

South Asia Conflict Monitor

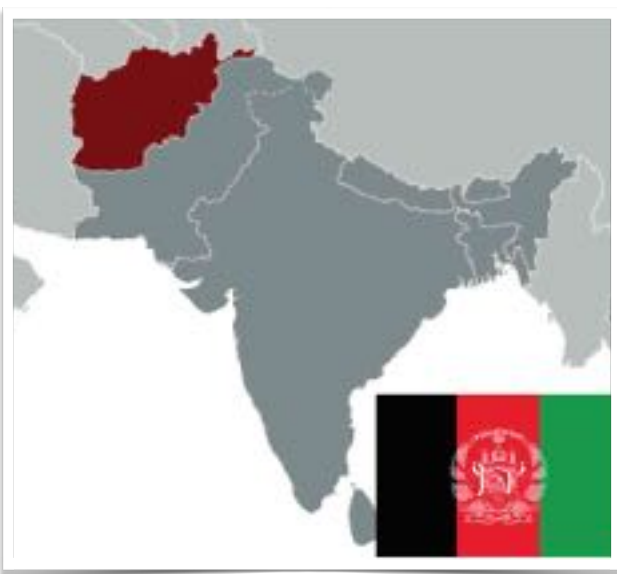
monthly newsletter on terrorism, violence and armed conflict...

COUNTRY NEWS ROUNDUP: OCTOBER 2020



AFGHANISTAN

MAJOR EVENTS:



October 05: Tariq Arian, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior (MoI), said that a group under the Taliban's command is involved in the targeted killings in cities across Afghanistan. Around 17 member of this covert group were arrested by the Security Forces and they have reportedly confessed about the group. Nearly 70 civilians were killed, and more than 140 others were wounded in the last two weeks in magnetic mine and roadside mine blasts in the country. ([Tolo News](#))

October 12: Nato Commander Scott Miller has called on the Taliban to stop their attacks in Helmand province, as it is not consistent with the US-Taliban agreement and that undermines

the ongoing Afghan peace talks. US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) spokesman Sonny Leggett has said that the US forces will continue to provide support to Afghan forces under attack by the Taliban. ([Twitter](#))

October 16: Head of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), Mr Abdullah Abdullah said that a return of the Taliban's Emirate is unacceptable to Afghans. He emphasised on the need for unity among Afghans and said violence will not lead the country to peace. ([HeartofAsia](#))

October 21: NATO allies and partners discussed contributions for 2021 and reiterated their commitment to providing financial support to the Afghan security forces through 2024. A Statement said, "Today's commitments help underpin the confidence that our financial support to the Afghan security forces will continue to be strong beyond 2020. International funding support to the Afghan forces is a key pillar of our commitment to Afghan security." ([HeartofAsia](#))

October 24: Around 30 civilians died in a suicide bomb attack in the Pul-e-Khoshk area of Dasht-e-Barchi in Kabul. Islamic State claimed its local affiliate IS Khorasan Province (ISKP) branch orchestrated the attack. ([Gandhara](#)/ [BBC News](#)).

October 26: Army Chief of Staff Yasin Zia said that Taliban is yet to cut ties with al-Qaeda and other terror entities operating out of Afghanistan and in Pakistan. He was reacting to the news of senior al-Qaeda leader Husam Abdul Rauf (Abu Mohsen al-Misri)'s death in Ghazni province on October 24. ([Tolo News](#))

October 27: According to the UN mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) report, overall the civilian casualty figure for the first nine months of 2020 (January-September 2020) dropped by around 30 percent compared to the same period in 2019. Total 2,117 people were killed and 3,822 were injured from January 1st to September 30, 2020, the report also noted that "High levels of violence continue with a devastating impact on civilians, with Afghanistan remaining among the deadliest places in the world to be a civilian". ([Tolo News](#))

