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Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



A Museum in Vietnam
Photo Courtesy: Sampa Kundu

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Contents

EDITOR'S NOTE

COMMENTARY

Trump's Triumph and What It Means for Southeast Asia
by Arenla

NEWS TRACK

Southeast Asia

- ASEAN
- ASEAN-India
- Northeast India-Act East Policy
- Brunei
- Cambodia
- East Timor
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Oceania

- Australia
- Fiji
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea

CENTRE ACTIVITIES FOR NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2016

Editor's Note

The last two months of 2016 brought significant challenges for the Asia-Pacific's human security aspects. Followed by a surprise assault on few police officials by the Rohingyas, the Myanmar authority showed little respect for human rights in Rakhine State in the name of manhunt. The brutality of the Myanmar army forced thousands of Rohingyas to flee again to the neighbouring states. Their houses were burnt down, women raped and violation of human rights became regular and painful incidents. This made the Noble Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi a questionable political leader as her presence as the de factor administrator of her country has done nothing to improve the situation in Rakhine State. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) again could do little except meeting for briefings and trying to motivate the authorities in Myanmar to be a more humane while handling the Rohingya issue. Other than that, November and December experienced fruitful discussions between President Duterte and his fellow leaders from other ASEAN countries including Singapore and Cambodia. The most striking event however happened between Singapore and Malaysia as both these countries inked a pact on high-speed railway connecting Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. This deal was marked as a landmark pact in the region. CARAT Brunei 2016 was another significant incident that took place. Events like a new prime minister swearing in for the top most position in Auckland, street protests against Malaysian PM Najib Razak on his alleged involvement with the scandalous 1MDB case, Suu Kyi's Japan visit and drug wars in Philippines stole the show in Southeast Asia and Oceania in these two months. While the present issue of *Insight Southeast Asia* has tried to cover all important events as they happened in the region in the months of November and December, we are also privileged to have Dr. Arenla with us who contributed a commentary on President Donald Trump and his policy implications for the region.

With this, we hope to give a cheerful time to our readers while reading the latest issue of *Insight Southeast Asia*. Suggestions and feedback are welcome.

Happy New Year!

Thank you,

Dr. Sampa Kundu

Trump's Triumph and What it Means for Southeast Asia



Arenla

Arenla is a New Delhi-based scholar with a Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research interests are political developments in Southeast Asia and wider region of the Asia-Pacific.

The triumph of a billionaire reality TV star, Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America leaves the world with mixed reactions. The President-elect himself is astonished by his victory. His massive win created shockwaves and uncertainties all over the world. Some are shaken; some expressed dismay; others predict disaster yet supporters still look forward to Trump ushering them into a new America. Southeast Asia, a region of million population with a combined GDP of \$ 2.4 trillion received great focus during the eight-year Presidency of Barack Obama's pivot to Asia. Without defying the predictions about the new President's major detachment from the region, Trump's Presidency will bring profound changes in US relation with Southeast Asia. The likely changes will be seen in the foreign policy, defence and security, and trade relations.

The leaders from Southeast Asia expressed different reactions to the triumph of the impending President-elect. The outrageous President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte is vocal of his support for President-elect Donald Trump. In his

own congratulatory message to Trump, he said. "We are alike. We both swear." He even went to the extent of calling himself, "The Trump of the East" and branding Trump as "Duterte of the West." Duterte, known for his often controversial and unpredictable comments left both the countries in a state of shock when he indicated the separation of all kinds of relationship with the decades-long security partner US. This was announced in his address to the Chinese businessmen in Beijing in October. He openly expressed his intent to develop closer ties with China and Russia. He also declared his plan to cancel all kinds of joint exercises and trainings in the foreseeable future between the two countries. Except for bilateral drills and military assaults, the rests were later completely quashed. Relationship with the outgoing US President Obama has been strained for months. Obama strongly criticises Duterte's campaign on drugs and human rights. On the flipside, Trump is supportive of Duterte's style of drug war announcing that he is doing it "as a sovereign nation, the right way". With the triumph of Trump, Duterte is ready to restore the strained relationship with the US. Both leaders have already exchanged seven minutes of engaging conversation over the phone where both invited each other to their respective countries.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's reaction to the victory of Trump was spot on. He said, "Mr Trump's success shows that politicians should never take voters for granted." The support for Trump by Najib is accepted with mixed reactions from the Malaysians. The anti-Muslim comments of Trump have led some sections of Malaysia not accepting his victory favourably. In reaction to Trump's victory, the strongman and the long-time authoritarian leader of Cambodia Hun Sen issued "I told you so" message in his facebook post. He was vocal about his support for Trump's presidency.

There is evidently mixed reaction from the largest Muslim majority population on Trump's victory. Indonesian President Joko Widodo congratulated the President-elect and hopes to keep diplomatic relations with the Trump administration to maintain peace and welfare in the world. He also added, "I think there will be no change." Different ministries including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade in Jakarta assured the Indonesians of a continued and positive impact on the US-Indonesian strategic partnership under the new US administration. Some fears that the incoming President of US may generate tensions between Jakarta and Washington if he is to go by his pre-election bitter rhetoric on Islamophobia and trade protectionism.

Thailand, one of the oldest allies of the US has noticeable differences with the outgoing administration on issues concerning the human rights and democracy especially after the military takeover in 2014. However, the Prime Minister of Thailand Prayut Chan-o-cha welcomed Trump's victory cautiously

though the PM was not vocal of his support for Trump. The PM said, "Thailand will be ready to work with the new administration provided it adheres to a balanced foreign policy with the world community." The PM feels that the transition should not have any serious negative impacts between the two countries. Trump never mentioned Thailand in any of his speeches. The Thais are also wary of Trump's protectionist stance and fears of the impact on its export-import if Trump is to go by his rhetoric. Hypothetically put, Trump's administration may give little or no importance to democracy in Thailand and human rights. This creates more confusion than comfort for the Thais. The city-state of Singapore did not figure prominently in Trump's campaign speeches except in his Florida speech where he accused Singapore of stealing America's job. Active in Facebook, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong posted on his wall while Trump gave his acceptance speech, "US voters have elected a president whom they feel best represents them. Singapore fully respects their decision. We will continue to work together with the United States to cultivate our strong ties". The country that relies heavily on global trade is wary of the trade protectionist policies of Trump if it were to be actualised.

