heavy cost it has had to pay at home due to its well-chronicled **fostering of terror groups**, from al-Qaida and Taliban to India-specific groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, nothing seems to have been learned by the Pakistani military, which directs the anti-India operations, and increasingly the country's foreign policy itself. The military's intelligence wing ISI was also implicated in the court proceedings in the U.S involving the Mumbai terrorist attack planner David Headley and in funneling money to Kashmiri separatist leader Ghulam Nabi Fai, both ISI stooges eventually going to prison.

Despite this, the US administration has refrained from taking punitive action against Pakistan other than to lately **whittling down military aid** mainly on account of Congressional pressure, amid fears that excessive sanctions and punishment will drive it into China's arms.

Aside from China's occasional support, Pakistan currently stands isolated in the world community, and is at odds with its principal neighbours - India, Afghanistan, and Iran. Islamabad blames India for its poor ties with its Islamic neighbors despite their saying that Pakistan's nurturing of terrorist groups is the problem. Few important foreign leaders have visited Pakistan in recent times, and Pakistan is considered inconsequential and troublesome in most countries.

India is now expected to step up pressure on Pakistan through the international community, taking advantage of its growing strategic and economic heft. While recent terrorist attacks on western interests, many of which have Pakistani fingerprints, make this a relatively easy job, Pakistan has also made it easy for India by giving UN -designated terrorist a free run and refusing to arrest or prosecute them for terrorist attacks.

Its hosting of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar make also makes it inevitable that it is seen as the world's terrorism central.

Pakistan may be Building New Nuclear Site: Analysts



ISLAMABAD: [Pakistan](#), estimated to have the **world's fastest-growing nuclear stockpile**, could be building a new uranium enrichment complex according to commercial satellite imagery analysed by Western defence experts.

The construction of a new site, based in the town of [Kahuta](#) some thirty kilometres east of Islamabad, provides fresh evidence of how Pakistan is seeking to **boost its atomic arsenal** — a goal which is inconsistent with the principles of the **Nuclear Suppliers Group** the country is seeking to join, said the analysis.

The analysis was conducted by IHS Jane's Intelligence review using satellite images taken by Airbus Defence and Space on September 28, 2015 and then again on April 18, 2016. Pakistan, which conducted its first nuclear tests in 1998, is believed to have around 120 nuclear weapons, more than India, Israel and North Korea.

A 2015 report written by scholars at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Center said Pakistan could increase its stockpile by 20 warheads a year and have the world's third largest in a decade.

"The area of interest is approximately 1.2 hectares and is located within the secure area of the [Khan Research Laboratories](#) (KRL), in the southwestern part of the complex," said the statement.

Karl Dewey, a proliferation analyst at IHS Jane's added: "It is sited within an established centrifuge facility, has strong security and shows some of the structural features of a possible new uranium enrichment facility. This makes it a strong candidate for a new centrifuge facility."

The structure of the site also bears strong resemblance to facilities built by nuclear fuel company URENCO which also operates several nuclear plants in Europe, it said. "This may be more than coincidence as A Q Khan, considered by many to be the founder of Pakistan's nuclear programme, worked at URENCO before stealing centrifuge designs and returning to Pakistan," said Charlie Cartwright, an imagery analyst for IHS Jane's.

Pakistan is currently seeking to join the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group that seeks to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture atomic weapons.

"It is difficult to see how these actions are consistent with the principles of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, a group of responsible nuclear exporters which Pakistan is seeking to join," said Ian Stewart, head of research group Project Alpha at King's College London.

Pakistan Threatens to Expose India's Human Rights Record if New Delhi Continues to Talk about Balochistan.

Geneva: Pakistan on Saturday criticised India over alleged human rights violation in Kashmir and threatened to expose the country in the world over the "abysmal rights situation" in other parts if it continued to talk about Balochistan.

Pakistan said the sudden Indian focus on Balochistan was consistent with their "playbook of seeking to distract attention from the repression unleashed in Kashmir".

Pakistan's delegation to the UN Human Rights Council strongly rebutted India's "untenable stance" on Jammu and Kashmir and slammed its "persistent interference" in Balochistan.



