

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Bangladesh

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Sheikh Hasina visits Malaysia; Bhutanese Prime Minister visits Bangladesh; 3 Rohingyas arrested; Remittance rebounds in November; Russia's Intersputnik wins the contract to sell an orbital slot to Bangladesh.**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina went to Kuala Lumpur on December 2 on a three-day official visit to seek recruitment of more Bangladeshis and expansion of trade and investment. She led a 100-member high-profile delegation composed of four ministers, a state minister and 35 leading businessmen, among others. This was Hasina's third visit to Malaysia as the prime minister after her two previous trips there in 2000 and 2010. Former Malaysian premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Grand Hyatt hotel, where he said that Malaysian car manufacturer Proton Holdings Berhad would open its plant in Bangladesh soon. Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the chairman of the company.<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh and Malaysia agreed to boost bilateral trade, cut trade gap and start negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Kuala Lumpur assured Dhaka of extending support to it for becoming ASEAN'S dialogue partner and hosting the next meeting of Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Commission next year. The last meeting of the joint commission was held in Dhaka in 2005. The assurance came at a bilateral meeting between the two countries at the Malaysian prime minister's office at Perdana Square in Putrajaya. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Malaysian counterpart Najib Abdul Razak led their respective countries at the meeting. Both the leaders agreed on duty-free and quota-free access of Bangladeshi products to Malaysian market, especially pharmaceuticals goods, cement, jute and jute products, ceramics and footwear. Both the countries signed four deals on December 3. The four deals are: protocol amending the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 2012 between Malaysia and Bangladesh on the Employment of Workers, MoU between Bangladesh and Malaysia on cooperation in the field of tourism, agreement between Bangladesh and Malaysia on the partial abolition of visa requirements and MoU between Bangladesh and Malaysia on cultural, arts and heritage cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "PM Flies to KL Today", *The Daily Star*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/pm-flies-to-kl-today-53007>. "Proton to Set up Car Plant in Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/proton-to-set-up-car-plant-in-bangladesh-53157>. "Dhaka, KL Ink 4 Deals", *The Daily Star*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/dhaka-kl-ink-4-deals-53291>.

<sup>2</sup> "Target Free Trade Deal", *The Daily Star*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/target-free-trade-deal-53289>.

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay went to Dhaka for holding talks with his Bangladesh counterpart on increasing bilateral trade, establishing connectivity, cooperation in power sector and tri-nation hydroelectricity generation.<sup>3</sup> In a move to enhance bilateral trade and commerce, Bangladesh and Bhutan signed two deals, including one on trade that will allow Dhaka and Thimphu to enjoy duty-free export of 90 items to each other. Under another agreement, Dhaka will allocate a piece of land at the city's Baridhara to Bhutan for the construction of its permanent embassy.<sup>4</sup> Bangladesh urged Bhutan to consider it as a partner in its future hydropower projects as Dhaka and Thimphu agreed to bridge the existing trade gap between the two countries. The request was made at the bilateral talks between the two sides at the Prime Minister's Office on December 6. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay led their respective sides at the meeting.<sup>5</sup>

Acting on a tip-off from Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA), Bangladeshi detectives arrested three Rohingyas at Lalbagh on November 30 for their alleged links with suspected Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operatives involved in Burdwan blast. This is the first instance of arrest since investigators of Bangladesh and India started sharing intelligence on militancy and decided to jointly tackle the cross-border menace.<sup>6</sup>

Remittance in November rose 14.7 percent to \$1.17 billion from the previous month on the back of legalisation of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. November's receipts were over 10 percent higher than in the same month a year ago, according to data from Bangladesh Bank. Bangladesh received nearly \$6.2 billion in remittances during the July-November period, up 11.42 percent year-on-year.<sup>7</sup>

Russia's Intersputnik won a contract to sell an orbital slot to Bangladesh for its first satellite. Bangladesh government will have to pay around \$36 million, equivalent to Tk 281.52 crore, for the slot. As per the Bangabandhu satellite project outline, \$28 million has been assigned for the purpose, but the vendor, Intersputnik, is firm on its asking price of \$36 million.<sup>8</sup>

## Sri Lanka

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Indian National security Adviser visits Sri Lanka; Sri Lanka's opposition signs MOU with common opposition candidate; Two Japanese naval ships arrive in Sri Lanka to attend Galle**

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<sup>3</sup> "Bhutanese PM Due Today", *The Daily Star*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/hydropower-ed-talks-likely-53598>.

<sup>4</sup> "Two Deals Signed", *The Daily Star*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/two-deals-signed-53935>.

<sup>5</sup> "Partner Us In Hydro Projects: Hasina to Bhutanese PM at Bilateral Talks", *The Daily Star*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/partner-us-in-hydro-projects-53933>.

<sup>6</sup> "3 Rohingyas Arrested", *The Daily Star*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/3-rohingyas-arrested-53006>.

<sup>7</sup> "Remittance Rebounds in November", *The Daily Star*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/remittance-rebounds-in-november-53082>.

<sup>8</sup> "Russian Company Wins Contract for Satellite Slot", *The Daily Star*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/russian-company-wins-contract-for-satellite-slot-54075>.

**Dialogue 2014; Sri Lanka shows improvement in Perception of Corruption; Sri Lanka welcomes EU Council decision to appeal judgment to annul sanctions on LTTE; Sri Lanka tourist arrivals rise 9.4 percent in November 2014; Sri Lankan President returns gold possessed by LTTE to rightful owners; Sri Lanka signs agreement with Bangladesh to purchase rice; Sri Lankan navy assists Indian fishermen to repatriate.**

National Security Adviser (NSA) of India Dr. Ajit Kumar Doval delivered the Keynote address at the inaugural session of the Galle Dialogue 2014. Evoking a 1971 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution, on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, Doval said it was important to revisit the resolution mooted by Sri Lanka then "calling upon great powers not to allow escalation and expansion of military presence in the Indian Ocean."<sup>9</sup> During his stay in Sri Lanka, leader of Sri Lanka's opposition and United National Party (UNP) Ranil Wickremasinghe met Ajit Doval and discussed the current political situation in Sri Lanka. The NSA has reportedly enquired about the election strategy and campaign plans of the common platform that the UNP is backing. Also the issue of China's role in Sri Lanka, which is a major concern for India, has reportedly come up in discussions. Doval also paid a courtesy call on President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the President's House in Colombo.<sup>10</sup>

Sri Lanka's opposition political parties and people's organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the common opposition presidential candidate Maithripala Sirisena on December 1. Opposition party leaders and leaders of civil society groups under the patronage of Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera signed the MOU expressing their support to work together with the common candidate at the upcoming presidential polls at Vihara Maha Devi Open Air stadium. Among the signatories were former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga, Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, Democratic Party leader Sarath Fonseka, and MP Arjuna Ranatunga. Major points of the MOU are abolishing the executive Presidency, changing the electoral system, amending the 18th Amendment to the Constitution and establishing the independent commissions introduced through the 17th Amendment to the Constitution.<sup>11</sup>

Accepting the invitation extended by the Sri Lanka Navy the two Japanese Defence Force ships Harusame DD-102 and Amagiri DD-154 arrived at the Port of Colombo on December 1, 2014 to participate in the 2014 Galle Dialogue International Maritime Security Conference.<sup>12</sup>