A joint congratulatory message to Trump was sent across by the Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang and Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc that read,

"Viet Nam has always highly valued the friendly and cooperative relations with the US. We hope that the two countries will keep on deepening the comprehensive partnership in a practical, stable, sustainable and long-standing manner, especially in terms of economic cooperation, trade, investment, science and technology, education and training, defence and security, as well as the cooperation in regional and international issues".

One important focus on the new US administration and Vietnam will be the TPP where both countries are members. The Vietnamese export-import is predicted to be highly affected if US pulls out of the TPP. The other is sustaining the rebalancing strategy that the outgoing administration focused extensively.

The result of Trump's victory caught the majority of people of Myanmar as they expected clear Clinton's win. Clinton, empathically was more close to the region and its people. The relationship shared between the two countries in the two terms of President Obama also strengthened extensively. However, in her congratulatory message, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi said that she looked forward to "working closely with [Trump] to further strengthen the existing friendship, cooperation and partnership between our two countries." Like most of the countries in the region, Myanmar also has concerns of Trump's nationalist and isolationist inclinations.

The trade policies of the incoming President require a close watch. The fate of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) remains in a great dilemma. The TPP, an initiative of the George W. Bush administration in 2008 became the centrepiece of economic priority of the Obama administration's pivot to Asia. TPP is a trade agreement based on a multi-country consortium linking twelve countries- Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, Australia, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, and the United States. The agreement is intended to reduce tariffs and other trade barriers while streamlining trade and investment rules and procedures. Trump announced the US withdrawal from the TPP on his first day in office. The four signatories of

Southeast Asia in the TPP express fears about the negative impact on the export-import trade with the US vowing to pull out of TPP. The departure of the US from the TPP makes China economically more powerful in the region. Several questions linger. Will this mean the withdrawal of the US from Asia? Will the remaining eleven countries move ahead with the TPP if the US withdraws? One needs to keep tabs on to see what happens to the fate of TPP as he takes over the Presidency in January 2017.

While Obama's team have extensively engaged in ASEAN-led multilateral processes, it is speculative that Trump is more interested in maintaining a one-on-one relationship than prioritising on partnerships or multilateral forums. However, a continuity of Washington's presence and support of ASEAN centrality in all security structures led by ASEAN remains high in the region. But uncertainty persists apropos US continued commitment in the region. As the world absorbs Trump's victory and as the countdown begins for the impending Presidential inauguration, it becomes pertinent to look at what America's new President might do in the region. As uncertain as it appears, how much of Trump's rhetoric will actually turn into official policies remains to be seen.

Note: This commentary was prepared before President Trump's inauguration.

Southeast Asia

ASEAN

ASEAN's Role in Rohingya Crisis

ASEAN's foreign ministers met in Yangon where they decided that Myanmar will inform the fellow ASEAN members about the ongoing crisis in Rakhine state on a regular basis and perhaps work with them to manage aid efforts. The meeting is the first high-level regional effort to take a briefing on what is happening in western Myanmar, where the Myanmar military has been carrying out a cruel manhunt in the Rakhine state after nine police officers were killed in the month of October.

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Anifah Aman said, "I believe that in the spirit of maintaining ASEAN centrality and cohesiveness, we have to address this issue collectively". Myanmar "must do more," he further said, pointing out the importance of unhindered humanitarian access with coordination from ASEAN. Aman also warned that groups like the Islamic State could take advantage of the crisis. He proposed to establish an "independent group of experts" to probe into the allegations of abuses in the Rakhine state.

Both the Rakhine state government and the national government have established investigative committees; however, their independence is doubted.

Since the surprise October attack on the police posts, Myanmar government has sealed off the area near the violence. Only limited aid and official delegations on guided tours are allowed. Amnesty International has named the military crackdown as "scorched-earth campaign" that could lead to crimes against humanity.

Kyaw Zeya, permanent secretary at Myanmar's Foreign Ministry mentioned the government position that genocide and ethnic cleansing were not taking place, saying that description was far "from the reality on the ground." He further mentioned, "On the other hand we also give regards to ASEAN solidarity," he added. "So everything we consider is from the perspective of maintaining ASEAN solidarity within the Association. This is our perception. So we explain this to our other member countries if they want some information they can contact and they can also consult with us we are very eager to share information with them."

The foreign ministers who attended the briefing event in Yangon said the meeting had been fruitful. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi mentioned, "We had a very transparent and honest exchange of views during the meeting." Myanmar will update ASEAN member countries regularly, Marsudi clarified.¹

North Korea's Request for ASEAN Dialogue Membership Not Accepted

North Korea requested for a dialogue partnership with ASEAN, but the regional grouping has rejected the request because of the unusual security situation on the Korean Peninsula. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DRPK] requested it, [but] as of now

¹ Joe Freeman (2016), "ASEAN to Play Bigger Role in Rohingya Crisis", *Voanews.com*, December 19, at <http://www.voanews.com/a/asean-to-play-bigger-role-in-rohingya-crisis/3641758.html>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