"In strongly-worded right of replies, the Pakistan delegate termed India's attempts to deny its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir a 'travesty of history'," Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) said. The delegate said Pakistan was not surprised by the "intemperate" remarks of the Indian leadership and the Indian delegation, which constitute "open interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, especially in Balochistan".

"The increasing international attention being given to the plight of the Kashmiri people is being desperately countered by New Delhi by attempting to shift attention elsewhere," it said. Given the "persistent, irresponsible flouting of international norms governing inter-state behaviour by India, we are constrained to point out the abysmal human rights record of the Indian government", FO said.

The delegate referred to a bill in Indian parliament seeking to penalise those who depict Jammu and Kashmir as disputed territory and said "this was yet another pathetic effort to alter facts to conform to their own deluded sense of reality". The delegate drew the attention of the Council to the recent statement by a PDP MP, who has described the current Indian repression as "worse than the Nazi forces".

Stepping up its offensive against Pakistan on the Balochistan issue at the UN Human Rights Council, India yesterday said Pakistan is a nation that practices terrorism on its own people and the sufferings of the people of Balochistan are a telling testimony in this regard. Exercising its right of reply and raising the Balochistan issue second time in three days at the UNHRC, India said the irony of a nation that has established a well-earned reputation of being the global epicenter of terrorism holding forth on human rights.

Pakistan Mosque Suicide Bomb Attack Kills 23.



At least 23 people have been killed in a suicide bomb attack on a mosque in north-western Pakistan, officials say. The attack targeted around 200 worshippers during Friday prayers in a remote village in the Mohmand Agency, north of Peshawar. More than 40 people were wounded, many of them children.

Reports say a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, carried out the attack which apparently targeted elders from a government-sponsored anti-Taliban militia. Pakistan's tribal areas have been subjected to recent attacks by both the Pakistani Taliban and so-called Islamic State. The Pakistani military began operations there in 2014 to reduce the strength of the Taliban but violence has continued.

8 IS Militants Held in Lahore, Pakistan.



LAHORE: Pakistan police have arrested eight Islamic State militants who were planning "large-scale" terror attacks on government installations in Punjab province.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) spokesman said four members of the terrorist group were arrested yesterday from Lahore, following a tip-off that "terrorists belonging to the IS were planning to attack government installations on a large scale in Lahore and assassination of officials of intelligence agencies."

He said the arrested men also had links with "terrorists who had killed policemen in Lahore and Faisalabad" and they were attempting to trigger unrest in the province.

CTD seized 1,600-kg explosives, safety fuse and four non-electric detonators from them. In another raid in Chan Qila Gujranwala district, about 80 kilometres from Lahore, CTD in collaboration with intelligence agency officials arrested four other IS members. They seized weapons and explosives from their possession. CTD said the arrested terrorists were planning to target officials of law enforcement agencies in Gujranwala.

The Pakistani government has regularly denied the presence of IS in the country, but law enforcement agencies have been arresting IS members from different parts of the country.

Pakistan one of Obama's Foreign Policy Failures.

Pakistan is one of U.S. President Barack Obama's foreign policy disappointments, former White House and Pentagon staffer Derek Chollet has said. He spoke at Carnegie India earlier this week about his latest book *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World*.

Emphasising the de-hyphenation of India and Pakistan by the U.S., Mr. Chollet noted: "India-U.S. relationship is one of the few bipartisan foreign policy achievements of the US in the last few decades."

"If I look at disappointments for President Obama, it would be Pakistan, given the amount of time and resources invested into the relationship particularly in the first year...", the former Obama staffer said.

Mr. Chollet, at present with the German Marshall Fund of the U.S, was the Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff before his current stint. He observed that one of the key conclusions that Mr. Obama made at the beginning of his first term was that Afghanistan and Pakistan needed to be seen together and that linkage was critical to understand that Afghanistan could not be solved alone.

'Not as satisfying'. Due to this, he said, the U.S. spent tremendous amount of resources to try and help Pakistan and influence its behaviour. "I think it's hard to see how that has worked. Particularly given that the amount of energy we put into this, today it is not as satisfying as it should be." Countering the popular argument that putting in more resources would give greater leverage, he conceded that did not pay off.