October 30: Media reports citing Afghan Ministry of Defense Spokesman Rohullah Ahmadzai said that Taliban forces have orchestrated violence in 28 provinces (out of total 34 provinces) in Afghanistan in the last 24 hours. Provinces under fresh Taliban attack were Uruzgan, Badghis, Badakhshan, Farah, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunduz and Kandahar. ([Tolo News](#))

BANGLADESH

MAJOR EVENTS:



October 06: Bangladesh court has issued arrest warrant against a fugitive terrorist leader, former Major Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque Zia in blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay Niloy murder case. Zia has been leading the Al Qaeda linked terrorist organisation Ansar al Islam. The charge sheet against 13 people, including major Zia, Mohammad Masum Rana, Saad Al Nahin, Mohammad Kawsar Hossain Khan, Mohammad Kamal Hossain Sardar, was submitted in the court. In August 2015, armed miscreants attacked secular blogger Niloy and killed him at his house in Goran. Al-Qaeda in Indian subcontinent (AQIS)

had claimed responsibility for his killing.(BBC; Dhaka Tribune)

October 14: Bangladesh police (CTTC) have arrested Six Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB) militants in connection with the February 28 (2020 bomb blast inside a traffic police box in Chittagong's Sholoshahar Gate-2 area. Militants identified as Moinuddin, Abu Sadek, Rahmatullah Akib and Alauddin were apprehended from Lohagara area and two other neo-JMB operatives (Mohidul Islam and Jahir Uddin) were arrested from Kolabazar area in Bandarban district of Chittagong Division. The late February 2020 blast injured five people including two policemen in Sholoshahar. (Dhaka Tribune)

October 24: Bangladesh police (Rapid Action Battalion) apprehended three Allahr Dal militants from Sodapir Bazar of Rangpur. The militants were Mohamad Rezaul Karim Khandakar, Mohamad Sultan Mahmud and Mohamad Nr Alam. Extremist literatures recovered from their possession. Among the arrested, Sultan is a first year college student. All of them are active members of the militant group and followed their leader, Matin Mehedi. The arrested paid monthly fees for their membership in the group and had been active in misleading religious Muslims into the outfit by "distorting religious interpretation," RAB said. (WorldNewsNetwork)

October 25: RAB police arrested Ansar al-Islam militant Mohammad Mizanur Rahman Mizan from Madhubagh area of Dhaka city. Jihadi literatures, laptops, pen drives and mobile phones used to operate the activities of the extremist outfit were recovered from him. (New Age-Bangladesh)

October 27: A Dhaka court fixed November 04, 2020 for the re-indictment hearing in the trial of the murder of blogger Wasiquir Rahman Babu. Wasiquir Babu was murdered by members of banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) in late March 2015. Of the accused, Zikrullah alias Hasan, Ariful Islam alias Mushfiq and Md Saiful Islam are now behind bars, while two others - Akram Hossain Hasib alias Abdullah and Junayed alias Taher - are absconding. (Daily Star; Dhaka Tribune/Prothom Alo)

INDIA

MAJOR EVENTS:



October 02: India's NIA filed charges against three persons in Kashmir in a conspiracy case to recruit local youth into the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant group and managing their travel to Pakistan for training. NIA statement identified them Muneeb Hameed Bhat, Junaid Ahmad Mattoo and Umer Rashid Wani. The NIA said that these people were part of conspiracy to procure visas for recruits on the recommendation of some separatist leaders, manage their expenses and send them for arms training in Pakistan. (Times Now News)

October 03: Pro Islamic State group Al-Hind conspired to build a safe heaven inside forests of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala States. The idea was to declare it as 'IS province'(Willah), according to NIA investigations into several (at least 17)

members of the module arrested between December, 2019, and January, 2020. To understand how to survive inside the deep forest, the 20-member module, led by Bengaluru-based Mehboob Pasha and Cuddalore (Tamil Nadu)-based Khaja Moideen even bought books on Veerappan (slain sandalwood smuggler) who successfully dodged the Police of several states. The outfit even identified hideouts in Kolar, Kodagu, and other places in Karnataka; Jambusar in Gujarat; Ratnagiri

in Maharashtra; Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh; and Bardhaman and Siliguri in West Bengal where they could hide, according to the NIA chargesheet on this case. ([Hindustan Times](#))