I don't think it is being considered," Shahafeez Shaharis, director at the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' ASEAN-Malaysia secretariat, informed. "They have to meet requirements [for partnership]. Under the current situation, it's going to be quite challenging for ASEAN to consider [the request]. I don't think it's an issue to be considered," the official added. He mentioned that ASEAN is looking forward to decreasing the tension on the peninsula. "We are very concerned about the violations of resolutions by the DPRK," Shahafeez Shaharis said, referring to North Korea's frequent breaches of international rules. The Malaysian diplomat also underscored ASEAN's emphasis on more engagement and dialogue in dealing with North Korea's nuclear issues. He further mentioned, "We want North Korea to come back to the six-party talks and to [move] away from the confrontational diplomacy". "The ARF is currently the only mechanism that has the participation of North Korea. Even though at the moment, it's very minimal... [but] this is an opportunity to engage and discuss the issue and come to an amicable solution," Shaharis added.²

ASEAN-India

President Jokowi Visited India

Indonesia's president Joko Widodo visited

India in December 2016. After welcoming him, President Pranab Mukherjee said that India and Indonesia have age-old bilateral ties and they share a common experience of struggle for freedom from colonialism. Mukherjee further said he considers India and Indonesia as two countries providing a fortification against radicalism and intolerance. He further said, "India values its cooperation with Indonesia to address these common security concerns and transnational threats. Our proximity as close maritime neighbours indicates that this is a key area where we must work together as partners to achieve strategic stability and security in the Indo-Pacific and safety and security of sea lanes." President Pranab Mukherjee also said India would be glad to support Indonesia's 'maritime fulcrum vision' and, thereby, also the security of the Indo-Pacific region. "In the multilateral and global context of facing the common challenges of the 21st Century, India and Indonesia, together, are factors of stability for the world," Mr. Mukherjee said. He underscored that India understands the importance of Indonesia's success as a pluralistic democracy with an open society based on the rules of tolerance and diversity.³

India-Malaysia Video-Conference held

Malaysia Prime Minister Najib Razak mentioned that both India and Malaysia are committed to fighting terrorism and his country is willing to provide know-how on de-radicalisation of terrorists. This happened at the

² "ASEAN turns down North Korea's request for dialogue partnership: Diplomat", *The Jakarta Post*, November 24, 2016, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2016/11/24/asean-turns-down-north-koreas-request-for-dialogue-partnership-diplomat.html>. Accessed on January 19, 2017.

³ India-ASEAN: India-Indonesia must work together in maritime security says, Pranab Mukherjee, *Zee News*, December 13, 2016, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-asean-india-indonesia-must-work-together-in-maritime-security-says-pranab-mukherjee_1958154.html. Accessed on January 19, 2017.

video-conference between two prime ministers of India and Malaysia. The 30-minute digital session between Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi saw both leaders expressing a common goal of instituting a strategic partnership with Malaysia as a gateway for India to ASEAN, to realize stronger inter-Asian links. This video-conference happened at the inaugural Asian Business Leaders Conclave in New Delhi. PM of Malaysia further said, "India has been Malaysia's largest export destination in the South Asian region since 1998..."

This Conclave could not have come at a better time as our relations are at a historic high...

Over the last few years, they have been enhanced by our agreement to form a strategic partnership – the Malaysia-India Comprehensive Economic Agreement or Miceca.”

Najib Razak also assured Modi that Malaysia would fully support activities and programmes that India plans to hold in New Delhi to commemorate the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations in 2017. PM Modi voiced confidence that Najib would drive Malaysia towards its goal to achieve the status of a developed nation.⁴

Northeast India-Act East Policy

Act East Through North East

In a conference on 'Act East through North East: from land locked to land linked' in Agartala topics like the growing proximity between Bangladesh and India in general and Tripura in particular and how improved access through the roads, rails and ports in Bangladesh can resolve connectivity issues of the North East were discussed. Pradeep Bagla, Co-chairman of the North East Core Committee on Infrastructure, underlined the fact that the northeast region shares 96 percent of India's international borders and can play a crucial role in the nation's Act East Policy. He also mentioned that the growing connectivity via road, rail and port between India and Bangladesh can help nurture development of the region and improve the intra and inter regional connectivity. He also informed about the positive steps taken by both the central and state governments to increase connectivity in the region. Other speakers gave detailed presentations on the road, railways and air connectivity in the region and neighbouring states.⁵

In another event, Union Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jitendra Singh that the northeastern region can play a pivotal role in the significant implementation of the Act East policy.

⁴ "Modi and Najib forge closer ties", *The Statesman*, December 15, 2016, at <http://www.thestatesman.com/india/modi-and-najib-forge-closer-ties-1481771909.html>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

⁵ "Agartala hosts seminar on 'Act East through North East'", *The Indian Express*, December 23, 2016, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/agartala-hosts-seminar-on-act-east-through-north-east-4441202/>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

He mentioned that the change of the approach from 'Look East' to 'Act East' is an evidence to the Government's intent to assist in the development of Northeast, trapped in the overabundance of problems despite being a land of ample opportunities for economic growth. Mr Singh mentioned, "Only looking at the eastern part from a distance will be a mere rhetorical exercise. Hence the Government decided that it is time to Act East. The need of the hour is to enable the north-eastern States to become self dependent in the domain of economic development which will lead to employment opportunities". He further mentioned that people in Northeast must understand that answers to their messy economic progress lies in the region itself. He also highlighted the fact the region must reconnoitre trade opportunities with neighbouring states like Myanmar and Bangladesh.⁶

Brunei

Brunei-US Naval Exercise

The United States and Brunei started a military exercise on November 14 that lasted for one week. The 22nd Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise or CARAT is a bilateral exercise series between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and the armed forces of nine

partner nations in South and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste. Brunei was one of the original CARAT partners and has been part of the exercise series since it began in 1995. The recent CARAT Brunei 2016 featured five days of shore-based and at-sea training events. USNS *Millinocket* (T-EPF 3), USNS *Salvor*, a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and staff from Commander, Task Force (CTF) 73 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7 took part in CARAT Brunei 2016. Capt. Lex Walker, deputy commodore of DESRON 7 which helps plan, organize and support maritime exercises such as CARAT in the Asia-Pacific mentioned, "We have a very diverse exercise planned this year that includes training and operations in multiple naval warfare areas". In 2015, CARAT Brunei saw over 500 U.S. military members operating alongside their counterparts from the Royal Brunei Armed Forces along with key U.S. assets, with ten days of shore-based and at-sea training events as well as professional symposia. CARAT Brunei 2015 also marked the first time that a P-8 Poseidon aircraft and the USNS *Millinocket* joined the exercise.⁷