Current mood. Mr. Chollet's comments reflect the current mood in U.S.-Pakistan relations which have been on a decline due to the latter's inability to reign in terrorists groups such as the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, which have been getting stronger in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has been the largest recipient of U.S. aid under the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), a program under which allies are compensated for their support to the country's counter-terrorism efforts. According to data from the Pentagon, the superpower paid about \$14 billion to Pakistan since 2002.

However, the latest tranche of \$300 million was withheld last month as Defence Secretary Ashton Carter has not certified to the Congress that Pakistan has done enough.

NEPAL

Col Saikat Roy

India Pitches for an 'Accommodating' Constitution in Nepal. Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhawan here on Friday, Sep 16. Prachanda, who arrived here on Thursday on a four-day state visit, was received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

As Nepal grapples with a political transition, India conveyed to its new Prime Minister that its Constitution should be implemented by accommodating aspirations of all sections and also pledged support to rebuild its infrastructure.

After wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart, the two sides inked three pacts including one on India extending USD 750 million for Nepal's post-quake reconstruction and another on laying of roads by India in Terai region. Modi and Dahal, had extensive discussions on the political situation in Nepal and decided to ramp up trade, improve rail and road connectivity and ensure speedy completion of major infrastructure projects being implemented by India in Nepal. These decisions assume significance amidst China's growing efforts to expand its influence over Kathmandu.

Comments.

India and Nepal has had friendly and cordial relations since long. The protest by Madheshi community, against marginalization due to provisions of the new

constitution had soured the Indo-Nepal relations. The Indo-Nepal relations received a reverse spin owing to Oli's overtures with a view to reduce Nepal's dependency over India by seeking closer trade, transit and economic relations with China.

The visit by the current PM is more of a reconciliatory visit, but one must credit the foreign policy directors in India for their calibrated response as this visit of the Nepal PM comes at a cost of antagonizing the Chinese counterpart to the extent that President Xi's visit to Nepal earlier scheduled in the next month has been held in abeyance.

BANGLADESH

Col Saikat Roy

Bangladesh Summons Pak Envoy Over Mir Quasem's Execution Reaction.

[Jamaat-e-Islami](#) leader and media tycoon [Mir Quasem Ali](#) was the sixth Islamist to be executed for war crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War, on September 3.

Just an hour after the hanging Pakistan's reaction came in the form of an allegation from [Pakistan](#) Foreign Office stating that, *"Pakistan is deeply saddened over the execution of the prominent leader of Jamat-e-Islami, Bangladesh, Mir Quasem Ali, for the alleged crimes committed before December 1971, **through a flawed judicial process.**"*

The [Bangladesh](#) Government summoned acting Pakistani High Commissioner on September 4, 2016 and lodged a strong protest.

Comments.

Pakistan finds it difficult to let go of its linkages to East Pakistan and is playing an active part to reassert its position as the leader in the comity of Islamic Nations, even at the cost of commenting on the internal affairs of another nation.

Evidence of Islamic State Links to Bangladesh Attacks: John Kerry.

US Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) arrived here on Monday, August 29, on a day-long visit to hold talks with the top Bangladeshi leadership on **key issues like security and terrorism** amid a series of brutal attacks on minorities in the Muslim-majority nation.

"Kerry will focus on strengthening our longstanding **bilateral partnership on democracy, development, security and human rights,**" the [US State Department](#) had said in a statement ahead of his visit.

[Kerry](#) asserted that there was evidence to link the extremists behind a recent series of deadly attacks in [Bangladesh](#) to the Islamic State group. "We talked very openly about this and we made it very clear ... that there is evidence that ISIL in Iraq and Syria has contacts with about eight different entities around the world and one of them is in South Asia," he said after talks with Bangladeshi government officials.

Comments.

However, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's administration continues to deny that IS has gained a foothold in Bangladesh.

10 Injured in Attack on Iskcon Temple in Bangladesh.

A clash between [Hindu worshippers](#) at an Iskcon temple and [Muslim devotees](#) from a nearby mosque in Sylhet, left at least 10 people injured. The clash took place after Friday prayers when Muslim devotees went to the temple to confront the authorities there for not stopping the devotional songs that were being played at the temple during offering of the Jumma prayers.

Comments.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation, is reeling from a wave of murders of secular, liberal activists and religious minorities. Radical Islamic elements have been constantly targeting the Hindu community. The present attack is a testimony of the polarisation of society and growing religious intolerance.