Sri Lanka has improved its ranking on the Transparency International's annual global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) released on December 3. Sri Lanka improved six notches in the CPI and ranked at the 85th place among 175 countries with a score of 38 points. In 2013 with a score of 37

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<sup>9</sup> "Galle Dialogue' International Maritime Conference Gets Underway in Sri Lanka", *Colombo Page*, December 1, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec01\\_1417421295CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec01_1417421295CH.php). "Doval Hails Defeat of the LTTE", *Colombo Gazette*, December 1, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/01/doval-hails-defeat-of-the-ltte/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Indian National Security Adviser Meets Sri Lanka's Opposition Leader", *Colombo Page*, December 2, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec02\\_1417493959CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec02_1417493959CH.php). "India Satisfied with Sri Lanka Ties", *Colombo Gazette*, December 2, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/02/india-satisfied-with-sri-lanka-ties/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Sri Lanka's Opposition Signs MOU with Common Opposition Candidate", *Colombo Page*, December 1, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec01\\_1417412669CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec01_1417412669CH.php).

<sup>12</sup> "Two Japanese Naval Ships Arrive in Sri Lanka to Attend Galle Dialogue 2014", *Colombo Page*, December 2, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec02\\_1417538896CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec02_1417538896CH.php).

points the island nation in South Asia ranked at the 91st place among 177 countries.<sup>13</sup>

The Sri Lankan government said Sri Lanka welcomes the decision of the Council of the European Union to appeal the judgment of the General Court of the European Union of 16 October 2014, which annulled measures taken by the Council to designate the LTTE as a terrorist organization and the freezing of LTTE funds.<sup>14</sup>

Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals rose by 9.4 percent in November 2014 compared to the same period in 2013, according to the data released by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). The month recorded 119,727 tourists arriving in the country compared to the 109,420 arrived in November 2013. In the first eleven months of this year a total of 1,348,481 tourists arrived in the island recording a 20.3 percent increase from the 1,120,675 came during the corresponding period in 2013.<sup>15</sup>

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa returned another stock of gold possessed by the LTTE to the rightful owners at a function held at the Temple Trees on December 5. Nearly 2,000 rightful owners of the gold jewellery either confiscated by the LTTE or pawned to them by the owners during the LTTE's control of the North were invited to attend the ceremony at the Temple Trees and receive their possessions from the President. According to the Defence and Urban Development Ministry Media Spokesman Brigadier Ruwan Wanigasooriya the President were to hand over 2,184 parcels of gold jewellery to 1,960 identified rightful owners in the North. The latest group of 1,960 identified owners came from Mannar (223), Vavuniya (319), Jaffna (45), Kilinochchi (1187) and Mullaitivu (186).<sup>16</sup>

Sri Lanka signed an agreement with Bangladesh on December 3 in Dhaka to purchase 25,000 metric tonnes of rice from Bangladesh. Under the provisions of the contract, Sri Lanka agreed to purchase 25,000 metric tonnes of non-fragrant, par boiled, coarse rice from Bangladesh to overcome the rice shortage caused by the drought situation affecting the harvest earlier this year in Sri Lanka. This will be the first time in the history of Bangladesh that it has decided to export rice to any foreign country, Sri Lankan High Commission in Dhaka said. Nalin Fernando, the Chairman of Lanka Sathosa Ltd and Mr. Sarwar Khan, the Director General of Food Directorate-Bangladesh signed the agreement on behalf of the two governments.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Lanka Navy assisted three Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu to repatriate, whose boat drifted to the island's waters last month. The Navy rescued the three distressed Indian fishermen and their vessel in Sri Lankan waters North of Mathagal on November 28, 2014 and handed them over

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<sup>13</sup> "Sri Lanka Shows Improvement in Perception of Corruption This Year", *Colombo Page*, December 3, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec03\\_1417585532CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec03_1417585532CH.php).

<sup>14</sup> "Sri Lanka Welcomes EU Council Decision to Appeal Judgment to Annul Sanctions on LTTE", *Colombo Page*, December 3, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec03\\_1417594333CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec03_1417594333CH.php).

<sup>15</sup> "Sri Lanka Tourist Arrivals Rise 9.4 Percent in November 2014", *Colombo Page*, December 3, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec03\\_1417617403CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec03_1417617403CH.php).

<sup>16</sup> "Sri Lankan President Returns Gold Possessed by LTTE to Rightful Owners", *Colombo Page*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec05\\_1417718168CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec05_1417718168CH.php).

<sup>17</sup> "Agreement Signed with Bangladesh to Import Rice", *Daily Mirror*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/58289/bangladesh-to-import-rice>.

to Vadukkoddai Police for onward action. Sri Lankan authorities handed over the fishermen and their boat to Indian Coast Guard (ICG) officials who brought them home.<sup>18</sup>

## Maldives

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Water crisis in Male; India's National Security Advisor meets President; US Ambassador pays farewell call on the President.**

Water supply is disrupted in Malé the capital of the Maldives after a serious fire accident on December 4 incapacitated the only provider of water in the city. Minister of Defence and National Security Colonel (Ret.) Muhammad Nazim has said that various countries have been providing assistance to the Maldives deal with the water crisis. He said that India would provide 150 tons of water to Malé. Naazim also said that two Indian sent military vessels capable of desalinating water. An American military vessel is also traveling to Malé with water, according to Naazim, and Sri Lanka is providing drinking water with every flight operated from the country to the Maldives.<sup>19</sup> Reportedly, Chinese government is working in partnership with the Maldivian government to provide water for some 150,000 residents. Under the assistance programme, every commercial flight from China to the Maldives would bring bottled water to be freely distributed in Malé. The first of such flights, a Mega Maldives flight, brought 15 tons of water. Also, two aircrafts of the Chinese Air Force arrived with 40 tons of water on December 6. The official from the Chinese Embassy also said that Chung Shing Dao, a Chinese navy ship capable of treating 90 tons of water per day. President Yameen expressed his gratitude to friends in the international community for their help at this critical juncture to the Maldives.<sup>20</sup>

India's National Security Advisor, Shri Ajit Doval, paid a courtesy call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom on December 3. According to President's Office, President and the National Security Advisor explored avenues to further strengthen bilateral relations between Maldives and India, particularly in the area of security.<sup>21</sup>

Ambassador of the United States to the Maldives, Michele J. Sison, has paid her farewell call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. The meeting was held on December 2 at the President's Office. During the meeting President Yameen expressed his appreciation for Ambassador Sison's contribution in strengthening relations between the Maldives and US, during her tenure as the Ambassador.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Sri Lanka Navy Assists Repatriation of Three Indian Fishermen", *ColomboPage*, December 8, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14B/Dec08\\_1417979045CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec08_1417979045CH.php).

<sup>19</sup> "Friends in the International Community Help Maldives Deal with Water Crisis", *SunOnline*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26387>.

<sup>20</sup> "Chinese Government Provides Assistance to Maldives as Water Crisis Continues", *SunOnline*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26406>.