Brunei Worst Violator of Freedom, Rights

International Humanist Ethical Union (IHEU) listed Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia as the region's worst freedom of thought supporters in a 2016 report. The Freedom of Thought Report rated the three countries where "Grave

⁶ "NE key to Act East policy: DoNER Minister", *The Assam Tribune*, November 11, 2016, at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=nov1216/state051>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

⁷ Prashanth Parameswaran, "US, Brunei Launch Naval Exercise", *The Diplomat*, November 15, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/us-brunei-launch-naval-exercise/>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

violations”, which is the last on a list of five categories, are happening. The other categories are “free and equal”, followed by “mostly equal”; “systemic discrimination”; and “severe discrimination”. Brunei is found to be deteriorating in the report’s rankings, following its gradual execution of a new Sharia penal code and the support for the death penalty for defectors by the country’s Grand Mufti.

The report said, Brunei’s new Sharia penal code, which was adopted in 2013, has been “deeply damaging” toward the right to freedom of thought in the country. It also contains a range of requirements that confine the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion to a great extent. The report further noted, “Future phases of the law will include more severe penalties, including the death penalty for blasphemy, mocking the Prophet Muhammad or verses of the Quran and Hadith, or declaring oneself a prophet or a non-Muslim.”

Articles 213, 214 and 215 of the revised penal code, the report mentioned, criminalises printing, disseminating, importing, broadcasting, and distributing of publications deemed contrary to Sharia by Muslims and non-Muslims.

Non-Muslims in Brunei are also barred from uttering the word ‘Allah’, the Arabic word for God, even though Bruneian Christians use the term to describe their God.⁸

Cambodia

Khmer Rouge Soldiers and Leaders Sentenced

Two Khmer Rouge leaders were sentenced for crimes against humanity in Cambodia by a court, backed by the United Nations. A news release declared that the Supreme Court of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) upheld its judgement on appeals against the trial judgement regarding Nuon Chea, former Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and Khieu Samphan, former Head of State of Democratic Kampuchea. The two, who are the most senior surviving members of the regime, were penalized in August 2014. In April 1975, during the first phase of the movement of the population, at least two million people were forcibly moved from Phnom Penh by Khmer Rouge soldiers regularly at gunpoint and in frightening and fierce conditions. The population was enforced to rally to rural areas during the scorching summer and without sufficient food, water or medical care. According to the Tribunal, there were many cases of Khmer Rouge soldiers shooting and killing civilians during the course of the mass migration, while many others died of tiredness, starvation or disease. There was another phase of the movement of the population between September 1975 and December 1977, where many more were evacuated. The ECCC, which is currently administering four cases, was shaped by Cambodia government and the United Nations, but is independent in nature.

⁸ A. Azim Idris, “Brunei, M’sia, Indonesia rated region’s worst violators of rights, religious freedom”, *Asian Correspondent*, December 8, 2016, at <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2016/12/brunei-msia-indonesia-rated-regions-worst-violators-rights-religious-freedom/>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

It is a Cambodian court with international participation that will apply international principles.⁹

Political Stalemate Ended in Cambodia

Cambodia's opposition party ended a six-month boycott of the parliament. It said that it was done so that the national budget for 2017 is debated well in the house. The Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) had stopped appearing in the parliamentary sessions after its members were stripped of their parliamentary immunity and challenged with lawsuits by Prime Minister Hun Sen's government. The opposition and human rights groups say the cases against the opposition are politically motivated, aiming at harassing them. The opposition leader Sam Rainsy has been in self-imposed exile abroad since November 2015 after an old verdict for offense was reinstated and his parliamentary immunity was cancelled by the government's legislative majority. His deputy, Kem Sokha was sentenced to five months in prison in September 2016 for twice disregarding summons to response to a case involving his alleged courtesan. His supporters say this is a politically driven move. Hun Sen's party has often been blamed for using violence or the threat of violence against challengers and opponents. But in recent years, they are called by the courts. Critics say Hun Sen

is influencing the courts to wane the opposition's probabilities in 2017 local polls and the 2018 general election. Hun Sen has been ruling Cambodia for three decades. But in a general election in 2013, his grasp on power was taken aback when the Cambodia National Rescue Party won 55 seats in the National Assembly, leaving the ruling Cambodian People's Party with 68.¹⁰

East Timor

PNG & East Timor's ASEAN Tests

Timor Leste's application of joining ASEAN is still pending. The country's history of communal riots and its tag of a least developed nation are hindering its ASEAN membership. Supporters of its ASEAN applications, however, would argue the same was spoken about Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar when they joined ASEAN in the 1990s. Besides, East Timor, Papua New Guinea is also waiting for its ASEAN membership approval. But their lack of stability is a matter of concern for ASEAN. Timor-Leste has experienced plenty of problems maintaining stability since independence, not least the jealousies between the eastern and western parts of the country," one observer said. In Timor-Leste local elections have just been held and presidential elections will be conducted in the new year and that may help the country get a membership in ASEAN. Gavin Greenwood, a regional security analyst with Hong Kong-based Allan & Associates., said, "Timor-Leste's factionalism remains a

⁹ "Cambodia: UN-backed court upholds life sentences for former Khmer Rouge leaders", *UN News Center*, November 23, 2016, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55636#.WICsVblW6Vo>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