October 03: Special Cell of Delhi Police arrested four people from Kashmir who were allegedly planning terror strikes in the national capital, New Delhi. In a statement, the Police said the accused were arrested from ITO area in central Delhi and were carrying four sophisticated pistols and over 120 rounds of ammunition. The accused have been identified as Altaf Ahmad Dar, Mushtaq Ahmad Gani, Ishfaq Majeed Koka and Aqib Safi. They were allegedly linked to Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, an off-shoot of Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent. ([Tribune India](#))

October 07: Armed militants attacked Ghulam Qadir, a district level Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader at Nunner in Kashmir. Personal security guard of the leader was killed in the attack while a militant got killed in the retaliatory gunfight. ([The Hindu](#))

October 07: Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh indicated militants in the State have been carrying out target killings of civilians and attacking Security Forces (SFs) in J&K on the directions by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). He said Pakistan is using militants of 'The Resistance Front' (TRF) to target civilians and issue threats to journalists and others who wanted Jammu and Kashmir to prosper. ([UNI](#))

October 07: India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested two Islamic State (IS) suspects in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Both were involved in radicalisation of youth and funding their trip to Syria to join the Caliphate. Ahamed Abdul Cader (from Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu), was a business analyst in a bank in Chennai and Irfan Nasir (from Frazer Town in Bengaluru, Karnataka) was into business dealing with Rice. "Further investigations resulted in revealing a module wherein Cader, Nasir and their associates were members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir. They had formed a group called 'Quran Circle,' which radicalised gullible Muslim youth in Bengaluru and funded their visit to the conflict zone in Syria to aid and assist the ISIS terrorists," the NIA said. ([One India/ Deccan Chronicle](#))

October 09: The West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar indicated that Al Qaeda terror group has its presence in the state. According to him "Law and order situation in West Bengal is very alarming and their presence is a threat to national security". He criticised the 'Ostrich Stance' of state police on the issue. Last month, Dhankhar had accused Trinamool Congress government of turning Bengal into a police state. He said "Law and order has collapsed in Bengal, and Maoist insurgency is raising its head. Terror modules are also operating from this state." ([Times Now](#))

October 16: A special court for National Investigation Agency (NIA) New Delhi, sentenced 15 pro-Islamic State extremists for conspiring against India. The conspiracy aimed at establishing IS bases in India by recruiting radical Muslim youth using different social media platforms. The convicted persons have formed Junood-ul- Khilafa-Fil-Hind to recruit Muslim youth to work for IS and commit acts of terrorism in India at the behest of IS chief Indian recruiter Yusuf-Al-Hindi (Shafi Armar), a former Indian Mujahideen based in Syria. Convicted extremists are Nafees Khan, Mudabbir Mushtaq Sheikh (leader), Abu Anas, Mufti Abdus Sami, Amzad Khan, Mohd. Shariff Moinudeen, Asif Ali, Mohd. Hussain, Syed Mujahid, Najmul Huda, Mohd. Obedullah, Md. Aleem, Md. Afzal and Sohail Ahmad. ([One india](#))

October 16: NIA Special Court in Delhi sentenced 15 accused convicted in an Islamic State (IS) conspiracy case. This case was registered on December 9, 2015. The criminal conspiracy hatched by the IS members to establish its base in India by recruiting Muslim youth for the jihadist group, by using different social media platforms. It was revealed that the accused persons had formed an organisation by name Junood-ul- Khilafa-Fil-Hind to recruit Muslim youth to work for IS and commit acts of terrorism in India at the behest of one Yusuf-Al-Hindi *alias* Shafi Armar *alias* Anjan Bhai, who was based in Syria and was purportedly the 'media chief' of IS. ([The Hindu/ One India](#))