<sup>21</sup> "India's National Security Advisor Meets President", *SunOnline*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26366>.

<sup>22</sup> "US Ambassador Pays Farewell Call on the President", *The Presidency, Republic of Maldives*, December 2014, <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=15021>.

## B. East Asia

### China

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **China and Brazil agree to promote science and technology cooperation; China releases a position paper on the South China Sea; China wants US to 'abandon' prejudice towards the Confucius Institutes; China and the US concluded 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the China-US Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation; China and Japan look for ways to improve relations; President Xi Jinping calls for strengthening of the military; China marks its first Constitution Day; China donates towards Ebola fight; China dispatches the 19<sup>th</sup> fleet for escort services in the Somali waters.**

Chinese President Xi Jinping and the President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff on December 7 discussed areas for further cooperation. Both sides discussed areas like science and technology cooperation and which will help in improving the bilateral ties. While discussing the successful launch of CBERS-4 satellite which has been jointly developed by China and Brazil, Xi said that, "the programme has yielded fruitful results, improved the scientific and technological level in both countries, and made great contribution to the economic and social development of the two sides".<sup>23</sup>

On December 7, the Chinese Foreign Ministry released a position paper of the Chinese government with regard to the jurisdiction in the South China Sea arbitration initiated by the Republic of the Philippines.<sup>24</sup>

During a recent press briefing the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said on December 5 that China has never been involved in interfering with the freedom of the Confucius Institutes in the United States. She added that, "in cooperation between Chinese and US universities, the Chinese side provides assistance on teachers and teaching materials according to requests from the US side". She further added that relevant sides should "abandon prejudice" against the Confucius Institutes.<sup>25</sup>

China and the United States concluded the 12th meeting of the China-US Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation (JLG) in Beijing. The meeting was held from December 3-5, 2014. Both sides discussed ways to improve the relations and asserted the importance of law enforcement cooperation between China and the US. Both sides urged that there should be reinforcing of JLG mechanism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Chinese, Brazilian Presidents Pledge To Promote Science, Technology Cooperation" *China Daily*, December 7, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/07/content\\_19038927.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/07/content_19038927.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>24</sup> "China's Position Paper on South China Sea", *China Daily*, December 7, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/07/content\\_19037946.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/07/content_19037946.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>25</sup> "China Urges US to Abandon Prejudice Against Confucius Institutes", *China Daily*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content\\_19034295.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content_19034295.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>26</sup> Shengnan, Zhao, "The 12th Meeting of the China-US Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation Concluded" *China Daily*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content\\_19033099.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content_19033099.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met a visiting Japanese delegation on December 4. Li said that, "We believe that China-Japan relations must be based on the four point principled consensus, draw lessons from history and overcome political impediments". He further added that, "only if we focus on the big picture of our relations over a long term can we carry out what we have agreed and hence improve our ties".<sup>27</sup>

During the People's Liberation Army Equipment Conference in Beijing, President Xi Jinping said that, "China will accelerate development of a military equipment system to build a modern army and support national security". This conference was held on December 3- 4, 2014.<sup>28</sup>

On December 4 China marked its first Constitution Day. This is a part of President Xi Jinping's idea to promote the rule of law. This is also an effort to strengthen the legal system of the country and also institutionalize the power the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>29</sup>

China donated around \$6 million to the UN Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund to support the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. This step is a part of China's fourth round of Ebola aid announce by Chinese president Xi Jinping. The agreement was signed on December 2.<sup>30</sup>

The Chinese People's liberation Army sent its 19<sup>th</sup> Chinese naval squad for escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters. This mission comprises of more than 700 troops and two helicopters and missile frigates Linyi and Weifang. This mission will replace the 18<sup>th</sup> escort fleet.<sup>31</sup>

## Japan

### (December 1-7, 2014)

- **Japan succeeds in launching the Hayabusa 2 space probe.**

On December 3, Japan Space Agency launched the Hayabusa 2 probe successfully from the Tanegashima Space Centre. The probe is to travel to an asteroid 300 million kilometres from earth in order to collect rock samples. The probe, which was launched on an H-2A rocket is expected to reach the asteroid in 2018 and return to earth in late 2020.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Zhaiyinan and Wangxu, "China, Japan Take Step To Soothe Relations", *China Daily*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content\\_19028077.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content_19028077.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>28</sup> Peng Yining and Zhao Lei, "Xi Vows Military Boost", *China Daily*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content\\_19027704.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/05/content_19027704.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>29</sup> "China Marks Constitution Day Amid Legal Push", *China Daily*, December 4, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/04/content\\_19025015.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/04/content_19025015.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>30</sup> "China Donates \$6m for UN Ebola Fight", *China Daily*, December 2, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/02/content\\_19013048.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/02/content_19013048.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>31</sup> "China Dispatches Escort Fleet To Somali Waters", *China Daily*, December 2, 2014 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/02/content\\_19011978.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/02/content_19011978.htm), accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>32</sup> "Japan Successfully Launches Hayabusa 2 Space Probe", December 3, 2014, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141203p2g00m0dm043000c.html>

## South Korea

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **US envoy visits Seoul to discuss North Korean nuclear issue; South Korea kicks off a large scale airlift exercise.**

On December 5, top US nuclear envoy and former US Ambassador to Korea Sung Kim met with his South Korean counterpart Hwang Joon-kook, Seoul's special for peace and security affairs on the Korean peninsula. In the meeting, they discussed about the resumption of the long-stalled six party talks (SPT). This meeting was significant in the sense that it took place just after North Korean envoy Choe Ryong-hae's visit to Moscow where he talked about restarting the talks without preconditions.<sup>33</sup>

On December 4, South Korea launched a large scale airlift exercise in the city of Yangju, north of Seoul. The main objective of the two day long exercise was to enhance air transportation capacities which could be instrumental in enhancing wartime capabilities. In that exercise around 1300 service personnel from Air force, navy, army and the Marine Corps. It was for the first time that all branches of the military participated in the joint airlift exercise.<sup>34</sup>

## North Korea

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **North Korea launches its winter military training;**

On December 2, North Korean military launched its routine winter exercise that is to continue till March. It took place at the instruction of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. It is argued that Kim instructed the military to carry out the exercise because he realized the necessity to keep his military fully prepared in case of any combat mission in the future.<sup>35</sup>

## C. Iran, Iraq and the Gulf

### Iran

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Car bomb explodes outside Iran's envoy to Yemen residence in Sanaa; Joe Biden resists calls for new sanctions.**

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<sup>33</sup> "Top S. Korea, US Envoy Discuss NK Nuclear Issue", *The Korea Herald*, December 5, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141205000412>

<sup>34</sup> "S. Korea Launches Large-Scale Airlift Exercise", *The Korea Herald*, December 4, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141204000837>

<sup>35</sup> "N. Korean Military Begins Winter Training", *The Korea Herald*, December 2, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141202000233>

A car bomb killed three people at the Iranian ambassador's residence in Yemen an attack claimed by al Qaeda militants who oppose Iran and the Yemeni Shi'ite rebels who control the capital Sanaa. A Yemeni civilian and two soldiers were killed, a medical official said. Seventeen people, mostly employees at a nearby oil ministry building, were wounded. The ambassador was unhurt, having left his residence for the embassy 10 minutes earlier, security officials said.<sup>36</sup>