¹⁰ "Cambodia opposition ends boycott of parliament", *Fox News*, November 21, 2016, at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/11/21/cambodia-opposition-ends-boycott-parliament.html>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

problem for the emergence of what might be termed a full democratic state...This is unlikely to be altered by next year's presidential elections ... this reflects the country's troubled past and the country's small political class – both of which are connected – although there is no indication that they will not meet international standards.” Timor-Leste applied for membership to ASEAN in March 2011. Former President and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao pointed out that all individual members of ASEAN support its regional integration and a road map had been recognized, including its active participation in meetings as a future member of the bloc. But Greenwood noted, “Timor-Leste's small market and narrow economy hold few advantages, while the global impetus for consolidation into often internally unbalanced trading blocs has come under greater scrutiny post-Brexit.”¹¹

Indonesia

Jakarta Governor in Trouble

The National Police named the Christian governor of Jakarta, Ahok as a suspect in a blasphemy investigation over comments he made about the Quran. Outrage over those remarks instigated massive street protests in Indonesia. The governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama aka Ahok is a popular leader, but now has

been barred from leaving the country as the authorities continue their investigation. Islamic groups opposed to Mr. Basuki, who is an ethnic Chinese Indonesian and a political ally of President Joko Widodo, showed a huge disapproval of him and took part in a protest march in Jakarta on November 4. The protest saw several injuries and ended in violence. Political experts are of the opinion that the protests against Mr. Basuki were coordinated by national opposition parties to damage his upcoming election campaign, and also to embarrass Mr. Jokowi, who in 2014 became the first Indonesian president from outside the country's traditional political elite or military.

Mr. Basuki is the first Christian in several decades to be the governor of Jakarta, Indonesia's most powerful provincial office.¹²

Terrorism Attack Foiled

Police in Jakarta claimed that they have obstructed a plot by extremists to explode a bomb at the presidential palace. Counter-terrorism police raided a house in the east Jakarta suburb of Bekasi and found a pressure cooker filled with three kilograms of high explosives. Officers from the counter-terror squad Densus 88 arrested four people, including a woman. Police claimed that the bomb would have had a blast radius of 300 metres. After January's bomb and gun attack at a Starbucks cafe and police post that killed four innocent people, this was the riskiest terrorist operation in Indonesia. Indonesia has recorded several number of foiled and disrupted plots in 2016

¹¹ Luke Hunt (2016), “Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste Prepare for Strategic Elections”, *The Diplomat*, November 14, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/papua-new-guinea-timor-leste-prepare-for-strategic-elections/>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

¹² Joe Cochrane (2016), “Indonesia Says Jakarta's Christian Governor Is Suspected of Blasphemy”, *New York Times*, November 15, at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/16/world/asia/jakarta-governor-ahok-basuki.html?_r=0. Accessed January 19, 2017.

against police and the Government. The nation's most infamous terrorist, Santoso, was killed by police in a Sulawesi jungle in July 2016 after an extensive manhunt.¹³

Laos

Lao PDR-China Defence Ties

China and Laos assured each other to enhance military ties and international-cooperation, marking the Laotian Prime-Minister Thongloun Sisoulith's first trip to China since taking office in April 2016. An analyst mentioned that Sisoulith's four-day trip was focused on soliciting Chinese investment. In Beijing, Premier Li Keqiang told his Laotian counterpart that China is willing to maintain positive bilateral ties and will support Laos's stable development. The two nations also vowed to expand cooperation on energy, finance and agriculture. Sisoulith visited China two months after Li visited Laos to attend the East Asia Summit. During Li's trip, Laos and China signed more than 20 documents to increase cooperation, including work on a China-Laos railway, economic zones and hydroelectric projects. China has invested in 764 projects in Laos, stretching from mining and agriculture, to electricity and tourism schemes. In Laos, 522 projects are solely funded by China and 212 are joint

ventures.

Laos has also supported China over its South China Sea claims, in difference with Singapore, Vietnam and some other ASEAN countries. "As a landlocked country, Laos has a limited role in influencing other Asean countries' positions on South China Sea territorial disputes with China," one analyst said.¹⁴

Laos-Vietnam Stronger Ties

Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV)'s General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong visited Lao PDR while he was addressing nearly 2,000 lecturers, officials and students of the National University of Laos in Vientiane; he mentioned that the friendship between Vietnam and Laos is important to both the countries. Looking through the past of the two Parties and States, he said that Vietnam and Laos appreciate each other as authentic comrades, walking hand in hand together and supporting each other through the most problematic ages. He further mentioned that important accomplishments in bilateral ties have contributed to the building and preservation of a peaceful regional and international environment, making favourable conditions for socio-economic and national development and defence in each country, augmenting the position of both Vietnam and Laos in the region and world. Articulating his feelings towards the youth of both countries, he stressed that youths are the pillar of a country, the pioneering force of revolution and the future owners of the nation.¹⁵

¹³ Adam Harvey (2016), "Indonesia counter-terrorism forces arrest suspects, thwart plan to bomb presidential palace, police say", *ABC Net*, December 11, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-11/indonesia-counter-terrorism-forces-foil-plot-to-bomb-palace/8110074>. Accessed January 19, 2017.

