



South Asia Security Monitor: No. 373

July 19, 2015

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INDIA, PAK TO JOIN SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) met in Ufa, Russia on July 10 where for the first time it extended Pakistan and India full membership. The two currently hold "observer status" in the China- and Russia-dominated organization. Some view the organization as an "anti-NATO" but mistrust among the members has made reaching consensus difficult -- a challenge likely to be exacerbated by the inclusion of two new rivals. (*Straits Times* - July 11, 2015)

US DRONE STRIKES KILL IN LEADERS

The Afghan intelligence agency is reporting that Hafis Saeed, regional leader of the Islamic States, was killed in a US-led drone strike. The Islamic State refutes that claim but acknowledges that the strike killed two other Islamic State officials, Shahidulla Shahid, and Malvi Abdurrahim Muslimdost. The strike was carried out in Nangarhar, an Afghan province with high levels of militant activity. (BBC - July 12, 2015)

INDIA TO SUPPLY MORE POWER TO BANGLADESH

India has announced plans to double the 500 MW of gas-fed electricity it currently supplies Bangladesh to 1,000 MW. The deal is contingent upon the completion of a new electrical grid being promoted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It is expected to be completed in the next year. The new grid will also allow India to import more hydropower energy from Bhutan and Nepal. (*Economic Times* - July 8, 2015)

MODI, SHARIF MEET AFTER A YEAR

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted his Pakistani counterpart's invitation to visit Pakistan for the 2016 SAARC Summit. Modi and Sharif met for 45 minutes at a recent summit for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Ufa, Russia. The last meeting between Sharif and Modi was over a year ago, in May 2014, at Modi's inauguration. Indo-Pakistan relations remain stable but static, with only minor diplomatic interaction over the past year. (Reuters - July 10, 2015)

INDIA ABSTAINS ON UN HRC VOTE CONCERNING GAZA

During a UN Human Rights Council meeting, India, Kenya, Ethiopia, Paraguay, and Macedonia abstained from voting on the Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict. 41 countries voted in favor of the report and only the US voted against it. Once staunch supporter of the "Palestinian cause," India's abstention is indicative of transformed ties between Israel and India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has declared his intent to visit Israel in the coming year. (*Diplomat* - July 6, 2015)