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden resisted calls by Congress for new sanctions against Iran but acknowledged it would be difficult to reach a deal to halt the country's nuclear programme. Renewed sanctions would only hinder attempts to reach a nuclear deal, Biden asserted. "This is not the time to risk a breakdown when we still have a chance at a breakthrough," he said.<sup>37</sup>

## Iraq

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Iraq finds 50,000 ghost soldiers on payroll, officials sacked; Iran carries out airstrikes on IS position in Iraq; Kerry says any strike by Iran on ISIS is positive; US-Iraq reach deal to immune US soldiers from prosecution, Iraq denies**

Iraq's new government has found 50,000 "ghost soldiers" who received salary without showing up for work, a practice that accelerated the military's collapse in the face of Islamic State (ISIS) fighters six months ago. The Iraqi prime minister fired dozens of top officials after the government uncovered the scam. According to *Aljazeera*, he said, he was saddened that the government was paying out salaries to false names "at a time when we don't have enough money. We have soldiers fighting and being killed, while there are mock names of soldiers receiving salaries."<sup>38</sup>

A senior Iranian official confirmed that country's air strikes against Islamic State extremists in Iraq were carried out and it was at the request of the Baghdad government but was not coordinated with the US. Iranian officials initially denied carrying out air strikes inside Iraq despite video aired by *Al Jazeera* this week showing vintage US Phantom warplanes, of the kind the Iranian air force still uses, carrying out raids in Diyala province on November 24, near the Iranian border. The Pentagon later confirmed Iranian aircraft had been in action, but stressed there had been no coordination with US forces.<sup>39</sup>

The US has reached an agreement with Iraq on privileges and immunities for the growing number of troops based in the country, helping in the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) militant group.

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<sup>36</sup> Bayoumy, Yara and Ghobari, Mohammed, "Car Bomb Kills Three Outside Iran Envoy's Residence in Yemen", *Reuters*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/03/us-yemen-blast-idUSKCN0JH0EW20141203>

<sup>37</sup> Barrabi, Thomas, "Iran Nuclear Talks: Joe Biden Resists Calls For New Sanctions, Gives 'Less Than Even Shot' Of Agreement", *International Business Times*, December 9, 2014, at <http://www.ibtimes.com/iran-nuclear-talks-joe-biden-resists-calls-new-sanctions-gives-less-even-shot-1738451>

<sup>38</sup> "Iraq PM Sacks Officials Over 'Ghost Soldiers'", *Aljazeera*, December 1, 2014, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/iraq-pm-sacks-officials-over-ghost-soldiers-201412118815429388.html>

<sup>39</sup> Borger, Julian, "Iran air strikes against Isis requested by Iraqi government, says Tehran", *The Guardian*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/05/iran-conducts-air-strikes-against-isis-exremists-iraq>

*The Guardian* reported that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has given assurances that US troops will receive immunity from prosecution.<sup>40</sup> After the reports began surfacing a government source denied, claims that the Iraqi government assured the United States that American troops would be granted immunity from prosecution as part of a deal to obtain US military aid. The government source stated that “what is published by some media outlets to grant immunity to American forces in Iraq are baseless.”<sup>41</sup>

## Syria

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Israeli jets bomb Syria; Syria death toll exceeds 2,00,000; Syria army repels IS advance on key air base.**

Syria accused Israeli jets of bombing two installations inside the country one near the capital, Damascus, and the second in a town near the Lebanese border. The report by Syrian state television described the attack as “an aggression”. It said the air raids occurred near Damascus’s international airport and in the town of Dimas. Israel has carried out several air strikes in Syria since the revolt against Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011. Binyamin Netanyahu has repeatedly threatened to take military action to prevent Syria from transferring sophisticated weapons to its ally Hezbollah.<sup>42</sup>

Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights that his agency has documented the killing of 202,354 people since March 2011. Of the total, 63,074 of the killed were civilians, including 10,377 children. He stated that more than 130,000 foreign-backed militants, including 37,324 Syrian nationals, have also lost their lives in the Syrian conflict, while a total of 76,223 Syrian army troopers and pro-government fighters have been also killed in the fighting.<sup>43</sup>

Syrian troops have repelled an attack by jihadists from the Islamic State group on a key military airport in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor. The jihadists had withdrawn to the edges of the base, a day after managing to seize a south-eastern part of the complex. The Deir Ezzor base is a key regime outpost from which warplanes and helicopters mount raids on jihadist positions in several parts of the war-wracked country. ISIS fighters control most of Deir Ezzor province, but half of its capital remains in government hands.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> “US Troops In Iraq Will Get Immunity From Prosecution, Bolstering Fight With Isis”, *The Guardian*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/dec/04/us-troops-in-iraq-will-get-immunity>

<sup>41</sup> Abdallah, Amir, “Iraq Denies Claim That Us Soldiers Were Granted Immunity As Part Of Military Aid Agreement”, *Iraqi News*, June 24, 2014 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/iraq-denies-claim-us-soldiers-granted-immunity-part-military-aid-agreement/>

<sup>42</sup> Beaumont, Peter, “Israeli jets bomb Syria, says Damascus”, *The Guardian*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/israeli-jets-bomb-syria-says-damascus>

<sup>43</sup> “Syria crisis death toll exceeds 200,000”, *Presstv*, December 2, 2014 at <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/388463.html>

<sup>44</sup> “Syria Army Repels Jihadist Advance On Key Air Base”, *The Mail Online*, December 7, 2014 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2864220/Syria-army-repels-jihadist-advance-key-air-base.html>

## Egypt

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Egypt sentences 185 to death; British Embassy in Cairo closed over security concerns**

An Egyptian criminal court has sentenced at least 185 people to death pending an appeal process and approval from the country's top religious official. They are accused of involvement in a "massacre" of 11 policemen in August 2014 in the town of Kerdasa, in the west of Cairo, in one of the country's deadliest assaults on security forces. The attack happened on the same day that security forces cleared two protest camps supporting overthrown President Mohammed Morsi, killing hundreds in the process. The human rights groups have repeatedly called that the HR situation has worsened under ISIS.<sup>45</sup> The British embassy has been closed amid the fears of deteriorating security situation in Egypt.<sup>46</sup>

## Libya

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Islamic State setting up Libya training camps.**

Islamic State militants have set up training camps in eastern Libya, the head of the US Africa command said. Gen David Rodriguez said, there could be "a couple of hundred" IS fighters undergoing training at the sites. Libya has been in turmoil since Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown in 2011, with various tribes, militias and political factions fighting for power. Several Islamist groups are competing for power in the east of the country, with some militants recently declaring allegiance to IS.<sup>47</sup>

## The Gulf

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Bahrain activist Maryam al-Khawaja jailed for a year in absentia for assaulting policewomen; Saudi arrests 135 people on terrorism charges; Saudi Arabia forced to rethink ideology in fight against Islamic state.**

Leading Bahraini human rights activist Maryam al-Khawaja has been jailed for a year in absentia for assaulting two policewomen at airport. Khawaja, director of advocacy at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was detained in August when she returned from Europe, and freed on bail