¹⁴ Mimi Lau (2016), "China and Laos vow to forge stronger military links", November 28, *South China Morning Post*, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2049857/china-and-laos-promise-deepen-bilateral-ties>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

¹⁵ Vietnam News (2016), "Party leader highlights significance of ViCt Nam-Laos ties", November 25, at <http://vietnamnews.vn/society/346940/party-leader-highlights-significance-of-vietnam-laos-ties.html#Bd7Xh5vsCT65S1Re.97>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

Malaysia

Malaysia-Myanmar Talk on Rohingya

Malaysia and Myanmar authorities met to discuss about the Rohingya issue. A statement released by Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief's Office confirmed the meeting and said that Senior General Min Aung Hlaing told his Malaysian counterpart that no human rights violations had happened in Rakhine state. President U Htin Kyaw also met with the Malaysian commander to discuss the ongoing military operations in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships. A statement from the President's Office pointed out that the Myanmar government is working to solve the issues in Rakhine State in agreement with existing laws and human rights standards. The tensions between the two nations follow from comments made by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak who defined the ongoing situation in Rakhine State as "genocide" and participated in a rally on December 4 against Myanmar's treatment of the Muslim minority. Kavi Chongkittavorn, said that Mr Najib's movements were simply an effort to gain support from his country's Muslim community. He said,

"The Myanmar government will be held responsible for what is happening, not Malaysia. It is an internal problem that has regional implications". In response to those criticisms, Mr Najib issued a response via Twitter in which he stated that it was not his intention to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs. Malaysia has given shelter to some 54,000 registered Rohingya refugees, as well as many unregistered asylum-seekers from Myanmar.¹⁶

Protests against Malaysian PM

Thousands of anti-government protesters marched in Kuala Lumpur demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, Najib Razak, over his alleged connection with 1MDB scandal. The demonstration is unlikely to shudder Najib, who has denied offense and consolidated power by cracking down on rebels and curbing media groups and activists. The head of pro-democracy group, Bersih which organised the rally was arrested. Another Bersih leader Hishamuddin Rais was also arrested at the protest area. "Our country is being governed by clowns and crooks. So I'm here to protest against our prime minister," said a cartoonist-artist who participated in the rally. In a speech uploaded on his website, Najib mentioned that the protesters were "a tool of the opposition". Najib holds significant support within UMNO and from the long-ruling Barisan Nasional coalition.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ye Mon (2016), "President, military chiefs meet to smooth Myanmar-Malaysia ties", *Myanmar Times*, December 6, at <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/24063-president-military-chiefs-meet-to-smooth-myanmar-malaysia-ties.html>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

¹⁷ The Guardian (2016), "Thousands call for Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak to quit", November 19, 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/19/thousands-call-for-malaysian-prime-minister-najib-razak-to-quit>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

Myanmar

UN Criticises Myanmar over Rohingya Issue

The reputation of Aung San Suu Kyi's government in Myanmar is shaken amidst international concerns over how it is handling the violence in the country's divided north-west, a senior UN official sounded cautioned.

The skirmish in Myanmar's Rakhine state has forced hundreds of Rohingya Muslims escaping across the border to Bangladesh amid accusations of misuses of power by security forces. In a statement, Adama Dieng, the UN's special adviser on the prevention of genocide, said "If they are true, the lives of thousands of people are at risk. The reputation of Myanmar, its new government and its military forces is also at stake in this matter." "Myanmar needs to demonstrate its commitment to the rule of law and to the human rights of all its populations. It cannot expect that such serious allegations are ignored or go unscrutinised," he said. However, Myanmar's military and the government have overruled accusations. The violence underscores that Suu Kyi has done too little to ease the predicament of the Rohingya minority, who are deprived of citizenship and have no access to basic facilities. Dieng said, "The government needs, for once and for all, to find a sustainable solution to the situation of the Rohingya Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar, a solution that is in full

compliance with the international human rights standards that the government has pledged to respect."¹⁸

Daw Suu's Visit to Japan

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited Japan and the 800 billion yen (\$7.7 billion) package from Japan was assured by PM Shinzo Abe. "This is designed to help Myanmar's nation-building through its balanced development," Mr Abe told reporters in a joint presence with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after their talks. A total of 40 billion yen is reserved to promote peace in areas populated by ethnic minorities. "With this aid, it is our hope that the fruits of reconciliation will be spread across Myanmar and be further promoted," Mr Abe said. "Such assistance will help Myanmar build peace and develop itself," said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She reached Tokyo on November 1. The state counsellor and foreign minister already has visited Southeast Asian neighbours as well as China, the United States and India. Her travels are aimed at enticing economic development and infrastructure aid to reconstruct the resource-rich country after years of military rule, economic isolation and ethnic conflict. However, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi did not discuss the military operations in northern Rakhine State during the press conference. Analysts have mostly applauded the visit, mentioning about the variances between Japanese and Chinese investments in Myanmar. Political and economic analyst U Than Soe said, "Myanmar has a large workforce and plenty of land. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should invite investments from Japan during her visit." The Myanmar Investment Commission has already accepted 88 direct

¹⁸ The Wire (2016), "Rohingya Crisis: UN Says Myanmar Government's Reputation at Stake", November 30, at <https://thewire.in/83403/rohingya-crisis-un-says-myanmar-governments-reputation-stake/>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

investments from Japan worth a total of US\$674.227 million. Of these, 77, worth \$571.532 million, are already in action. A further 19 Japanese businesses have invested indirectly via other countries, to the extent of \$983.483 million. Additionally, there are 24 investments in Thilawa special economic zone that do not fall under MIC authority, worth \$251.25 million, and further inputs are expected in the case of Dawei SEZ, in which Japan attaches significant importance. The Japan International Cooperation Agency also designed the Master Plan for the country's development in 2011 and at that time it started to offer Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Myanmar. Most of the factories in Myanmar are Japanese-owned and situated in Thilawa port. According to the Ministry of Commerce, Japan-Myanmar bilateral trade amounted to \$800 million in the 2011-12, then rising to a high of \$2305 million in 2014-15.¹⁹

Philippines

Duterte Visited Cambodia, Singapore

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte visited Singapore and Cambodia in December 2016 as his country is preparing to chair ASEAN in 2017. Since coming to office in June, Duterte has visited six of

the nine other ASEAN states including Laos and Malaysia. In Cambodia, Duterte met King Norodom Sihamoni. He attended a state banquet, a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Hun Sen, and an engagement with the 5,000 Filipinos living in Cambodia. But in terms of deliverables, the only thing mentioned was a memorandum of agreement on sports cooperation. Since taking office in June, Duterte has downplayed the South China Sea issue as he seeks to recover ties with China. Duterte then visited Singapore. Duterte met Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, had a state banquet hosted by President Tony Tan, and met the Filipino community. Lee was one of the first heads of state to meet with Duterte on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Laos. The two sides discussed ways to both enhance bilateral trade and investment and reinforce defense and security cooperation. Singapore and the Philippines will commemorate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations or the golden jubilee in 2019 which will happen during Duterte's single six-year term.²⁰

Drug War in Philippines

Around 5927 people have been killed in the war on drugs in Philippines since July 1, 2016.

