

ENVIRONMENT SCAN: 01 Jul - 15 Jul 2017

China(Continental), China (Maritime), Pakistan, Iran, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, United States of America

CHINA (CONTINENTAL)

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

How India and China can Defuse Doklam Tension by Blaming Colonial Britain. India and China have different and conflicting interpretations of the Britain engineered 1890 Sikkim-Tibet Convention, which vaguely defines the borders of the three countries including Bhutan, India and China agreed in 2012 for trilateral talks for tri-junction dispute.

Even as the Indian and Chinese armies are standing their grounds in Doklam area of Bhutan, reports suggest that National Security Advisor Ajit Doval may visit Beijing to break ice with China.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday (July 13) said that diplomatic channels would be used to defuse the Doklam tension. Earlier, it was made clear by the government at several levels that the Indian Army will not back off from their position in Doklam.

China has used an 1890 treaty between Chinese Qing dynasty of British colonial leaders of India to justify its claim over Doklam. The treaty was formalised between Britain and Chinese kingdom. Ironically, it is being used by China to alter its boundary with Bhutan, which was not a signatory to the 127-year-old treaty. Tibet also did not sign the treaty. Britain officially negotiated on behalf of both India and the kingdom of Sikkim.

WHAT IS IN THE 1890 TREATY? The treaty between Britain and China was signed at Calcutta Convention in 1890. Of the eight Articles mentioned in the treaty, Article 1 is of critical significance. China has cited this Article to stake its claim over Doklam.

Article 1 of the Calcutta convention reads, "The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluent from

the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi (Gyemochen), on the Bhutan frontier, and follows the above-mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal (Nepal) territory."

This treaty was an attempt to define what has become the bone of contention now: the tri-junction or tri-boundary between India, Bhutan and China or Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet.

Where is Tri-boundary? The tri-junction or the disputed tri-boundary is an area of less than 90 sq km and is part of the Doklam plateau of Bhutan, north of which lies China (till the recent stand-off broke out). This area is locally called not Doklam but Dolam plateau. China has claimed that Doklam tri-boundary area is its territory with "effective jurisdiction".

China uses a Similar Language to Assert its Claim over the South China Sea. The Doklam tri-boundary is very close to the passage - otherwise called Chicken's Neck or Silliguri Corridor - that connects the northeastern Indian states with the rest of India and hence of great strategic value for New Delhi. For some distance the boundaries of Bhutan and Sikkim are separated by the Chumbi Valley of Tibet. The valley protrudes towards the tri-junction like a knife.

While the Indian side of the boundary is settled and there is no dispute over it with China, the Bhutanese side is disputed. This is the present theatre of stand-off between India and China.

Chinese in Perpetrations of 1890 Treaty. China has used 1890 treaty to justify its claim on Doklam tri-boundary referring to specifically mentioned Gipmochi which is same as Gyemochen. China says that Gyemochen is an established tri-boundary under the Sikkim-Tibet Convention.

But, Bhutan and India don't agree. Bhutan was the first to lodge protest against Chinese construction activities in Doklam tri-boundary area. It objected to road construction by China saying that Doklam belonged to China.

India, under its security arrangement with Bhutan stopped Chinese advance in the area and asked last month the People's Liberation Army of China to hold construction of road there.

Why India Sees it Differently. According to India's interpretation of the treaty and delineation of the boundaries, the phrase "crest line" assumes more significance. This is in accordance with the general principle of boundary delineation across the world for the treaties agreed on the basis of 18th and 19th century understanding of maps and cartographic practices.

India asserts that the crest line or the ridge that runs from the border of Nepal ends at a place called Batang La. Bhutan also maintains the same demarcation.

Batang La is located about four kilometres north (farther from India) of Doka La, where the stand-off is going on. Gyemochen - which China defines as the tri-junction - is about two-and-a-half kilometre south of Doka La (towards India). This stretch of six-and-a-half kilometers alters strategic stakes of India considerably as it would replace Bhutan - an ally - at the vantage with China - a known adversary.

China also Ignores the Phrase "Bhutan Frontier" mentioned in the 1890 treaty. Use of word "frontier" means that the boundary lines were not clearly demarcated between Bhutan and Tibet in 1890 - as per British and Chinese understanding. Technically, a frontier is a zone or area that separates two sovereign nations while border is a specifically marked line that defines sovereign control of countries involved.

Way Out - Status Quo. China has been on an information campaign to suggest that India has accepted Chinese jurisdiction over Doklam area. It produced a letter written by former Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru to back its claim.

Chinese foreign office read the portion of Nehru's letter to suit its case."On September 26, 1959, Nehru confirmed with Zhou that there was no dispute on the China-Sikkim border," Chinese foreign office spokesperson GengShuang said last month citing the letter.

But, in the same letter, Nehru went on to state that the "Chinese maps show sizeable areas of Bhutan as part of Tibet," adding, "The rectification of errors in Chinese maps regarding the boundary of Bhutan with Tibet is therefore a matter which has to be discussed along with the boundary of India with the Tibet region of China in the same sector."

India and China have been discussing various aspects of boundary for decades. An agreement has eluded the two countries. But, the negotiators from the two countries developed broad understandings of the terms to settle their disputes.