October 18: The Anti-Naxal Squad (ANS) commandos killed five Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) operatives, including three women cadres, in the Kosmi-Kisneli forests in Gadchiroli District of Maharashtra. ([News18](#))



October 20: The ninth edition of pro-Islamic State magazine 'Sawt al Hind' was released via its official channel on the messaging app Telegram (@SoutulHind_bot). The India-focused pro-Islamic State group (IS) magazine has released its latest issue that included a poster celebrating the recent beheading of a school teacher in France. It featured a quote from the former leader of al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden that read: "If your freedom of expression doesn't stop you from criticizing prophet Muhammad... then our swords will not stop defending [his] honour". The issue also featured article criticising UAE and Baharain over recent deals to normalise ties with Israel. It has also a translation piece from Al Naba on the Indian origin IS-Khorasan member. (Telegram)

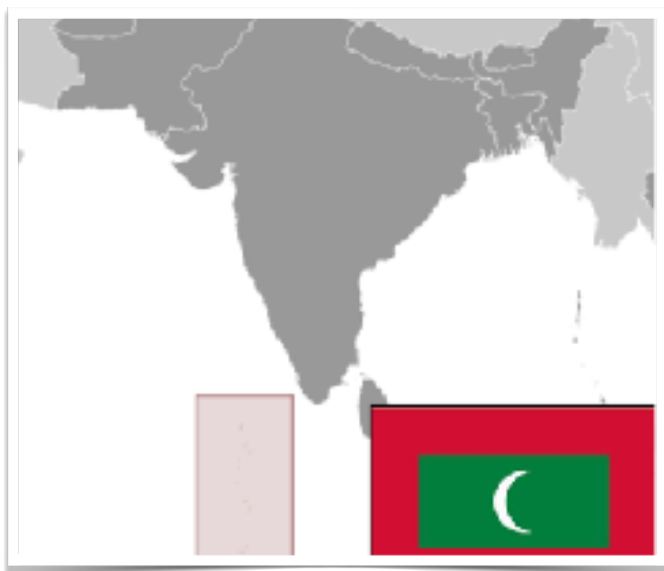
October 27: Union Ministry of Home Affairs (UMHA) released the list of 18 individuals as terrorists under the amended Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The designated

individuals belong to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Indian Mujahideen (IM) and members of the Dawood Ibrahim led crime syndicate. The list of designated terrorists includes key 26/11 conspirators -- Sajid Mir and Yusuf Muzammil alias Muzammil Butt; JeM leaders-Ibrahim Athar and Yusuf Azhar; JeM chief Masood Azhar's brother Rauf Asghar, who is the key conspirator in Parliament Attack, Pathankot Airbase attack and the Pulwama CRPF convoy attack cases; Indian Mujahideen founders- Riyaz and Iqbal Bhatkal; HM chief Syed Salauddin and Dawood's close aides- Chhota Shakeel and Anees Shaikh apart from 1993 blasts accused Tiger Memon among others. ([Hindustan Times](#))

October 29: The Resistance Front (TRF) terror group claimed responsibility for the killings of three Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members in Qazigund in Kulgam, J&K. The victims were identified as Fida Hussain Yattoo, Umer Rashid Beigh and Umer Ramzan Hajam, ([india.com](#))

MALDIVES

MAJOR EVENTS:



October 16: Maldives Police arrested a 34 year old male Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF) who returned to Maldives after fighting in the Syrian civil war. The Criminal Court remanded him for a period of seven days as the investigation continued by the Serious and Organized Crime Department i teh Maldivan police service. ([Rajee.mv; Edition](#))

October 24: Maldivian authority detained the FTF returned from Syrian warzone early this month (October 15) in the National Reintegration Centre, established in Himmafushu, Kaafu Atoll. He was detained under the Anti-Terrorism Act. The Home

Ministry revealed that establishing the centre and holding insurgents in custody for a thorough assessment is a step towards protecting Maldives from individuals returning from warzones and curbing the spread of extremist ideologies in the country. [Edition](#)