Since taking office in early June, President Duterte's police force has conducted a bloody war on drug dealers and users, causing the deaths of thousands of suspects. The figures released by the Philippine National Police Monday span the period from July 1 to December 12.

¹⁹ AFP and Chan Mya Htwe (2016), "Japan announces a nearly \$8 billion package for Myanmar", *Myanmar Times*, November 3, at <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/23451-japan-announces-a-nearly-8-billion-package-for-myanmar.html>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

²⁰ Prashanth Parameswaran, Philippines' Duterte Continues ASEAN Tour with Singapore, Cambodia Visits, *The Diplomat*, October 10, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/philippines-duterte-continues-asean-tour-with-singapore-cambodia-visits/>. Accessed January 19, 2016

Of the total, 2,086 were slayed in police operations and 3,841 in extrajudicial or vigilante-style killings. More than 40,000 suspects have been arrested. Robredo, the Vice President, who was elected in May in a separate contest to Duterte, said, “There are so many of us against the policies of the President.” She added, “I hope I will be able to portray the role of unifying all the discordant voices.” Washington has also been criticising Duterte on his handling of the drug dealers and users. But on December 3, President-elect Donald Trump told the Philippine President that he supports his controversial fight against drugs “the right way,” according to Duterte. The national police force also declared that since July, more than five million houses have been visited as part of an anti-drug campaign where officers knock on the doors of alleged drug users or pushers.²¹

Singapore

Singapore Armoured Shipment Delayed in Hong Kong

In a statement, Singapore’s Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) confirmed on November 24 that a shipment of Terrex Infantry Carrier Vehicles (ICVs) and associated equipment with no ammunition, used by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) for overseas training was being held at Hong Kong’s Kwai

Chung Container Terminal. It was late “due to a request for routine inspections by the Hong Kong Customs authorities”. However, Hong Kong’s Customs and Excise Department said that they seized the shipment as they were carrying suspected materials. Apple Daily reported that the containers had been shipped from Kaohsiung in Taiwan and were en route Singapore. It was also reported that “Hong Kong was not its final destination. It is not known why the consignment was unloaded here (Hong Kong).” MINDEF reported that Terrex ICVs were used by the SAF in routine overseas training and they were coming back to Singapore upon completion of the training.²²

Singapore-Malaysia Economic and Infrastructure Cooperation

Singapore and Malaysia signed a momentous agreement to build a high-speed rail line that is scheduled to begin by Dec 31, 2026. It will be 350km long line with eight stations. The milestone deal will change the way both countries interact and do business, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his counterpart Najib Razak said at a press conference after their annual Leaders’ Retreat. They called it a “marquee project” in a joint statement. The statement also claimed that it will bring Singapore and Malaysia even closer together, improve connectivity, deepen people-to-people ties and catalyse further economic cooperation. PM Lee said, It gives both sides a big stake in keeping relations stable and warm.” The ambitious rail link was designed and conceived in 2013 and it will cut travel time between

²¹ Sherwin Alfaro and Elizabeth Roberts (2016), “Philippines: More than 5,900 deaths in ‘war on drugs’ since July”, December 13, *CNN*, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/12/asia/philippines-death-toll-drug-war/>. Accessed January 20, 2017.

²² Channel News Asia (2016), “9 armoured vehicles bound for Singapore ‘delayed’ at Hong Kong customs”, November 24, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/9-armoured-vehicles-bound-for-singapore-delayed-at-hong-kong/3314824.html>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to 90 minutes. Both countries are now looking for a development partner for technical advice and operational service. Mr Najib said an international tender will be called in the fourth quarter of 2017 to involve an assets company to design, build, finance and maintain rail assets and trains for the line. They will also create a bilateral committee with senior officials from both countries to oversee and monitor the progress of the project.²³

Thailand

Thailand Got its New King

Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, 64, became the new king, Rama X in Thailand. He acceded to the throne followed by his father; King Bhumibol Adulyadej's death in October 2016. They belong to the Chakri dynasty, beginning with Rama I, which has ruled Thailand since 1782. Born in July 1952, Vajiralongkorn was educated in the United Kingdom and Australia before officially being declared crown prince and heir apparent in 1972. King Bhumibol ruled Thailand for seven decades and

experienced several numbers of military coups, democratic uprising and massive changes both the domestic and international levels. King Vajiralongkorn now has to survive his father's legacy as the Junta continues to rule the country since 2014.²⁴

Vietnam

Vietnam's South China Sea Expedition

Washington's Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative mentioned in one of its report that Vietnam is extending a runway in one of the disputed South China Sea islands followed by the Chinese actions of accumulating military equipment in several of those islands. Satellite images taken this month showed Vietnam had extended its runway on Spratly Island from less than 760 metres to more than 1 km. The report mentioned that the runway will be able to house maritime surveillance aircraft, transport planes and combat aircraft. US has criticised China for its massive land reclamation activities in the South China Sea islands and Vietnam's activities look smaller and modest if compared with those of China's. However, Vietnam has not issued any official statement on this particular issue.²⁵

²³ The Straits Times (2016), "KL, Singapore sign deal for high-speed rail; service slated to start by Dec 31, 2026", CNN, December 14, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/kl-singapore-sign-deal-for-high-speed-rail>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