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<sup>45</sup> "Egypt Sentences 185 To Death Over Attack", *Aljazeera*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/egypt-sentences-185-death-over-attack-2014123671393723.html>

<sup>46</sup> "Egypt: UK Embassy In Cairo Remains Closed Over Security", *BBC*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30374005>

<sup>47</sup> "Islamic State Setting up Libya Training Camps, US Says", *BBC*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30323761>

pending trial on charges including assault, entering Bahrain illegally and insulting King Hamad.<sup>48</sup>

Saudi Arabia said it had arrested 135 people on “terrorism” offences, with dozens suspected of having links to the Islamic State of the Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and planning to destabilise the kingdom. The country’s interior ministry said that 135 people, including 26 foreign nationals, were among those arrested in raids carried out across the country. The 26 foreign nationals included 16 Syrians, three Yemenis, an Egyptian, a Lebanese, an Afghan, an Ethiopian, a Bahraini, an Iraqi and a stateless person.<sup>49</sup>

## D. The United States of America

### National

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Pentagon leaders, Governors discuss 2016 budget issues; ASD Nominee Scher Emphasizes ‘Unwavering’ Military Support; DoD seeks future technology and innovative ideas as part of its Long Range Research Development Plan; Defence Secretary Hagel releases progress report on Sexual Assault in the Military, and announces four new directives; wave of disappointment and protests followed after a grand jury decided not to indict a white New York police officer.**

Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work held discussions on December 2 with members of the Council of Governors regarding the Fiscal Year 2016 budget and other fiscal initiatives, Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters. The Council of Governors is a 10-member bipartisan group appointed by the president to serve as a mechanism for governors and key federal officials to address matters pertaining to the National Guard, homeland defence and defence support to civil authorities. Kirby said both representatives of both parties – Department of Defence (DoD) and the Council of Governors — agreed about the negative impact that the return of sequestration would have on the department and on some of the states. This includes, he said, the possibility of further reductions in military force structure.<sup>50</sup>

Robert M. Scher, the nominee for assistant secretary of defence for strategy, plans and capabilities, testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee on December 2 that what happens at the Pentagon “is all about how to better support the men and women that make up our armed forces.” Since April 2012, Scher has served as the deputy assistant secretary of defence for plans. If confirmed, he said his new role would be to support the undersecretary of defence for policy, the deputy secretary and the secretary of defence in formulating strategic guidance for the department.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> “Bahrain Activist Maryam Al-Khawaja Jailed For A Year In Absentia For Assault ”, *The Guardian*, December 1, 2014 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/01/bahrain-activist-maryam-al-khawaja-jailed-assault>

<sup>49</sup> “Saudi Arrests 135 People On Terrorism Charges”, *Aljazeera*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/saudi-arrests-135-people-terrorism-charges-2014127224758210316.html>

<sup>50</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., “Pentagon Leaders, Governors Discuss 2016 Budget Issues”, *DoD News*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123745>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>51</sup> Richmond, Jake, “ASD Nominee Scher Emphasizes ‘Unwavering’ Military Support”, *DoD News*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123738>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

The Defence Department seeks technology and innovative ideas as part of its Long Range Research Development Plan (LRRDP) within the Defence Innovation Initiative, a broad effort that examines future capabilities, dominance and strategy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Systems Engineering Stephen P. Welby said on November 24. The newly-released LRRDP Request for Information will provide a way for DoD technology scouts to collaborate with industry, academia, and the general public to explore topics and ideas to better identify the “art of the possible,” Stephen Welby said.<sup>52</sup>

On December 4, Secretary Hagel released a report on the Department of Defence’s recent progress in addressing sexual assault in the military, and announced today four directives intended to further improve the department’s sexual assault prevention and response programmes by: (1) creating a pilot programme for select installations that will customize prevention efforts; (2) requiring commanders to identify and prevent retaliation; (3) training first-line supervisors to lead sexual assault and prevention programmes; and (4) further publicizing resources for victims. It noted that sustained senior leadership engagement over the past three years – including 41 Secretary of Defence initiatives – has changed how the military works to prevent, respond to and effectively adjudicate sexual assault crimes.<sup>53</sup>

In the hours after a grand jury decided not to indict a white New York police officer, Daniel Pantaleo, whose chokehold helped cause the death of an unarmed black man, Eric Garner, on Staten Island, the city seemed to throb with a single cry of bafflement and fatigue. This time, a cell phone camera had captured the encounter. The protesters had hoped, the video would act as a bulwark against the unpredictability of a grand jury. But the wave of disappointment that followed the jury verdict on December 3 barely touched the South Shore of Staten Island.<sup>54</sup> The protests drew crowds in New York, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Washington. Many chanted the last words of Eric Garner: “I can’t breathe.” In some places, they grew disruptive, snarled traffic on major arteries and lay down in the streets.<sup>55</sup>

## (December 1-7, 2014)

- **Cleveland police tactics violated rights of citizens, Justice Department probe finds; US House of Representative pushes back on Obama immigration order; 17 States are suing President Obama over immigration actions; President Obama nominates Ashton Carter as the next Secretary of Defence; Department of Defence announced the transfer detainees.**

The Obama administration on December 4 issued the Department of Justice’s report “Investigation

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<sup>52</sup> Lyle, Amaani, “DoD Seeks Future Technology Via Development Plan”, *DoD News*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123746>. Accessed on December 6, 2014

<sup>53</sup> “Secretary Hagel Releases Progress Report to the President on Sexual Assault in the Military, Announces Four New Directives to Strengthen Department Response”, *DoD News Release No: NR-603-14*, December 04, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/Releases/Release.aspx?ReleaseID=17063>. Accessed on December 7, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Mueller, Benjamin, “Outcome of Eric Garner Case Bares a Staten Island Divide”, *The New York Times*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/nyregion/outcome-of-eric-garner-case-bares-a-staten-island-divide.html>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>55</sup> Southall, Ashley, “Protesters Fill the Streets Across the Country Over Decision in Eric Garner Case”, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/nyregion/protests-continue-after-grand-jury-decision-in-eric-garner-case.html>. Accessed on 5 December 2014

of the Cleveland Division of Police”, accusing the Cleveland police department of using excessive and deadly force against citizens in violation of their constitutional rights, the latest development in a growing national debate over the fairness of local police tactics, especially in minority communities. According to the Justice Department report, Cleveland police engaged in a “pattern or practice” of unnecessary force — including shooting residents, striking them in the head and spraying them with chemicals. The Justice Department and the city agreed to establish an independent monitor to oversee changes in the police department, including better training and supervision of officers. And the Justice Department urged Cleveland civic leaders to hold police accountable for their improper actions when necessary.<sup>56</sup>

The U.S. House of Representatives on December 4 passed a bill that would bar President Barack Obama from using an executive order to shield nearly five million undocumented immigrants from deportation, but the measure was largely viewed as a political message to the president. Obama’s recent immigration action angered most Republican lawmakers, who said he had overstepped his constitutional authority. They took to the House floor to urge support for the bill, introduced by Representative Ted Yoho of Florida.<sup>57</sup>