Dhaka cafe attack mastermind's deputy shot dead in Bangladesh.

[Bangladesh](#) police on September 3, 2016, raided a militant hideout and killed a top Islamist extremist 'Murad' or 'Major Murad' as referred to by the members of his outfit. Murad helped plan the the [Dhaka cafe siege](#) and was the deputy of attack 'mastermind' Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury.

Khaleda leaves Dhaka for Hajj.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia left Dhaka for Saudi Arabia on September 07, 2016 afternoon to perform Hajj there at the invitation of the Saudi king. Khaleda is expected to return home on September 22.

SRI LANKA

Col Saikat Roy

Indian Prime Minister to Visit Sri Lanka Next Year. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Sri Lanka in May 2017. Prime Minister Modi will visit Sri Lanka to inaugurate a hospital being built with the assistance from India and also to participate in an event at Colombo.

The 150-bed hospital is being built in Hatton, under grant assistance of Government of India at an estimated cost of 1.2 billion rupees for the benefit of the Indian-origin plantation workers.

UN Secretary General Visits Sri Lanka. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon held talks with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena at the President's House in Colombo Thursday, September 1. The two leaders discussed about the ongoing development programs, the progress of the programs being implemented to strengthen reconciliation and the process of constitutional reforms.

President briefed the visiting UN Secretary General about the steps taken by the government with regard to constitutional reforms, devolution and structural reforms. He explained the steps taken by the government for resettlement and rehabilitation, release of land to the original owners and livelihood development.

Mr Ban Ki-moon expressed appreciation over the progress made by Sri Lanka in different spheres over the last one and half years and assured continuous assistance and support from the United Nations Organization for the efforts of the government.

Sri Lanka Summons High Commissioner of Malaysia Over Attack on its Envoy. Sri Lanka summoned the High Commissioner of Malaysia to protest the assault on its High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Ibrahim Sahib Ansar, by a group of people on 4 September 2016, in Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

The attackers were reportedly protesting the visit of Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapaksa to Malaysia, who was attending an international conference. The Tamil diaspora in Malaysia who were described by the former President's delegation as pro-LTTE, held demonstrations and burned effigies of Rajapaksa.

The High Commissioner of Malaysia expressed the deepest regret and informed that the Malaysian law enforcement authorities had already arrested five suspects involved in the incident.

U.S. Assistant Secretary Ms Nisha Biswal holds Talks with Tamil Diaspora. The United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Ms. Nisha Biswal, held discussions with the London-based Tamil diaspora group, Global Tamil Forum (GTF) on the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka on Friday September 16. Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Tom Malinowski also attended the discussion. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Manpreet Singh Anand was also present.

GTF President Father S.J. Emmanuel, Spokesperson Suren Surendiran and other leading GTF members participated in the discussions. Assistant Secretary Biswal in a Twitter message said she had a good discussion with Malinowski and the GTF on diaspora efforts to support reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka.

Speaking in Jaffna Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe Assures Political Solution. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, speaking in Jaffna on Sep 17, assured that his Government will work towards a political solution to resolve the National issue. He stated that following the end of the war there was an expectation that the National issue would be resolved with the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. Wickremesinghe noted that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa had also promised to go beyond the 13th Amendment with "13 plus" but that was not to be.

He said that the Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims faced several hardships since the National issue was not resolved. However the current Government was determined to address the issue. He also said that the concerns of the Tamils would be addressed in order to heal their wounds and give them peace of mind. The Prime Minister insisted that the reconciliation and accountability process was not to take revenge on anyone but to find the truth over some incidents related to the war. He said the ultimate goal of Sri Lanka must be to ensure all communities work together in a united Sri Lanka and not a divided country. The Prime Minister urged all political parties, including former President Mahinda Rajapaksa to support the reconciliation process.

Japan extends Rs. 86 million grant for Humanitarian Mine Clearance for Resettlement and Livelihoods in Northern Sri Lanka. Japan has decided to provide USD 600,000 in grant aid for humanitarian mine clearance in Northern Sri Lanka, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project (GGP). The Project will expedite the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to make mine contaminated areas safe lands for people to return to and resume their livelihood activities.