One such understanding was reached in 2012, when the two Governments "reached (an) agreement that the tri-junction boundary points between India, China and third countries will be finalized in consultation with the concerned countries."

Pointing to the 2012-agreement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said, "Any attempt, therefore, to unilaterally determine tri-junction points is in violation of this understanding."

During his Beijing visit later this month, Ajit Doval may use the five-year-old bilateral understanding to blame colonial leaders of Great Britain for creating confusion and leaving the legacy of boundary disputes between India, Bhutan and China to resolve the present stand-off. Ajit Doval's visit may result in India and China finally settling for the status quo over Doklam.

Doklam faceoff: Why China wants to Grab Bhutan's Land and Blame India. There are tactical and geostrategic reasons why China has been pushing Bhutan to have a separate package deal with it and hand over Doklam to Beijing.

Access to Doklam will give China Advantage Over Silliguri Corridor in India. China has border disputes with Bhutan. They have conflicting claims in at least three pockets - two in north Bhutan and one in south-west Bhutan over Doklam plateau where Indian and Chinese forces are engaged in eyeball encounter for over a month.

Till 1998, China had not recognized Bhutan as a sovereign country. It counted Bhutan as one of the five fingers of Tibet. Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are the other four fingers of Tibet, according to Chinese understanding.

During the 1990s, when the India story began with liberalisation and rising stature of Indian leadership, China, in 1996, made a proposal to Bhutan to settle the boundary dispute. China offered to give its claim on northern pockets under a package deal. China offered to renounce its claim over 495 sq km of disputed land in the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys - in exchange for a smaller track of disputed land measuring a total of 269 sq km of Doklam plateau.

China Recently held 24th Round of Talks - that began after 1998 China-Bhutan pact to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas - with Bhutan to settle border disputes. India has been keenly watching these talks

China Eyes India's Chicken's Neck. The Doklam area is dangerously close to the narrow Silliguri Corridor or the Chicken's Neck that connects the northeastern states with the rest of India. Undisputed control over Doklam will give China tactical and strategic advantage in the region. This is the same region where China has had to back off twice.

Just five years after humiliating India in 1962 war, China suffered a massive loss in 1967 when Indian Army got decisively better of the PLA. Again, in 1986, the Indian Army successfully carried out Operation Falcon to force China to pull out its troops from the region.

Since 1998, China has been developing infrastructure in the region. Reports suggest that it has already built a crisscross of basic roads there. China now intends to build all-weather highway in the region to gain strategic advantage.

It's Advantage India Now. As it stands today, Chumbi Valley of Tibet is compressed between Sikkim and Bhutan. In case of any misadventure by Chinese Army, India can send its forces from its bases in north and north-east Sikkim to cut off PLA's deployment in the narrow Chumbi Valley.

Further, the 27th Division of Indian Army is stationed at Kalimpong. It can easily be mobilised as back for Sikkim based forces. There is another Division of Indian Army at Gangtok.

India has further raised a 90,000-strong force of mountain corps in last couple of years. Half of them are stationed in or near the region.

The presence of Indian forces at vantage point - higher altitude - has been a concern for China. This is the reason why China has been pushing Bhutan to have independent foreign relations, which has largely been dependent on India's worldview.

China has accused India to enter a third country with the motive to alter border. In its Defense, India has cited its understanding with Bhutan.

Why India is Defending Bhutan. India and Bhutan signed a friendship treaty in 1949 when the Communist Party of China was making serious inroads and removing signs of previous regime in the country. Occupation of Tibet by the PLA looked imminent.

According to the India-Bhutan friendship treaty of 1949, Bhutan was to hold diplomatic relations with rest of the world with the guidance of India.

The treaty was revised in 2007 with nine of the 10 Articles of the treaty remaining almost the same. The first Article of the treaty reads, "There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between India and Bhutan."

However, the wordings of Article 2 have been changed. In the earlier treaty, it read, "The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations."

Under the new terms, the mandatory consultation with India on foreign affairs is no longer binding on Bhutan. The Article 2 in the new treaty has been worded like this: "In keeping with the abiding ties of close friendship and cooperation between Bhutan and India, the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."

The combined reading of the first two Articles makes Defence of Bhutan against any aggression an obligation on India. Under this obligation when Bhutan approached Indian Army against Chinese intrusion in Doklam last month, Indian soldiers stopped China from constructing road in the region.

There is Tactical Confusion. India and Bhutan follow the same map for delineating the border with China, which has a different set of maps. The different maps and varying understanding of it make India and China lay their claims differently.

The PLA was working on a road that went up to a place called Gyemochen, which China considers as the point of tri-junction. This is located in the southern part of Doklam area.

On the other hand, the Survey of India maps of 1956 places the tri-junction north of Gyemochen at a place called Batalang La. The Batalang La is located at the narrower end of Chumbi Valley and is almost sandwiched between Sikkim and Bhutan. China does not have tactical or geostrategic bargain at Batalang La as heavy deployment of troops is not possible here.

China Tried to Capture the Area in 2008 as well. But attempts failed. China has been striving hard to pull Bhutan out of India's sphere of influence. Incidentally, Bhutan is the only neighbor of China with which it does not have formal diplomatic relation.