17 states are suing President Barack Obama over his recent executive actions on immigration, which shields from deportation up to 5 million people who are in the country illegally. The lawsuit claims that Obama violated the ‘Take Care Clause’ of the U.S. Constitution that limits presidential power, that the federal government violated rule-making procedures, and that the order will “exacerbate the humanitarian crisis along the southern border.” The lawsuit is led by Texas Attorney General and Governor-elect Greg Abbott, who said in a statement that Obama’s executive action “tramples” the Constitution.<sup>58</sup>

On December 5, President Obama announced his nomination of former Deputy Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter to be the next U.S. Secretary of Defence. Carter has been in public service for more than 30 years, and has served in various positions under 11 Secretaries of Defence. Obama said, “Ash is rightly regarded as one of our nation’s foremost national security leaders”.<sup>59</sup> Mr. Carter, a physicist and former Harvard professor, is regarded as having a deep understanding of the Pentagon’s most complex matters, from cyber-warfare to building the world’s most advanced fighter jet. His command of Pentagon politics, moreover, is expected to serve him well when, if confirmed by the Senate as expected, he takes over as defence secretary early next year. Yet even

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<sup>56</sup> Markon, Jerry and Horwitz, Sari, “Cleveland Police Tactics Violated Rights Of Citizens, Justice Department Probe Finds”, *The Washington Post*, December 4, 2014 at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/cleveland-police-tactics-violated-rights-of-citizens-justice-department-probe-finds/2014/12/04/db93f0e0-7bfd-11e4-b821-503cc7efed9e\\_story.html?tid=pm\\_politics\\_pop](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/cleveland-police-tactics-violated-rights-of-citizens-justice-department-probe-finds/2014/12/04/db93f0e0-7bfd-11e4-b821-503cc7efed9e_story.html?tid=pm_politics_pop). Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>57</sup> Saine, Cindy, “US House Pushes Back on Obama Immigration Order”, *Voice of America (VOA)*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-house-pushes-back-obama-immigration-order/2546726.html>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>58</sup> Berenson, Tessa, “17 States Are Suing President Obama Over Immigration Actions”, *Time*, December 4, 2014 at <http://time.com/3618378/obama-immigration-lawsuit/>

<sup>59</sup> Hudson, David, “President Obama Nominates Ashton Carter as the Next Secretary of Defence”, *The White House*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/12/05/president-obama-nominates-ashton-carter-next-secretary-defense>. Accessed on December 7, 2014

his strongest supporters worry that Mr. Carter's mastery of the issues and his respected intellect will not give him significant influence in major national-security debates with White House officials whose sharp elbows have irked every one of his predecessors in the Obama administration.<sup>60</sup>

On December 7, the Department of Defence announced the transfer of Ahmed Adnan Ahjam, Ali Hussain Shaabaan, Omar Mahmoud Faraj, Abdul Bin Mohammed Abis Ourgy, Mohammed Tahanmatan, and Jihad Diyab from the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to the Government of Uruguay. The United States coordinated with the Government of Uruguay to ensure these transfers took place consistent with appropriate security and humane treatment measures. As directed by the president's January 22, 2009, executive order, the interagency Guantanamo Review Task Force conducted a comprehensive review of this case. As a result of that review, which examined a number of factors, including security issues, these men were unanimously approved for transfer by the six departments and agencies comprising the task force.<sup>61</sup>

## International: Asia

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Pentagon confident Afghan security forces can take full security control next month; Defence Secretary Hagel announced the delayed withdrawal of up to 1,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan; USFOR-A transfers three detainees to Pakistan; Challenges remain for US troops in Afghanistan, Hagel says; Pakistan's Military Kills Militant Wanted in US; US, Pakistan remain wary but relations improve.**

With less than a month to go before the U.S.-led NATO combat mission ends in Afghanistan, Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters on December 2 that Afghan security forces will be ready to take over the job of securing their country come January first. Some 9,800 U.S. troops are set to remain in Afghanistan in 2015, as part of Operation Resolute Support. That NATO mission follows 13 years of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, and will no longer include a combat role but will instead focus on training, advising and assisting Afghan forces. However, in recent days, there has been an increase in attacks claimed by the Taliban on key sites around the country, including in the capital, Kabul. Kirby said the attacks did not signal a Taliban resurgence but were to be expected during periods of transition.<sup>62</sup>

In an unannounced visit to Afghanistan, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel December 6 announced the delayed withdrawal of up to 1,000 U.S. troops from the country during the transition to Operation Resolute Support. Hagel said U.S. forces in Afghanistan would "always" have the right and the capacity to defend themselves against attacks. Also, the United States will take appropriate measures against Taliban members who directly threaten U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan

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<sup>60</sup> Nissenbaum, Dion, "Pentagon Nominee Vows Active Role on National Security", *The Wall Street Journal*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-to-nominate-pentagon-veteran-ashton-carter-as-defense-secretary-1417777202>. Accessed on December 7, 2014

<sup>61</sup> "Detainee Transfer Announced", *DoD News Release No: NR-609-14*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/Releases/Release.aspx?ReleaseID=17069>. Accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>62</sup> Simeone, Nick, "Kirby Confident Afghans Can Take Full Security Control Next Month", *DoD News*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=12374>. Accessed on December 6, 2014

or provide direct support to al Qaeda, he added. Hagel said, he has observed progress in Afghanistan during his time as defence secretary and earlier when he served in the U.S. Senate.<sup>63</sup>

United States Forces – Afghanistan (USFOR-A) confirms that on December 6, acting on behalf of the United States Government, we transferred custody of three Pakistanis held in U.S. custody in Afghanistan to Pakistan. This followed consultations between the United States and Pakistan and after receiving appropriate assurances. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was not involved in this transfer.<sup>64</sup>

Departing U.S. defence chief Chuck Hagel has told the remaining American troops in Afghanistan that they still have challenges to meet, even as their mission soon will shift from fighting Taliban insurgents to training Afghan troops.<sup>65</sup>

Pakistan's military says government forces have killed a top al-Qaida leader wanted in the United States for a 2009 plot to attack the New York subway system. The military says Adnan Shukrijumah was killed in an early morning raid on December 6 on his compound in Shinwarsak, South Waziristan, near the Afghan border. Two of his accomplices were also killed.<sup>66</sup>

The fitful U.S. relationship with Pakistan, which U.S. officials say is crucial to the future of Afghanistan and the effort to defeat al-Qaida, has been improving lately after years of bitter recriminations following the 2011 raid in Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden. In the latest sign of cooperation, the U.S. carried out a series of airstrikes in recent days against some of Pakistan's most wanted militants hiding in a remote border area. On November 24, an American airstrike in eastern Afghanistan narrowly missed Pakistani Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah, a top target for Pakistan's military, said a U.S. official, who was not authorized to be quoted by name discussing the clandestine operation and spoke on condition of anonymity.<sup>67</sup>

## (December 1-7, 2014)

- **U.S. military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq; U.S.-led coalition halting Islamic State's advances; Qaeda Group in Yemen Threatens to Kill American Journalist, Luke Somers; Senior U.S. leaders condemn murder of Luke Somers; North Korea 'volatile and dangerous,' Pacom nominee, Harris says; China's satellite navigation system**