AFGHANISTAN

Capt Ranjit Seth

President Ashraf Ghani's Visit to India. President Ashraf Ghani was in India on a two day visit commencing 14 Sep 2016. This was the eighth meeting between the Afghan leader and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During an earlier visit in April last year, President Ghani received a cold reception. The President was courting Pakistan then, in a bid to improve the security situation in Afghanistan. He hoped that Pakistan would influence the Afghan Taliban to negotiate peace in Afghanistan. However Pakistan did not respond favourably stating that it had limited influence with the Taliban. The Afghan president now appears to have given up on Pakistan and has tilted toward India. Relations between Kabul and Islamabad have been on the decline ever since.

In a speech to the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis in New Delhi, President Ghani described Pakistan as a "revisionist state" trapped in its own fantasies. "Every one of its defeats is celebrated as a victory," he said.

President Ghani sought military assistance from India, attack helicopters, in addition to those India has already supplied, mobility and engineering equipment, and training. The joint statement however did not mention any specific defence aid that India might provide Afghanistan. Incidentally China and Russia have also made small investments in Afghanistan's army.

India promised \$1billion in development aid to Afghanistan and the two countries signed three agreements, including a treaty that would allow extradition of criminals, economic offenders and people linked to terrorist activity.

A large part of the joint statement was devoted to the challenge of terrorism. The two countries stated that the use of terrorism as a tool to achieve political objectives was the single biggest threat to peace, stability and progress in the region. It also highlighted counter terrorism and the need to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

Afghanistan at United Nations. Speaking at the United Nations Security Council debate at the United Nations Afghan envoy to the UN asked the international community to address the state elements who orchestrate attacks from "outside" its borders, and slammed the supporters of terrorist groups for targeting civilians.

Afghan Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal said, "Growing violent extremism and terror worldwide is proof that the current pace of counter-terrorism efforts is at best, lax, compared to the magnitude of the threat. As a strategic imperative, we must move beyond rhetoric and address the enablers of terrorism, including the role of state elements in orchestrating and facilitating the growth of terror. We need to review the state of UN counter-terrorism efforts to identify and address gaps in the

implementation, and assess what needs to be done by relevant UN agencies to achieve results and effectively fulfil their mandates.” He added that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had in August asked Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff for “serious and practical” measures against the organisers of the attack on the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul.

IRAN

Capt Ranjit Seth

Iranian's Barred from Hajj. Saudi Arabia banned Iranian pilgrims from attending Haj at the holy sites of Mecca and Medina. Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a furious rebuke saying the Muslim world should challenge Saudi management of Islam's holiest sites. "Saudi rulers... who have blocked the proud and faithful Iranian pilgrims' path to the Beloved's House, are disgraced and misguided people who think their survival on the throne of oppression is dependent on defending the arrogant powers of the world, on alliances with Zionism and the US," Khamenei said. The Saudi response to a deadly stampede during last year's hajj that killed some 2,300 foreign pilgrims, including an estimated 464 Iranians also came in for severe criticism.

Saudi Arabia on its part has condemned Iranian efforts to politicise Hajj and 'convert it into an occasion to violate the teachings of Islam, through shouting slogans and disturbing the security of pilgrims'.

For the first time in almost three decades, Iranians have been effectively barred from participating in this year's pilgrimage to Mecca after talks on logistics and security fell apart. Some 60,000 Iranians took part in last year's hajj, but it was announced in May that they would not be permitted to take part this year after the two countries failed to agree the hajj memorandum of understanding that is signed annually with more than 70 countries.

Two rounds of talks led to agreements in some areas, including use of electronic visas which could be printed out by Iranian pilgrims, as Saudi diplomatic missions remain closed in Iran. But Iran had made 'demands' including the right to organise demonstrations that were 'unacceptable' to the Saudis.

The two countries are at odds over a raft of regional issues, notably the conflicts in Syria and Yemen in which they support opposing sides. In January this year, relations were severed between the two important West Asian countries after Iranian demonstrators torched Saudi Arabia's embassy and a consulate following the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric. It would be recalled that Saudi- Iran ties were also broken off for four years in 1987 after more than 400 people were killed in Mecca during clashes between Iranian pilgrims staging an anti-US protest and Saudi security forces.

Jet Airliner Purchase. Iran earlier this year signed a deal to buy over 200 jets worth \$50 billion from Airbus and Boeing under an agreement between Iran and world powers to ease sanctions in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear activities. Both aircraft deals are held up for U.S. Treasury approval, which is needed because of the high proportion of U.S. parts in modern jetliners, including those made by Europe's Airbus.