Beyond Doka La: 10 Irritants in India-China Relation. Both nations have several similar attributes and problems including large population, huge rural-urban, rising economy and conflict with neighbors.

Border between India and China lies in the world's highest altitude zones.

India and China are the two ancient civilisations, who have had centuries of cultural exchanges but in modern times, their relationship has been more adversarial than friendly.

As big economic and military powers, India and China are key strategic players in the world. Both nations have several similar attributes and problems including large population, huge rural-urban, rising economy and conflict with neighbours.

India and China have fought a full-scale war and a low intensity armed clash. China had upper hand in the 1962 war when Indian government decided not to use Air Force. In 1967, China suffered more loss before backing off in Sikkim sector.

Now, both countries focus on enhancing their economic prowess and become the world leader. So, what are the irritants between India and China that keep them engaged as adversaries?

Border Disputes. India and China share about 3,488-km long border, which is yet to be fully delineated. The border is classified under 14 divisions. There is a Line of Actual Control in Aksai Chin of Ladakh region that China captured during 1962 war.

China still lays claim over 90,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh calling it South Tibet. However, this claim seems to be more a bargain point for China, which could have established its control over large part of the state during after 1962 but it decided to go back to McMohan Line.

Besides the eastern and western sector, there is a middle sector in Uttarakhand where China stakes claim over an area of about 10,000 sq km. All these remain unresolved even after several rounds of talks since 1986. But, the border has largely been peaceful.

Border Trespasses. Border disputes between India and China are attributed to two main factors: British colonial legacy and contrasting understanding of maps.

The border between India and China lies in the highest altitude zones of the world. The Himalayas are the tallest mountains and the Tibet is the highest plateau of the world. The terrain is rugged and remained unscaled for long.

Both countries see their borders at different points on the ground and both are committed to build infrastructure till the last mile. The result is seen in complaints of incursions. The matter gets complicated as the two nations are militarily very strong.

China has deployed about 3 lakh soldiers in the eastern sector while India has stationed about 1,20,000 soldiers in the region. India has further created a new Mountain Strike Corps of over 90,000 soldiers. Half of the Mountain Strike Corps will be deployed along India-China border.

The Dalai Lama and Tibet. China occupied Tibet in 1950. Tibet had declared independence from China in 1913. A Seventeen Point Agreement was signed and Tibet legally merged with China. India has accepted the merger.

The then Prime Minister AtalBihari Vajpayee made a formal announcement during his visit to Beijing in 2003.

Chinese occupation of Tibet was not welcomed by the masses and the former spiritual kingdom saw an uprising. China responded with force. The 14th Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959. Indian government granted him and his follower's political asylum. China accused India of fomenting trouble in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama formed a Tibetan government in exile, which still functions without any real authority over the people. Protests are often staged by Tibetans against China in India and many other countries. China objects to the Dalai Lama's free movement in India and abroad in general and his visit to Arunachal Pradesh in particular.

Arunachal Pradesh and Stapled Visa. Upping its ante against India, China began the practice of issuing stapled visa to residents of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. India has lodged strong protest with China saying by resorting to these tactics Beijing is questioning its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Two years later in 2011, China stopped the practice of issuing stapled visa for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir. But it continues for people living in Arunchal Pradesh.

Bhutan and Nepal. China has been critical of India's role in and its relationship with Bhutan and Nepal. India has a long tradition of cultural and trade exchanges with both Nepal and Bhutan. India has a security arrangement with Bhutan for protection of its borders.

Nepal has been dependent on India for all practical economic purposes. India facilitates its external trade. Only recently Nepal under former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli signed a pact with China ending Kathmandu's singular dependence on India for foreign trade.

There is an ongoing face-off between Indian and Chinese forces near Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction at Daklam plateau. Indian forces are in eyeball-to-eyeball encounter position with the Chinese troops near Doka La.

String of Pearls. China has an undeclared policy of String of Pearls to encircle India. This involves building of ports and naval bases around India's maritime reaches. China has been active in the Indian Ocean and attempting to encircle India.

China is present at Cocos Island in Myanmar, Chittagong in Bangladesh, Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Marao Atoll (Maldives) and Gwadar (Pakistan). Interestingly, China is the only other country than India to have a fully functional embassy in Male. India, on the other hand, has been trying to develop closer arrangements with the countries surrounding China. India has been able to forge friendly relationships not only with Japan, South Korea and Vietnam but also with the central Asian neighbors of China.

River Water Dispute. China is historically involved in river water sharing disputes with almost all its neighbours including Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand.

Brahmaputra river water sharing is the major flashpoint between India and China. China has been building dams after dams in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra which is called Tsangpo in Tibet. India has objected to it but there has been no formal treaty over sharing of the Brahmaputra water.

Further, China has not been forthcoming in sharing the details about water level in the Brahmaputra, which puts a large tract in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam to the risk of sudden and huge flood.

India is now planning to build nearly two dozen dams on the Brahmaputra and its tributaries to deal with the flood problem.

Nuclear Suppliers Group. India has been pushing for entry into the exclusive club of nuclear fuel suppliers - Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). It is a body of 48 nations which have an understanding to supply nuclear fuels to nuclear power nations.

