



South Asia Security Monitor: No. 368

May 11, 2015

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ARIHANT SEA TRIALS MOVE FORWARD

Sea trials of the Indian Navy's new, indigenously-built nuclear attack submarine are progressing steadily. The INS Arihant, constructed with nearly 60% domestic content, has undergone various tests at sea and will soon undergo diving trials and test-fires of nuclear-capable missiles. Nuclear submarines comprise an important part of the Indian Navy's second strike capability. It currently operates a leased Russian-origin nuclear submarine but there are limitations on its offensive uses. Though sea trials began years ago, there is still no set date for the Arihant's first operational patrol. (*The Tribune* April 30, 2015)

KERRY VISITS SRI LANKA

In the first visit to Sri Lanka by an American Secretary of State in a decade, John Kerry pledged to strengthen ties with Colombo and support new president Maithripala Sirisena's push for democratic reform. Secretary Kerry met with Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, and Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera. Sirisena hopes to mend Sri Lanka's relationship with the international community after a brutal war with Tamil Tiger rebels and the authoritarian tendencies of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa. After seeing signs of democratic progress in the last election, the U.S. pushed for the delay of a UN human rights probe into possible war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan military against the Tigers. (*Washington Post* May 2, 2015)

QATAR HOSTS MORE TALIBAN PEACE TALKS

Afghan politicians and Taliban representatives met in the Qatari town of Al-Khor in an effort to start formal negotiations on an end to Afghanistan's thirteen year-long war. The two sides did not give any indication of progress and refused to speak with reporters until a common statement is reached. The Taliban denied any peace talks were taking place, instead insisting that its representatives were attending a conflict resolution forum. However, Qatar admitted that it was hosting discussions between the two sides, in an effort to achieve reconciliation. The talks come as the Taliban launched a new offensive in Kunduz province, testing the ability of Afghan security forces to repel the attack without close American military support. (Reuters May 3, 2015)

GHANI PUSHES FOR ACCESS TO WAGAH BORDER

Pakistan has been blocking Afghan trucks from crossing into India via the Wagah border. Signalling his frustration with the development, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani indicated that Afghanistan "will not provide equal transit access to Central Asia [for Pakistani trucks]" if the current state of affairs continues. Currently, Afghan trucks can travel only up to the last Pakistani checkpoint in Wagah and not to the Indian checkpoint at Attari, less than one kilometer away. Under the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement (APTTA), both countries should have equal access up to each other's national boundaries. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants India to be included in the APTTA. (*The Hindu* April 30, 2015)

INDIA, CHINA VIE FOR INFLUENCE IN NEPAL AFTER QUAKE

Regional rivals India and China are using the humanitarian crisis in Nepal caused by an earthquake to garner favor with the Nepalese government and people. The two countries rushed to provide aid to the impoverished nation after the quake, engaging in search and rescue operations, humanitarian aid distribution, and reconstruction activities. Together, the two countries have contributed over a thousand personnel. (*Zee News* May 1, 2015)