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Hagel Meets With Leaders, Troops in Afghanistan", *DoD News*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123779>. Accessed on December 7, 2014

<sup>64</sup> "USFOR-A Transfers Three Detainees to Pakistan", *ISAF News*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-news/usfor-a-transfers-three-detainees-to-pakistan.html>. Accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>65</sup> "Hagel: Challenges Remain for US Troops in Afghanistan", *VOA News*, December 7, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/hagel-says-challenges-remain-for-us-troops-in-afghanistan/2549474.html>. Accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>66</sup> "Pakistan's Military Kills Militant Wanted in US", *VOA News*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/pakistan-al-qaida-killed/2548387.html>. Accessed on December 7, 2014

<sup>67</sup> "US, Pakistan Remain Wary But Relations Improve", *Associated Press*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-relationship-with-pakistan-wary-but-improving/2014/12/05/2a5a31c0-7c68-11e4-8241-8cc0a3670239\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-relationship-with-pakistan-wary-but-improving/2014/12/05/2a5a31c0-7c68-11e4-8241-8cc0a3670239_story.html)

**has won a stamp of approval from an international maritime body, a step towards global acceptance.**

U.S. military forces continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria December 1 through December 3 using fighter and bomber aircraft to conduct 14 airstrikes, U.S. Central Command officials reported on December 3. The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the terrorist group's ability to project terror and conduct operations. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Iraq include the U.S., Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria include the U.S., Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>68</sup>

The military campaign against Islamist extremists in Syria and Iraq is inflicting heavy damage, said officials from a coalition working to uproot the militants from their self-declared caliphate. Foreign ministers from the coalition of about 60 nations appeared so confident that they are making progress in the fight against the Islamic State that they have begun talking about the need to help Iraq rebuild once the extremists are ousted. The issue was raised by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi at the Brussels meeting, which was held after a year-end NATO summit. No dollar figure was mentioned, however. U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry said several nations in the region, both Sunni and Shiite, had offered to help pay for Iraq's rebuilding once it is rid of the Islamic State, an al-Qaeda offshoot that is also variously known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh.<sup>69</sup>

Seething over an attempt last month by United States commandos to free an American hostage, Al Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate has threatened to kill him by the end of the week and warned the Obama administration against further "foolish action," according to a video posted on *YouTube*. The journalist, Luke Somers, who appears in the video posted on December 3, has been missing since September 2013, when he was snatched off a street in Sana, the Yemeni capital.<sup>70</sup>

President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John F. Kerry and Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel condemned murder of U.S. photojournalist Luke Somers in Yemen on December 5 by al Qaeda terrorists as U.S. and Yemeni commandos attempted a rescue. Somers, 33, was taken hostage in Yemen in September 2013 by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, an al Qaeda splinter group. Another hostage, South African teacher Pierre Korkie, was also fatally shot during the rescue attempt. A November 25 raid by U.S. special operations forces to rescue Somers freed some other al Qaeda-held hostages, but Somers was not present.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Airstrikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq", From a U.S. Central Command News Release, *DoD News*, December 3, 2014, at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123748>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>69</sup> Morello, Carol, "U.S.-led Coalition Halting Islamic State's Advances, Officials Say", *The Washington Post*, December 3, 2014 at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/us-led-coalition-halting-islamic-states-advances-officials-say/2014/12/03/cd015874-7b08-11e4-84d4-7c896b90abdc\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/us-led-coalition-halting-islamic-states-advances-officials-say/2014/12/03/cd015874-7b08-11e4-84d4-7c896b90abdc_story.html)

<sup>70</sup> Fahim, Kareem and Callimachi, Rukmini, "Qaeda Group in Yemen Threatens to Kill American Journalist End of This Week", *The New York Times*, December 4, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/world/middleeast/qaeda-group-in-yemen-american-journalist.html?action=click&contentCollection=World&region=Footer&module=MoreInSection&pgtype=Blogs>

<sup>71</sup> "Senior U.S. Leaders Condemn Murder of Luke Somers", *DoD News*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123777>. Accessed on December 8, 2014

Navy Adm. Harry B. Harris Jr., the nominee to become the next commander of U.S. Pacific Command told Congress on December 2 that North Korea is the most volatile and dangerous threat in the Asia-Pacific region. Kim Jong Un is opportunistic, unpredictable and ruthless as he seeks to acquire nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them intercontinentally, Adm. Harris Jr. said during his nomination hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee. And, he added, Kim is likely to take advantage of a weakened U.S. presence in the region if sequestration returns in 2016 as scheduled and forces the Navy to make cuts to its carrier strike groups. North Korea's destabilizing efforts extend beyond the maritime realm and into cyber, he said.<sup>72</sup>

China's own satellite navigation system has won a stamp of approval from an international maritime body, an important step toward its goal of global acceptance for its answer to the United States' Global Positioning System (GPS). The Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization, a United Nations body that sets standards for international shipping, formally included Beidou in the World-Wide Radionavigation System during its November 17-21 meeting. This means that the Chinese system has become the third system, after GPS and Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS), recognized by the United Nations body for operations at sea.<sup>73</sup>

## India-US Relations

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **US to assist India in its military modernisation efforts; India, US need to ease defence-trade administrative hurdles, Mr Puneet says; India friendly former Pentagon official, Ashton Carter named new defence secretary; climate negotiators meet in Lima, Peru, in December 2014, hopeful of India to follow China; US says President Putin's India visit no shadow on Obama's trip in January; US condemns terrorist attacks in Kashmir and expresses its "commitment" to work with India to defeat terrorism.**

Admiral Harry Harris, nominee for US Pacific Command, told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during his confirmation hearing on December 3 that the US is committed to a broad defence trade and technology relationship with India to assist it in military modernisation efforts. Admiral Harris said that expanding bilateral security partnership is crucial for security and stability in Asia. He added, "A close, continuing, and expanding security partnership with India is important for security and stability in Asia and for effectively managing Indian Ocean security in the twenty-first century".<sup>74</sup>

The US and India must work together to ease the administrative burden on the defence trade as part of a continuing drive to expand their collaboration, said Puneet Talwar, US assistant secretary

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<sup>72</sup> Roulo, Claudette, "North Korea 'Volatile and Dangerous,' Pacom Nominee Says", *DoD News*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123742>. Accessed on December 5, 2014

<sup>73</sup> Feng, Bree, "A Step Forward for Beidou, China's Satellite Navigation System", *The New York Times*, December 4, 2014 at <http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/04/a-step-forward-for-beidou-chinas-satellite-navigation-system/?rref=world/asia>. Accessed on 5 December 2014

<sup>74</sup> Jha, Lalit K., "US to Assist India In Military Modernisation", *Press Trust of India*, December 3, 2014 at [http://www.ptinews.com/news/5419240\\_—US-to-assist-India-in-military-modernisation](http://www.ptinews.com/news/5419240_—US-to-assist-India-in-military-modernisation). Accessed on December 7, 2014

of state for political-military affairs, in New Delhi on December 3. Pointing out that the value of US military exports to India has grown from “near-zero to nearly USD10 billion” since 2008, Talwar said in a speech to the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses that the US aims to move “beyond a buyer-seller relationship towards one of co-development and co-production”. One way in which the US is attempting to promote this evolution is by easing administrative obstacles to defence trade with India, said Talwar.<sup>75</sup>