All these nations have ratified the Non-proliferation Treaty, which India has not signed. India calls it discriminatory.

China has been blocking India's attempt to entry to this exclusive club on one or the other pretext. Observers say that China is building a case for Pakistan by blocking India's entry. Pakistan has also applied for entry into the NSG.

Terrorism. While India has been unequivocal in condemning terror outfits and identified Pakistan as the biggest source of terrorism, China has defended Pakistan at every single forum.

China has blocked India's attempt at the UN for sanctions against Jash-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar. India has been campaigning for sanction against Masood Azhar, who has allegedly masterminded several terror attacks in India.

CPEC. China calls Pakistan its all-weather friend and has huge investment in that country. China is building China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India has objected to the CPEC.

India considers building of the CPEC as China's interference in India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. But China has not deterred from going ahead.

China has also developed Gwador port near Karachi to facilitate its maritime trade with West Asia and North Africa. It also gives China a hold in the north Indian Ocean near India's boundaries.

CHINA (MARITIME)

Capt (IN) Ranjit Seth

China's Air Force conducts long-range missions near Taiwan and Japan. China's Air Force (PLAAF) fighters and bombers conducted 'multiple' long-range sorties far out at sea, including flying near Japan and self-ruled Taiwan, in what it said was a test of its ability to operate over the sea.

The aircraft flew through both the Miyako Strait – which lies between two southern Japanese islands – and the Bashi Channel that separates Taiwan and the Philippines.

The PLAAF stated that the exercises were part of routine drills planned for this year, accord with international law and practices and are not aimed at any specific country. Such exercises will continue, it added.

Indonesia Names its EEZ Waters as North Natuna Sea. Indonesia has renamed a southern part of the South China Sea waters, north of the Natuna Islands in Riau Islands province as the 'North

Natuna Sea,' Such actions are being seen as bold moves against China's territorial ambitions in the South China Sea (SCS).

The renaming of SCS waters that lie within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) quickly triggered a response from China. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the renaming "makes no sense at all." He stressed that the name South China Sea refers to a clear geographical area with an internationally recognized standard name. "The so-called change of name is not conducive to the efforts for the international standardization of place names. We hope the relevant country can work with China for the shared goal and jointly uphold the current hard-won secure situation in the South China Sea."

The Director General of Fisheries and Maritime Resources Surveillance of Indonesia, Eko Djalmo Asmadi said, "Our sovereignty over EEZ waters north of Natuna is now more certain."

The North Natuna Sea has been claimed by China under its ambiguous nine-dash line maritime boundary.

Exercise Malabar. The five-day naval exercise involving the US, Japanese and Indian maritime forces kicked off on July 10. This is the 21st edition of the trilateral exercise. Sixteen ships and more than 95 aircraft from the three countries are participating in the exercise. With two aircraft carriers - India's INS Vikramaditya, and US' USS Nimitz, and Japanese helicopter carrier JS Izumo participating, Aircraft Carrier operations and air defence was a key component of the exercise. The focus was on anti-submarine warfare as well. Both India and US had a submarine each, as well as Maritime Patrol and Anti-Submarine Warfare Aircraft P8-I from India and P-8A Poseidon aircraft from the US, as well helicopters on board the JS Izumo for the ASW phase. Air defence, surface warfare, visit board search and seizure (VBSS), search and rescue, joint manoeuvres and tactical procedures were other aspects of the exercise. Ex Malabar is one of the five naval exercises by India and the US, and among more than a dozen joint drills the Indian Navy carries out with international navies every year. Apart from Malabar, the Indian and US navies conduct a series of joint drills that cover explosive ordnance disposal (Ex Spitting Cobra), salvage operations (SALVEX) and Indian Navy-US Navy Special Forces exercise.

IBSAMAR is the trilateral naval ex between India, Brazil and South Africa that began in 2008. Indra is a joint naval exercise between India and Russia conducted since 2003. It was last held in the Bay of Bengal in December. Varuna is an exercise between India and France — the drills are on since 1993 and were named Varuna in 2001. Konkan is an annual exercise between India and

Britain's Royal Navy. The joint drills began in 2004. Naseem Al Bahr is the name of the exercise between India and the Royal Omani Navy ongoing since 1993. SLINEX is an India and Sri Lanka Navy joint exercise that began in 2005. AUSINDEX is an India and Australia exercise in the Bay of Bengal on since 2015.

US- India Partnership Based on Shared Values. Cara Abercrombie, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for South and Southeast Asia, said that the U.S. and India have a broad-based strategic partnership rooted in shared values as democracies. "As we look at the global order, and when we look at the evolving security environment within Asia, India's rise and role is evolving, and we see the United States and India increasingly viewing the region in the same way, and our interests are very much aligned. We have the same security interests, the same counter-proliferation, counter-piracy, and counter-terrorism interests."

PAKISTAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra

Pak Helped Iraq in Defeating IS. Pakistan was among a number of countries that supported Iraq in fighting the IS, also known by its Arabic acronym Daesh, said Ambassador of Iraq Ali Yasin Muhammad Karim at a press conference at the embassy. Talking about Pakistan's help, the ambassador said Iraq, besides getting intelligence on terrorists, also received arms and ammunition and military medical assistance from Pakistan including training of some of the Iraqi pilots.