PAKISTAN

MAJOR EVENTS



October 06: Pakistan's Islamic clerics and religious scholars from all schools of thought devised a consensus on a 20-point code of ethics to be observed by religious organisations for ending sectarian violence and communal hatred in the country. The code of conduct was agreed at a meeting held here under the auspices of Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). The main points of the code of conducts included 1) Any kind of violence, tyranny and armed struggle in the name of Islam would be considered as revolt against the state; 2) No one will be allowed to deliver speech against other sects from mosques, Imambargahs and mass gatherings; 3) The media should avoid discussing communal issues, airing hate material and information against the teachings of Islam; 4) Only the courts are authorised to decide the blasphemy cases; and last but not the

least 5) Non-Muslims in Pakistan have the right to freely practice their religion in accordance with their beliefs. ([The News](#))

October 07: Pakistan's Supreme Court declined to extend detention of four accused in Daniel Pearl murder case. Last April, the Sindh High Court overturned the death sentence for British-born militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, who had been convicted in the case in 2002. His sentence was commuted to seven years and a fine was imposed on him. Other three accused, Adil Sheikh, Salman Saqib and Fahad Nasim, were acquitted. They had previously been sentenced to life imprisonment. However, Pearl's parents and the Sindh Government on May 2 had filed appeals in the Supreme Court against the Sindh High Court's order. The Sindh Government decided on July 15 to extend detention of the four men. ([Samaa News](#))

October 07: A Lahore High Court (LHC) bench, headed by Justice Syed Shehbaz Ali Rizvi, has acquitted a Christian man Sawan Masih, who was sentenced to death by a trial court under blasphemy laws in 2019. Masih, a resident of Joseph Colony in Lahore, had filed an appeal against the death sentence given by the trial court. A case had been filed against Masih, accusing him of committing blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad in March 2013. ([The News](#))

October 12: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Sindh police has arrested two wanted suspects in separate incidents. One of them was Minhajuddin, a militant belonging to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)'s Banu Akhtar Group. The other person was identified as Lal Badshah of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-London (MQM-L), who was a close aide to MQM's target killer Raees Mama and was involved in the killing of workers of a nationalist party. ([Express Tribune](#))

October 15: Six Pakistan Army personnel died in a bomb attack near Razmak area of North Waziristan. The banned militant group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has issued a statement later claiming responsibility for the attack. ([Geo Tv News/ Dawn](#))

October 16: Balochistan based militant conglomerate BRAS (Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar) targeted a security detail escorting the state-run Oil and Gas Development Company in Ormara, in Gwadar district of southwestern Balochistan. The attack killed seven soldiers and seven private security guards. ([Dawn](#))



October 23: Nearly four thousands (3990) terrorist incidents occurred in Pakistan between January 2015 to September 2020, according to Federal Home Affairs Ministry. The data compiled by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) indicated in those incidents, 3,384 persons were killed, and 8,436 people left wounded. Out of that 1,457 personnel of law enforcement agencies were killed, and 1,927 other persons (e.g. civilians) lost their lives. ([Pakistan Today](#))

October 23: IS Pakistan province claimed one attack on a government oil tanker in Muzaffargarh district. The jihadist group made the claim in a short statement via its channels on the messaging app Hoop. The statement said militants had opened fire a day earlier on the tanker, injuring those on board and wrecking the vehicle. No mainstream media reports on the attack have been observed. IS claimed the attack under the banner of its recently launched militant campaign "Answer the Call", which is aimed at stepping up IS attacks globally. ([Hoop](#))

October 23: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) found that Pakistan has successfully complied with 21 out of 27 points of action. It decided to keep the country on its 'grey list' until February 2021. The President of FATF Marcus Pleyer announced the decision after reviewing Pakistan's progress on the 27-point action plan for addressing anti-money laundering and terror financing. ([Dawn](#))