²⁴ James Griffiths and Kocha Olarn (2016), "Thailand: Crown prince assumes throne as King Rama X", December 2, 2017, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/01/asia/thailand-king-rama-x-vajiralongkorn/>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

²⁵ The Guardian (2016), "Vietnam expanding South China Sea runway, says thinktank", November 18, 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/18/vietnam-expanding-south-china-sea-runway-says-thinktank>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

Oceania

Australia

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop is expected to outline a white paper for Australia's foreign policy, a first of its kind in 13 years. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has invited for public submissions to the strategic document, which is supposed to be released in the second half of 2017. Ms Bishop said, "It is not about predicting the future or events — we wouldn't have predicted Brexit for example". Australia had its last White Paper in 2003 under the then foreign minister Alexander Downer, who is now Australia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. Ms Bishop further commented, it was "precisely the time" to release a statement of values and priorities and dismissed claims it may offend other nations... We are able to positively shape and have some influence over our national interest and shape things for the better, rather than reacting to events once they have occurred".²⁶

Fiji

Fiji's Call to President-elect Trump

At COP22, Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama called on US President-

elect Donald Trump to reconsider his view that global warming was a "hoax", at the closing plenary of the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) in Marrakesh. Fiji will be the President of the next the COP23 conference which will be held in Germany. Bainimarama said, "We must act more decisively and avert catastrophe... As the second biggest carbon emitter on earth, the United States must take responsibility for contributing to our collective response to this crisis and show leadership at this critical stage." The Prime Minister also invited Trump to visit Fiji and witness first-hand the effects of climate change.²⁷

New Zealand

Bill English New Zealand's New PM

Simon William "Bill" English is New Zealand's new prime minister as his predecessor John Key resigned from his post surprisingly. English was elected unchallenged by the Parliamentary members of the National Party, allowing him to accept the leadership of both the party and the country. English served the country's finance minister from 2008.

He started his career as a politician in 1990. In November 2017, New Zealand will have its next election and English needs to prove himself as a successful successor of John Key by that time. Bill played a significant role in Key's policy-making. He did well as a finance minister as he was responsible for stabilizing the economy

²⁶ Henry Belot (2016), "Julie Bishop announces foreign policy white paper, says it will put Australia in 'good stead' with world", *abc.net.au*, December 13, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-13/foreign-policy-white-paper-to-be-released-mid-2017/8116680>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

²⁷ The BRICS Post (2016), "Fiji PM calls on Trump to avoid climate calamity", November 19, at <http://thebricspost.com/fiji-pm-calls-on-trump-to-avoid-climate-calamity/#.WIWdlrIW6Vo>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

during the Global Financial Crisis and delivering budget surpluses. He was also instrumental in much of the government's direction on issues of welfare, education, and housing. At the foreign policy front, he is expected to establish a quick and working relationship with his Australian counter-part Malcolm Turnbull. Another challenge would be to restore trust in New Zealand-Fiji relationship which has been under question for last couple of months. His most important task would be to maintain New Zealand's reputation in the world economy and political affairs.²⁸

O'Neill and the Australian Federal Police officers deployed to the Pacific nation during his time as prime minister. Mr Abbott also delivered a speech to a fundraising dinner for Anglicare PNG during his 2-day visit to PNG. Mr Abbott reflected on the Abbott government's foreign and security policy achievements. As Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull has not yet visited PNG which houses Australia's asylum seeker detention centre on Manus Island. However, Mr. Turnbull has met Mr O'Neill at the Pacific Islands Forum.²⁹

Papua New Guinea

Tony Abbott Visited PNG

Mr. Tony Abbott, former prime minister of Australia visited Port Moresby to meet Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter

²⁸ Grant Wyeth (2016), "Meet Bill English, New Zealand's New Prime Minister", *The Diplomat*, December 13, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/meet-bill-english-new-zealands-new-prime-minister/>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

²⁹ Heath Aston (2016), "Tony Abbott to meet PNG leader Peter O'Neill in latest foreign foray", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 3, at <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-to-meet-png-leader-peter-oneill-in-latest-foreign-foray-20161102-gsg8ue.html>. Accessed January 23, 2017.

Centre Activities for November and December 2016

- Mr Ankur Gupta, Lecturer, School of Business, Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore, delivered a lecture on 'Singapore: An Outsider Looking In' at IDSA on December 22, 2016. The lecture covered a range of domestic and international factors which continue to shape Singapore.
- Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh made a presentation on 'Role of Historical Legacy in India's Relations with Myanmar' in a Conference on 'Cultural, socio-economic factors at the time of King Thibaw and at Present' organised at the National Museum, New Delhi, on December 18, 2016.
- Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh spoke on 'India Myanmar relations' to Senior BSF commandants at IDSA on Dec 14 2016
- Dr. Sampa Kundu gave a brief on ethnic unrest in Myanmar on Monday morning session on November 28, 2016
- Dr. Sampa Kundu wrote a commentary titled 'Advocating for a Better Future of BIMSTEC: India Doing it Right' for *World Focus*, Issue 444, December 2016.

ABOUT US

The Southeast Asia and Oceania Centre focuses on policy-relevant research in respect of the ten ASEAN states, East Timor and Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand. The Centre studies India's bilateral and multilateral relations with states of the region with a view to providing contemporary relevance to India's Look East policy. It has a futuristic approach and examines the emerging trends in the regional security architecture. The Centre studies the potential for India's enhanced defence cooperation (including maritime issues) and cooperation in non-traditional security issues with the region. It examines internal developments of countries in this region, especially political transition and the role of the military, and their implications for India. The Centre seeks to promote Track-II institutional linkages with the region.

Contributions are invited for:

Book Review (800 words)

Commentary (900 - 1300 words)

Photo Essay (10-12 photographs, each with a caption,
accompanied by a 1000 words essay)

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