Comments. Pakistan's contribution to the fight against the IS in Iraq has never been mentioned earlier either by Pakistani officials or Iraqis.

Facebook Rejects Call for Linking all Accounts with Phone Numbers. Voice of America (VOA) reported that social media giant Facebook has refused to comply with Pakistan's request to link all Facebook accounts with phone numbers. However, Facebook has decided to not comply with the request to continue protecting its customers' rights. Facebook was also asked to help Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in the country by providing them with data. Facebook, in response, said that it received around 1,000 requests in 2016 from Pakistan and about 70 per cent of them had been complied with. The Facebook administration reiterated that it will continue to support such requests.

Comments. The purpose of the request was to curb the usage of fake profiles to post blasphemous content and make it easy for authorities to trace users. Since, February 2017, 137 blasphemous links have been blocked by the Facebook administration for viewership in Pakistan.

Panamagate. The report of the joint investigation team (JIT) has charged the Sharif family on several counts — from perjury and faking documents to hiding their sources of wealth and living beyond their means. Another shock for Sharif is that the JIT report has also alleged that his daughter Maryam Nawaz, who has long been

groomed as his heir apparent, has falsified documents. This may have doomed the family's plan for the transition of power to the second generation to failure. The JIT report has left the Sharif family reeling. While members of the ruling PML-N have 'rejected' the report, dubbing it a 'PTI report', opposition party members of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) have come out in full force demanding PM Nawaz Sharif resign. Nawaz Sharif has rejected the report of the JIT and has refused to resign.

Comments. The JIT report has made it very difficult for the prime minister to stay in power despite his party's majority in the National Assembly and control over Punjab. His options are becoming increasingly limited. The choices are whether steps down now and face the charges or wait for the decision of the Supreme Court. It is also believed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday wrote a letter to the Embassy of United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Islamabad, seeking an arrangement for urgent telephonic contact between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

IRAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra

French Energy Giant Total to Sign South Pars Gas Deal. Iran's oil ministry says Total, the French energy giant, will sign a multi-billion-dollar contract to develop an Iranian offshore gas field in the largest foreign deal since sanctions were eased last year. Total signed a preliminary deal with Iran over the South Pars gas field in November, taking a 50.1 percent stake in the \$4.8bn project. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) will own 30 percent and Iran's Petropars 19.9 percent.

Comments. Signing of this deal will mark Total's return to Iran, which has the second-largest gas reserves and fourth-largest oil reserves in the world. The French firm led the development of phases two and three of South Pars in the 1990s but effectively left Iran in 2012 when France joined European Union partners in imposing sanctions, including an oil embargo. Iran's oil officials have been eager to attract Western investment and know-how to improve the outdated energy infrastructure.

NEPAL

Col Harpreet Singh

Nepal to get Internet Connection from China. Nepal is likely to get internet connection through Chinese optical fiber from next month, ending India's monopoly over the online services in the landlocked Himalayan country. Nepal has relied on India for internet services for long as the country is optically connected with the southern neighbour. However, the connection with China will end the monopoly of India in supply of internet bandwidth. The long-awaited internet connection from China is expected to be completed by the end of July as the work of laying optical fiber on the Chinese side has resumed after a two month delay due to an avalanche. Nepal has already completed the task of laying optical fiber on its side for the connection.

“Nepal, the country sandwiched between the two big neighbours, will soon get Internet services from the Dragon, curbing its dependence on India for the same, a report published in the China’s Global Times. According to the Chinese daily report, "This is set to be a great boon to the South Asian country, which is still rebuilding its shattered economy and infrastructure after a devastating earthquake in 2015"..It also opined that “The long-awaited availability of bandwidth supply from China will put an end to Nepal's long-held reliance on Indian Internet services. It goes without saying that there are conspicuous benefits of reduced dependence on Internet supply from India,” the report said.

In 2016, for the first time, Nepal’s state-owned telecom company Nepal Telecom and China Telecom Global had signed an agreement in Hong Kong on providing internet protocol service between the two countries through cross-border Terrestrial Cable Route. This agreement was

signed after the two countries were connected with optical fiber through the Geelong Port (Kerung) - RasuwaGadhi border point in June last year.

Currently, Nepal has been connected internationally through Radiotelephone Communications via microwave landline to India and satellite earth station via Intelsat (Indian Ocean). Nepal Telecom has been connected with various Indian telecom service providers through bordering southern towns Bhairahawa, Birgunj and Biratnagar.

Comments. The Chinese internet will give tough competition to Indian Internet providing companies in Nepal. The Indian internet to Nepal was slow and erratic and the Chinese internet is expected to be cheaper and faster. However there is no clarity on what restrictions this internet will have as it will be routed through Chinese firewalls. Nevertheless, it is another step in the gradual increase in Chinese influence over Nepal. Connected with this is the rise of Chinese phone brands seen in Nepal, with the likes of Huawei and Xiaomi becoming household names in the country.

Local users are thus able to purchase quality yet affordable smartphones, which will now be coupled with high speed internet thus swaying public opinion in favour of China. India must ensure that there are minimum voids in its infrastructure development in Nepal lest the Nepalese turn to China for better services in other sectors also.