Iran is also facing delays in getting European banks to finance the deals because of restrictions over the use of U.S. dollars and concerns over legal risks if sanctions are re-imposed.

AMERICA

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

India's Stake in American Elections. India and America relations are closest than ever before. Recent signing of Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA) also implies this. The closeness serves US strategic need of counterbalancing China by helping India's rise. India has emerged as an important strategic partner to US. Following this, America has largest FDI in India and substantial trade and become our biggest exporter of weapons.

But apart from right noises from America, nothing substantive has happened on ground. Until now, no transfer of technology has taken place in any key area, defense, space, clean technology etc. We have inhibiting nuclear neighbors. Both are strategically aligned. Pakistan is engaged in low cost unconventional war with India and is regularly sponsoring terror attacks on Indian soil. It gets support from China which uses Pakistan to contain India. India has failed in its effort to get terror leadership in Pakistan proscribed in UN due to the Chinese Veto. Close relationship with America has not brought any change in their behavior as yet other than Obama's appreciation of our problem. Meanwhile, the attacks on India soil continue to take place with regularity. America is aware that terror emanates from Pakistan and has the state support. We look forward to support from America in fighting terror by way of providing intelligence that it may have on them, declaring Pakistan a terror state and imposing sanctions as it had done on Myanmar, Iran in past and on North Korea. Mere lip service is not going to help us. We alone however will fight the scourge of terrorism.

What is India Hoping to See Next Year in American Election? In two months' time, US would elect next President. We have sizeable population of India origin in America who can play significant role in the election. Obama has pro India stance though other than feel good factor; we have not benefited much from this relationship. We should look for a US President who will continue to value relationship with India, transfer technology in key areas, support India case for membership in multilateral forums and support India in its fight against Terrorism. Average Indian would be reassured if the next President upholds traditional liberal democratic views on religious minorities and multiculturalism and is open for immigrants, students and temporary hi-tech workers. Viewed holistically, it seems that Hillary Clinton could meet these aspirations. She is pro-India and has a hard stance on terror emanating Pakistan and China's expansionist designs in South China Sea. She is likely to give more impetus to pivot Asia which goes well with our strategic concerns. With a view of this, Indian-American community should support Hillary Clinton especially as her Republican opponent Mr. Donald trump is generally seen as racists and against immigrants.

ASEAN

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

EU Devotes Half of its Financial Aid to Support ASEAN Connectivity.

JAKARTA (The Jakarta Post/ANN) - The focus of the European Union while providing financial aid will be to strengthen ASEAN connectivity through trade and cooperation in climate change.

The European Union (EU) has devoted roughly half of its financial assistance to support ASEAN connectivity, specifically in sustainable and inclusive economic integration and trade.

The establishment of the Asean Economic Community at the end of 2015 provides an opportunity to intensify EU-Asean cooperation, said Franck Viaul, the head of cooperation with the EU delegation to Indonesia.

Connectivity through sustainable and inclusive economic integration and trade is among the three focal points in EU-Asean cooperation, aside from cooperation in climate change and disaster management and comprehensive communication.

"Aside from concentration in selected sectors, we also work on larger multi-annual programmes. Between 2013 and 2016, the average size of EU-Asean programmes increased from €6.5 million (\$7.3 million) to €22 million (\$25 million) each," Viault said on Wednesday in Jakarta.

To share the EU's experience in integration, the economic bloc has offered Asean Regional Integration by the EU (Arise) — a technical facility designed to help develop the Asean single market and production base with €15 million (\$17 million) in funds from 2013 to 2017.

"The programme will end next year," he went on to say, adding that the new Asean Regional Integration Support from the EU (Arise Plus) was expected to be approved this year.

In addition to that, the EU has provided €3.5 million (\$4 million) in funds over three years to support Asean integration by strengthening law enforcement networks and cooperation at regional transit hubs.

Indonesia to Start Joint Maritime Patrols this Year.

JAKARTA (The Jakarta Post/ANN) - Indonesia will start a coordinated patrol with the Philippines and Malaysia in regional waters.