October 23: The upper house of parliament was informed that 3,990 terrorist incidents took place between January 2015 and September 2020, leaving 3,384 persons dead and 8,436 others wounded. The Interior Ministry presented the details compiled by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). ([Pakistan Today](#))

October 25: Three people died and several others injured in a bomb blast in Hazarganji area of Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. The blast took place as the 11-party anti-government Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance held a rally in Ayub Stadium in Quetta. Balochistan government appealed earlier to postpone the public meeting in view of heightened security threats. ([The News](#))

October 27: A bomb explosion targeted at the Jamia Zuberia madressah in Peshawar's Dir Colony killed eight and injured over a hundred people mostly students. Over 1,000 students were present in the madrasa at the time of the explosion. According to investigations, four to five kilograms explosives were used in the explosion. Islamic State Pakistan branch's hand was suspected, though no terrorist groups have claimed responsibilities so far. ([Dawn](#))

SRI LANKA

MAJOR EVENTS



October 06: Sri Lanka's Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe testified before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) into the April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday attacks. He informed that the former President Maithripala Sirisena did not invite him to the National Security Council (NSC) meetings after the change of Government that took place on October 26, 2018. Both Sirisena and Wickremesinghe were at the helm of affairs in Sri Lanka as President and PM respectively during the Easter attacks. (Outlook India)

October 07: A former Army commander Mahesh Senanayake testifying before the PCoI said that former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen's brother helped National Thowheed Jamaat (NTJ) leader Zahran Hashimto flee to India. He further said that

he came to know about Zahran when he was serving as the Commander in Jaffna. (Daily Mirror)

October 10: Members of Parliament (MPs) of ruling party Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) called for an investigation into the release of Riyaj Bathiudeen. They handed over letters to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa urging for an investigation into the release of Riyaj, the brother of MP Rishad Bathiudeen. Riyaz was arrested on April 14 on charges of aiding and abetting the terrorists involved in the Easter Sunday attacks. He was released by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on September 30 without even being produced in the courts. (LankaNewsWeb/ MENAFN)



October 16: A police official attached to the Police Terrorism Investigation Division revealed to the Presidential Commission to Inquiry (PCoI) that Easter attack mastermind Zahran Hashim and his group had planned to launch an attack using 20 suicide bombers. He further said that the proposal of launching an attack using 20 suicide bombers was made during a discussion held on March 27, 2019, at a house in Sarikkammulla area in Panadura.

Seven persons, including Zahran Hashim, were present during the discussion. According to investigations during the meet it was suggested that the attacks should be carried out within 15 days from March 27, 2019, as the bombs assembled by Zahrans's brother Rilwan were to expire during that period. (Daily News, LK)

October 29: A Criminal Investigation Department official testified before the PCoI and submitted the CCTV footage and invoices related to purchasing of nine backpacks and eight shawls from various shops in Colombo area. The Suicide bomber who blew himself at Kingsbury Hotel Mohammed Azam Mohammed Mubarak and Katuwapitiya Church bomber Mohammed Hastun had purchased nine backpacks and eight shawls which the National Thowheed Jamaat (NTJ)

members had been wearing in the video they aired before the attack, on April 11, 2019. “Two suicide bombers visited a shop in Battaramulla to buy the backpacks and also visited a shop in Grandpass, Colombo 14 to buy the shawls,” the CID officer said. According to sources, 12 more National NTJ members had remained in the East to carry out a second wave of attacks in August 2019. (Daily Mirror)



The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM) aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government’s strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is scheduled to be published at the beginning of each calendar month, assessing events and developments of the previous month.

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The Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict (SSPC) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan research organization based in New Delhi, dedicated to conduct rigorous and comprehensive research, and work towards disseminating information through commentaries and analyses on a broad spectrum of issues relating to peace, conflict and human development. SSPC has been registered under the Societies Registration Act (XXI) of 1860. The SSPC came into being as a platform to exchange ideas, to undertake quality research, and to ensure a fruitful dialogue.

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