BANGLADESH

Col Saikat Roy

India, Bangladesh Should Fight Common Enemies Together: Sonowal. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal while addressing the inaugural programme of the 8th Round of India-Bangladesh Friendship Dialogue at Guwahati on Sunday, July 2, 2017 said India and Bangladesh should fight their common enemies like poverty and terrorism together. He also highlighted the need to improve market access and remove barriers of trade, including port restrictions, to ensure smooth movements of goods.

More Floods in Low-lying Areas of Central Bangladesh. According to the Water Development Board's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, flood situation has deteriorated in the central region but remain unchanged in the north. Vast areas have been waterlogged following two straight weeks of heavy rain and rising river water. The water level on rivers in the Brahmaputra-

Jamuna basin and the Surma River remained unchanged, but rose in the Ganges-Padma basin and the Kushiara River. The Brahmaputra-Jamuna basin water level may fall in the coming days, but the level in the Ganges-Padma basin is likely to rise. Rising levels on the Jamuna River have also contributed to waterlogging in central regions. The flooding in the north and northeast is likely to improve after Sunday. If the trend continues waters may begin to recede from the end of next week.

Bangladesh Risks more Flooding, Droughts Hurting Development: Report. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) have prepared the report.

It predicts that unabated climate change would bring the inhabitants of countries in Asia and the Pacific to their knees, severely affecting their future growth, reversing present development gains, eventually degrading the quality of life in the regions.

The paper says Bangladesh harbours acute terrestrial vulnerabilities for its low-lying property, and combined with the growing range of climate drivers and the high population density, the peril hovers over a multitude of development sectors in the small nation. The report suggests climate change-influenced sea level rise would force displacement of a huge population.

- An overall rise of four degrees Celsius may see 13 percent loss of coastal lands to the sea, leading to flooding of 20 percent more land than currently.
- A 15 cm sea level rise by 2030 would lead to 3 percent of land loss and 6 percent of total flooded area increase while a 27 cm rise would cause 6 percent of land loss and 10 percent of flooded area increase in the 2050s.

Already witnessing drought-stricken summers, the surge in intensity of the dry spells in regions would cripple the production of crops in ways deadlier than the flooding. Cross-border migration to India and to a lesser extent Myanmar, on the other hand, may be a common phenomenon.

Election Commission All Set to Reveal Roadmap to National Polls. The Election Commission has finalised its roadmap for the next one and a half years, aiming for an all-inclusive parliamentary polls.

The KM Nurul Huda, led commission, which took office almost five months ago, will oversee the 11th parliamentary election due between late 2018 and early 2019. EC officials said the talks will start on Jul 31 and will continue through October. Meetings with civil society, media, political parties, polls observers, representatives of women's rights bodies and election experts have been scheduled.

Comments. The 10th parliament was convened on Jan 29, 2014, which means the 11th national election has to be held between Oct 30, 2018 and Jan 27, 2019.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka Sign 14 Deals after Hasina-Sirisena Talks. President Sirisena arrived for a three-day state visit on Thursday, Jul 13, 2017, his maiden tour of Dhaka as president.

Bangladesh signed 14 deals with Sri Lanka for cooperation in various fields following bilateral talks with a delegation headed by President Sirisena. Thirteen MoUs were signed for cooperation in coastal shipping, agriculture, higher education, foreign service training, central bank activities, investment, ICT, broadcasting and training on apparel and textile. An agreement to waive visa for holders of diplomatic and official passports was also signed.

SRI LANKA

Col Saikat Roy

UN Special Rapporteur finds Sri Lanka's Progress in Achieving Key Goals in UN Resolution Virtually Halted. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Ben Emmerson concluded his five-day visit to Sri Lanka from The purpose of the Special Rapporteur's visit was to assess the progress Sri Lanka has achieved in its law, policies and practice in the fight against terrorism since the end of its internal armed conflict, as measured against international human rights law, particularly since progress in these areas is key to its efforts in ensuring reconciliation, accountability and lasting peace in the country.

In his report of preliminary findings Special Rapporteur while commending the Government for the transparency and cooperation allowing a frank and open dialogue expressed disappointment in Sri Lanka's progress in achieving the key goals set out in the UN Human Rights Council

Resolution adopted in October 2015. "None of the measures so far adopted to fulfil Sri Lanka's transitional justice commitments are adequate to ensure real progress, and there is little evidence that perpetrators of war crimes committed by members of the Sri Lankan armed forces are being brought to justice."

The Special Rapporteur said there have been many statements of good intention, but so far little in the way of effective action to bring about a lasting and just settlement to the conflict. "It seems that some small steps are now, at last being taken, in that direction," he said.

New Army Commander Sets Out Plans to Raise Standards of Sri Lanka Army to Fit Country's Current Needs. The new Commander of Sri Lanka Army, Lieutenant General Mahesh Senanayake has set out his vision and future roles of the Army to elevate the organization to meet the required modern standards considering the country's current needs. He elaborated on his intentions to make some structural changes to the organization to elevate it to required modern standards, taking due cognizance of prevailing concerns and development efforts, related to nation-building, national reconciliation and fast changing social reforms in society.