Indonesia plans to start coordinated patrols with the Philippines and Malaysia this year as part of efforts to step up maritime defense in regional waters amidst the risks of piracy and hostage-taking.

The Indonesian Navy is currently drafting the routes for the joint patrols, which will stretch to the piracy-prone waters of the Sulu Sea, to realize the trilateral maritime agreement signed by the three countries in August, Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu said.

"I believe we can start the coordinated patrols this year. I will meet the Malaysian defense minister in the near future [to further discuss the plan]," Ryamizard told journalists.

Aside from drafting the coordinated patrol routes, the navy is also mulling the safest routes for commercial ships to use in the area, especially those traveling back and forth amongst the three countries. Safe routes are important to prevent any recurrences of hijacking and hostage-taking in the future, he added.

The trilateral maritime agreement, signed by the Indonesian, Philippine and Malaysian defense ministers during a ministerial meeting in Bali, is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation to overcome security challenges in the countries' maritime border areas, which have been beset by threats in recent months. At least nine Indonesians are still being held captive by Philippine militants from the Abu Sayyaf group, who has demanded ransoms in exchange for the hostages.

Additional Steps Needed to Facilitate Asean Trade: Lao Minister

VIENTIANE (Vientiane Times/ANN) - Asean member countries need to work together to align their various procedures to enable easier trading within the 10-member bloc, Minister of Industry and Commerce KhemmaniPholsena stated on Tuesday.

KhemmaniPholsena noted at a press conference at the Lao National Television Station that standards concerning goods produced and traded by member countries currently vary across nations.

"We have had agreements (on trade), but trade facilitation involves many aspects that need to be worked out," she emphasised.

For instance, Asean member countries have different standards that exported and imported goods must meet to gain market access within the bloc after the Asean leaders announced the establishment of a single market and production base.

KhemmanisaidAsean needs to decide on uniform standards that are acceptable to all countries to enable the freer flow of goods and capital in the region.

She also stressed the need for Asean to improve the business environment, so that it is more conducive to competition. "To do so, each Asean member country needs to improve its legislation. The Lao PDR is speeding up the amendment of the Investment Promotion Law," she said.

To facilitate trade and investment in the region, Asean economic ministers attending their 48th meeting in Vientiane last month launched the Asean Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade. The initiative is an internet-based and business-friendly facility that receives and responds to complaints submitted by Asean-based businesses.

The ministers also launched the Asean Tariff Finder that is a new practical tool for businesses, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises.

This takes the form of a no-cost online search engine to obtain up-to-date facts on tariff-related information applied by Asean member states and their Free Trade Agreement Partners under the various Asean+1 Free Trade Areas.

Khemmani said the Asean is committed to doing whatever is necessary to standardise legislation and streamline procedures to ease the processing of

investment licences and to enable smooth business operations and the free flow of goods.

It was reported that the Asean central bank officials recently met in Vientiane to discuss ways to deepen cooperation in payment linkages to facilitate trade and investment in the region.

Khemmani also said Laos would draw up a Law on Special Economic Zones to facilitate cooperation in this area with other countries.

Trade facilitation and Special Economic Zones are among the eight priority deliverables under Laos' Asean Chairmanship 2016.

Economists say that Asean, a region of 620 million consumers, has growing economic and strategic importance, as it has rich natural resources and an emerging middle class that provides huge investment opportunities.

Statistics reveal that Asean's economy is projected to grow by 4.5 per cent in 2016 and by 4.8 per cent in 2017, supported by strong private and public consumption and improved efficiency in infrastructure.

Total merchandise trade in Asean reached \$2.28 trillion in 2015, of which 24 per cent comprised intra-Asean trade, highlighting the continuing development of regional production networks.

WEST ASIA

Brig Ranjit Singh

IRAQ

ISIS declares emergency in Mosul. ISIS has declared emergency as a panic reaction to wave of assassinations of its elements. It has begun to cut-off main roads to the residential areas in neighborhood.

ISIS deploys special battalion in Mosul entrance. It is reported that ISIS has deployed its special battalion, Gray Battalion, at the main entrance to Mosul to oversee inspection of vehicles and people entering Mosul. ISIS fears internal collapse in its ranks.

ISIS has launched major offensive south of Mosul. ISIS launched major offensive in south Mosul, in areas close to main road linking Mosul and Baghdad. However, the offensive was repulsed, killing 100 ISIS elements.