He also mentioned to the President that he would like to run the Army with one-third of its strength for combat preparedness, another one-third for nation-building and the remaining third for Army administrative purposes.

Australian Naval Ship 'Arunta' Arrives at Sri Lanka's Colombo Port on Goodwill Visit. Sri Lanka Navy, in accordance with naval traditions, welcomed an Australian naval ship, an Anzac-Class frigate of the Royal Australian Navy, HMAS 'Arunta' which arrived on Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at the Port of Colombo on a goodwill visit. During their four day official visit, the ship's crew is expected to take part in several programs including passage exercises, friendly sport events and several cultural programs, organized by the Sri Lanka Navy to enhance mutual relations and interactions. The Australian ship will leave on 14th July, on completion of its tour.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Col Saikat Roy

Bulletproof Helmets to Help Army Face Enemy Head On. The Indian Army has received its first set of advanced bulletproof helmets, a long-pending demand of the Army. In sync with the idea of 'Make in India', the helmets, weighing 1.8 kg, are manufactured by a private Indian company based in Kanpur and have already started replacing the old ones that were bulky and cumbersome. The helmets would be made available in two variants.

Comments. The Army has received the initial batch of 7,500 helmets of the 3.28 lakh proposed. 1,58,279 of the proposed number of helmets have been cleared for procurement at a cost of Rs 170 crore and are expected to be given to the Army in the next one year.

Forces seek Rs 27 lakh crore over next 5 years for defence projects. The armed forces have sought an allocation of Rs 26.84 lakh crore (\$416 billion) over the next five years to ensure requisite military modernization and maintenance to take on the collusive threat from Pakistan and China as well as to safeguard India's expanding geostrategic interests.

The 13th consolidated defence five-year plan for 2017-2022, which has been pegged at Rs 26,83,924 crore was presented at the Unified Commanders' Conference on July 10-11, after extensive consultations with all stakeholders.

Comments. The actual annual Defence budgets have shown a discernible trend of declining modernization budgets, unspent funds and a skewed revenue to capital expenditure ratio, which have meant that the Army, Navy and IAF continue to grapple with critical operational gaps on several fronts. Moreover, the Rs 2.74 lakh crore Defence Budget works out to just 1.56% of the projected GDP, the lowest such figure since the 1962 war with China. "The forces want the defence budget to progressively reach at least 2% of the GDP for their operational requirements". As per the 13th Defence Plan, Rs 12, 88,654 crore has been projected for the capital outlay, while Rs 13, 95,271 crore for revenue expenditure.

AFGHANISTAN

Brig Deepak Malhotra

ISIL Leader in Afghanistan Killed in US Raid. As per the Pentagon, US forces killed Abu Sayed, the emir of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria - Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) - in a strike on the group's headquarters in Kunar Province, Afghanistan on July 11. The raid also killed other ISIS-K

members and will significantly disrupt the terror group's plans to expand its presence in Afghanistan.

Comments. ISIL established a presence in Afghanistan in 2015 and overran large parts of Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, near the Pakistan border. Sayed is the third ISIL leader in Afghanistan to be killed since July 2016. Sayed had led the group since late April after the previous leader, Abdul Hasib, had been killed by US forces. Hasib's predecessor Hafiz Sayed Khan was also killed by US forces. The compound used by Hasib in Nangarhar province was not far from the spot where on April 13, the US military dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb it has ever used in combat, hitting ISIL positions.

RUSSIA

Col Harpreet Singh

Russia to Expel US Diplomats over Curbs. In response to the recent round of US sanctions against Russia, Moscow is planning to strike back by expelling at least 30 American diplomats and seizing US state property in the country. Russia had already waited more than six months for the Trump administration to improve the relationship between the two countries and was now forced to strike back. The official Kremlin statement is that "These moves are not meant as our attempts to show our negative attitudes toward the Trump administration but rather as evidence of the fact that Russia is a strong nation that deserves respectable treatment."

There are reports that while the administration plans to seize the American summer house outside of Moscow and a warehouse in the centre of the city, it will not touch the residence of the US ambassador and the American international school in St Petersburg.

Comments. The move comes after the US expelled 35 Russian diplomats and seized Russian diplomatic compounds in Maryland in response to alleged interference in the 2016 presidential election. The decision probably came after Trump and Putin's first meeting at the recent G20 Summit in Germany failed to produce an agreement on reducing of US sanctions against Russia. Expelling few diplomats is the least Russia can do as a face saver and after a few days, once the US election hacking issue dies down, things will probably go back to normal

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

US House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2017 on 14 Jul 17. It was passed with 344 votes in favour with 81 votes in against. The act proposes \$ 621 billion as the base budget with \$ 75 billion for the wartime oversea contingency. What is striking in the bill is that it has reversed the earlier trend of squeeze in the defence budget with progressive cuts in the force. In 2016 a base budget of \$543 billion was passed for defence. In comparison, the current budget is substantially high. The present bill has also proposed accretion creation of the 17000 soldiers (active Army by 10,000, the Army National Guard by 4,000, and the Army Reserve by 3,000). This in line with thinking of President Trump that, US military power has eroded during the Obama's tenure and he would like to restore it by making "America great again".

What really concerns India is the broad statement on US stance on the world at large and in particular about India and its neighborhood.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, the budget has media provision for \$ 400 million for reimbursement of defence funding to Pakistan. However, it is conditional as in the past. The conditions essentially relate primarily to Islamabad maintaining security along the ground lines of the communication which are still needed by United States for their supplies to their forces in Afghanistan. This requirement is expected to become vital, as there is talk about the prospective increase in the US and ISAF force level in future to control deteriorating conditions in Afghanistan. The other main requirement is about Pakistan's effort to fight the Haqqani group which has been targeting the ISAF forces. Pakistan is also required to carry out substantial work to demolish the safe heavens of Haqqani group in North Waziristan. Defence Secretary needs to specifically certify that stipulated conditions are being met before funds are released.

We are aware that these conditions existed in the past as well but, Pakistan has observed the stipulations more in violation only except the uninterrupted supply to US forces in the Pakistan. Hence, like in past US administration would release the funds.

As far as India policy is concerned, the NDAA reconfirms India as the "Major Defence Partner" with shared interests. The term major defence partner however, still remains undefined, but the senior officials have explained that after this designation, India's requests for arms and technology are treated with presumption of approval as opposed to presumption of denial. This relationship have definitely changed as US has emerged as the major weapon import source to

India. From the state of zero import from US our weapon imports are nearly \$ 15 billion now. We however, are yet to see transfer of high tech weapon technology from US. With china becoming a major player in weapon export, a change in weapon sale policy is expected soon. For example, US willingness to sell Guardian Drone to India is seen as a positive step but , China which has developed near replica of the Predator and Reaper is already getting enquires for its drones and other weapons from several countries in the Middle East and Africa. In view of this, US is considering export of drones and other weaponry before it losses weapon market to its competitors .

CAR & STRATEGIC RELATIONS

Air Cmde T Chand (Retd)

Space Quantum Communication using a Microsatellite. The “Space Daily” has published an article on 11 Jul 2017, titled “World's first demonstration of space quantum communication using a microsatellite”. Dr Hideyuki Tokuda president of The National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), Tokyo, has stated in that article that they have developed the world's smallest and lightest quantum-communication transmitter (SOTA) onboard the microsatellite SOCRATES. The results of this research were accepted to be published in the prestigious peer-reviewed journal "Nature Photonics" (August 2017 physical issue). They have also succeeded in the demonstration of the first quantum-communication experiment from space, receiving information from the satellite in a single-photon regime in an optical ground station in Koganei city.

As a result of this research, NICT demonstrated that satellite quantum communication can be implemented with small low-cost satellites, which makes it possible to many research institutions and companies to use this key technology. It is an achievement that opens a new page in the development future global communication networks, being a big boost to the space industry.

The technologies required to launch small satellites at a low cost have progressed immensely during this century, and significant efforts are being made to develop satellite constellations to achieve a global communication network covering the entire Earth.

However, there is a need for a technology that can transmit large amounts of information from the space to the ground in short periods of time, and the current RF bands are already congested,

setting a bottleneck of communication capacity. By using lasers, satellite optical communication has a readily-available frequency band and can transmit with higher power efficiency and with smaller and lighter terminals.

Thus, it is expected to be a key technology to support the future satellite communication networks. Quantum communication and more specifically, Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is another key technology to guarantee the information security of the next global communication networks.

Current QKD links are limited to several hundreds of km, thus implementing satellite-to-ground QKD is a fundamental step in this endeavor. QKD research is actively conducted in Japan, China, Europe, Canada and the United States. In August of 2016, the University of Science and Technology of China launched a large (635 kg) quantum-communication satellite called Micius and performed a quantum-entanglement experiment with two ground stations.

SOTA is the world's smallest and lightest quantum-communication transmitter (6 kg weight, 17.8 cm length, 11.4 cm width, and 26.8 cm height) embarked on the microsatellite SOCRATES. SOTA transmitted two polarization states, encoding '0's and '1's, to the ground at a rate of 10 million bits per second. The signals from

SOTA were received at the NICT optical ground station in Tokyo's Koganei city, using a 1-m telescope in order to collect the transmitted photons and guide them to the quantum receiver to decode the information using a QKD protocol.

The signal that arrives at the 1-m telescope is extremely weak, with an average of 0.1 photons per received pulse. NICT developed the technology to perform the time synchronization and polarization reference frame matching between the satellite and the ground station directly from the QKD signals, as well as a quantum receiver capable of detecting such a weak signal with low noise. We demonstrated the world's first quantum communication from a 50-kg microsatellite. This will enable the development of future secure links from space by using quantum cryptography to completely prevent information leakage.

In the future, NICT plans to further increase the transmission speed and improve the precision of the tracking technology, to maximize the secure key delivery from space to ground by using quantum cryptography enabling a truly-secure global communication network, whose confidentiality is currently threatened by the upcoming development of quantum computers.

In fact Quantum Computing gives the capability to perform calculations million times faster than today's most powerful supercomputers. It can replace the current ICT platforms with superfast hack proof computing and communication technologies. It is likely to increase the computing capability and provide much faster C4ISR and other systems for military applications.