IDP fleeing Mosul may rise to one million. It has been reported by ICRC that as the fighting intensifies in Mosul, the number of internally displaced people is likely to rise to one million. Thus, there is a need to make necessary arrangements to avert humanitarian crisis. US has offered assistance for management of IDPs, prior to launch of operations for liberation of Mosul.

US contemplating more troops for Iraq. US is considering more troops to Iraq, prior to launch of final offensive for liberation of Mosul. The US already has around 4500 troops in Iraq, helping in planning and conduct of operations against ISIS.

France military aid to Iraq. France has pledged military support to Iraq for retake of Mosul. France has decided to deploy Artillery forces and send aircraft carrier to enhance support to Iraqi forces in the crucial battle for retake of Mosul.

Finland decides to send more troops to Iraq. Finland has decided to send 50 additional advisers to Iraq to train Peshmerga forces. The Peshmerga forces are seeking more assistance from Finland for liberation of Mosul.

Comments.

The operations to retake Mosul, the last stronghold of ISIS in Iraq are progressing well, but slowly. The Iraqi forces have made significant gains, inching closer to central part of the city. In the ongoing operations to retake Mosul, the security forces have been exerting pressure from all fronts and significant gains have been made.

The defeat of ISIS is imminent; it has been realized by ISIS, panic reaction to declare emergency in Mosul is an indicator. ISIS also fears internal collapse of its ranks. Liberation of Mosul is only a matter of time.

A humanitarian crisis is looming large as the operations gain momentum for capture of Mosul. It is expected that IDP are likely to touch about a million. Thus, there is needed to make large scale arrangements to locate these people, to avoid humanitarian crisis. US has offered assistance for better management of IDPs.

SYRIA

Syria Ceasefire comes in to effect on 12 Sep 16 under US-Russia Deal. After striking a deal between US and Russia, nationwide ceasefire has come in to effect on 12 Sep. The details of US-Russia deal are not clear, however, the deal has agreed on unhindered access for providing aid to besieged and hard to reach areas. If ceasefire holds good for a week, US-Russia would consider joint targeting of hardline groups. The two countries also propose to have a joint coordination unit. The ceasefire has so far been successful, with minor breaches by either side, blaming each other for violations. The ceasefire does not include ISIS and Al Qaeda affiliates.

UN aid to Besieged Areas. Post implementation of ceasefire, providing humanitarian aid to the besieged areas and areas hard to reach is being accorded highest priority.

Comments

Syria Ceasefire has come in to effect on 12 Sep, post US and Russia Deal. The peace process would be taken forward on successful implementation of ceasefire. The ceasefire has been successful so far, with minor violations by either side.

The focus, post ceasefire has been shifted to providing humanitarian aid to thousands of people stuck up in the besieged areas and areas hard to reach

YEMEN

Govt Forces Advance in to Al Houthi held Serwah District in Marib Province. The Govt forces 12 Km in to rebel controlled Serwah District, which is gate way to capital city

of Sana'a, the last stronghold of rebels in Marib. The Govt forces have taken control of strategic mountains and captured Serwah Airport. The Serwah district could soon be liberated.

UN Asked to Stop Iranian Arms Smuggling Yemen. Saudi Arabia has called on Security Council to put an end to Iranian arms smuggling in to Yemen, despite UN Resolution.

Yemen Peace Talks in Kuwait End Without Agreement. The UN sponsored peace talks being held in Kuwait ended without agreement, have been suspended for one month. The rebels rejected the UN sponsored peace plan for ushering peace in Yemen. The rebels instead have announced appointment of 10 member governing body to run Yemen.

Houthi Rebels Seize Two Oil Tankers in Hodeida Port. The Houthi rebels have seized two oil tankers belonging to Singapore based owner in Hodeida Port, under rebels control.

Comments.

UN sponsored peace talks being held in Kuwait have failed to make any head way, have been suspended for one month.

The Hadi Govt has been successful in making deep inroads in to Serwah District under the control of rebels. The Govt forces have captured Serwah Airport and taken control of strategic mountains. Serwah District could soon be liberated.

Iranian arms smuggling in to Yemen continues and Saudi Arabia has sought UN intervention to put an end to the smuggling.