President Barack Obama on December 5 nominated Ashton Carter, a former Pentagon second-in command, who once described India as destined to be America’s security partner, as his new defence secretary in place of ousted Chuck Hagel. In his previous avatar as the deputy secretary of defence from October 2011 to December 2013, Carter is credited with enhancing India-US defence ties and pushing for easing restrictions on technology transfer to India. He together with India’s then National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon were tasked to lead India-US Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI) envisaging technology transfer and co-production and co-development of defence equipment.<sup>76</sup>

As climate negotiators meet in Lima, Peru, in first and second week of December 2014, and news reports are full of gloomy predictions that the negotiations will produce little, there are increasing signs that this stalemate may have been broken. This emerging shift is due in large part to China and its decision to break ranks and join the United States in making commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One critical question now is whether India — the country that has stood by China’s side in climate talks and is now the world’s third-largest emitter — will follow suit in a meaningful way at the Lima negotiations. And there seems to be a surprisingly high chance that India will.<sup>77</sup>

The US says “now is not the time for business as usual with Russia” but insists Russian President Vladimir Putin’s upcoming India visit would not cast a shadow on US President Barack Obama’s own trip in January. “Let’s wait and see what comes from the visit,” US State Department spokesperson Marie Harf told reporters on December 5 when asked about reports that a number of trade agreements on oil and gas as also a nuclear site may be signed during Putin’s India visit. However, Harf said, the Putin visit was not casting a shadow on Obama’s visit to India in January at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be the chief guest at India’s Republic day.<sup>78</sup>

The U.S. has strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Kashmir ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s poll rally, and said it remained firm on its “commitment” to work with India to defeat

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<sup>75</sup> Grevatt, Jon, “India, US Need To Ease Defence-Trade Administrative Hurdles, Says Official”, *IHS Jane’s Defence Industry*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.janes.com/article/46639/india-us-need-to-ease-defence-trade-administrative-hurdles-says-official>. Accessed on December 6, 2014

<sup>76</sup> “India Friendly Ashton Carter Named New US Defence Chief”, *Business Standard*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-friendly-ashton-carter-named-new-us-defense-chief-114120501338\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-friendly-ashton-carter-named-new-us-defense-chief-114120501338_1.html). Accessed on December 6, 2014

<sup>77</sup> Greenstone, Michael, “The Next Big Climate Question: Will India Follow China?”, *The New York Times*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/03/upshot/the-next-big-climate-question-will-india-follow-china.html?ref=asia&abt=0002&abg=0>

<sup>78</sup> “No Shadow Of Putin’s India Visit On Obama Trip: US”, *The Times of India*, December 6, 2014 at

terrorism in all forms. Kashmir Valley was on December 5 rocked by four terror attacks by militants from across the border who stormed an Army camp in Uri leaving 11 security personnel including a Lt Colonel dead and killed two civilians in Tral. Earlier in the day, the State Department expressed its concern about any violence in Kashmir adding that its policies on it have not changed. "We are concerned about any violence in Kashmir. Our policy on Kashmir hasn't changed. We still believe that the pace and the scope and character of India and Pakistan's dialogue on Kashmir is for those two countries to determine," State Department Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf, told reporters.<sup>79</sup>

## II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

### Jammu and Kashmir

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Votes were cast for 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Assembly polls; 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed makes anti-India speech in Lahore; Saeed, who is also the founder of the banned terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba, Saeed tells his supporters that efforts are being made to declare jihad terrorism; ahead of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Srinagar, multiple terrorist's attacks killed at least 21 people; Army recovers heavy ammunitions and logistics from terrorists.**

According to reports, a total of 71 per cent of voters cast their vote for the 18 seats of the State Assembly Elections on December 1. The first phase of the five-phase polls for 15 assembly seats had witnessed a record 71.28 per cent polling on November 25. There has been a marked increase in the voter turnout over the past polls of 2014 Lok Sabha elections (61.04 per cent) as well as the 2008 Assembly election (68.79 per cent).<sup>80</sup>

It was reported that the outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) Chief and 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed, while addressing a JuD congregation at historical Minar-e-Pakistan ground in Lahore had told his supporters that Pakistanis should come forward and help the Kashmiris in getting "freedom" from India. The two-day congregation that concluded on December 5 was attended by a large number of Saeed's supporters who had reached Lahore from all across Pakistan. There were also reports that the Nawaz Sharif government had run two special trains from Karachi and Hyderabad to transport people to the JuD congregation. Saeed, who roams freely in Pakistan despite being a designated terrorist, also asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to tell India firmly that the Kashmir issue had to be resolved peacefully under the United Nation's resolution.<sup>81</sup> Saeed,

<sup>79</sup> "US Condemns Terrorist Attacks In Kashmir", *The Hindu*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/us-condemns-terrorist-attacks-in-kashmir/article6667675.ece>; and, Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson, *Daily Press Briefing*, Washington, DC, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/12/234712.htm>. Accessed on December 8, 2014

<sup>80</sup> "Assembly Polls 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase : 71 pc Voting In J & K, 65.46 pc in Jharkhand ", *The Indian Express*, December 2, 2014 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/assembly-polls-live-second-phase-of-voting-underway-in-jharkhand-jk-amid-tight-security/>

<sup>81</sup> "Pakistanis Should Help Kashmiris in Getting Freedom from India, says Hafiz Saeed", *Firstpost*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/pakistanis-help-kashmiris-getting-freedom-india-says-hafiz-saeed-1836615.html>

who is also the founder of the banned terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba, told his supporters that efforts are being made to declare jihad terrorism.<sup>82</sup>

Just two days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Srinagar, terrorists struck at multiple targets leaving a total of 21 people dead in Kashmir on December 5. PM Narendra Modi was due to make a campaign stop in Srinagar in an election that has thus far seen voters turn out in unprecedented numbers in a strong rejection of the separatists' boycott call. The attacks took place in a span of 12 hours in four places in north, south and central Kashmir. The fatalities included eight soldiers, eight militants, three policemen and two civilians.<sup>83</sup> The main attack took place at around 3 am in the strategic Uri sector as six heavily armed foreign terrorists attacked a local garrison at Mahura housing the 31 Field Regiment and also the location of an ammunition depot. The encounter that lasted for almost seven hours after the militants entered, left eight troops, three policemen and two civilians dead. All the six terrorists were killed and five soldiers were injured during the face-off. The Army recovered six AK rifles with 55 magazines, two shotguns, two night vision binoculars, four radio sets, 32 unused grenades, one medical kit and a large quantity of warlike stores from the terrorists.<sup>84</sup>

## Left-wing Extremism

(December 1-7)

- **14 CRPF personnel killed in a Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh; Delayed arrival of IAF choppers hampered rescue of CRPF men; outlawed CPI (Maoist) calls for a 10-day "celebration" to mark the 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PLGA and calls for fresh recruitment to strengthen all three layers of PLGA; CRPF says, anti-Naxal operation failed because UAV pulled back midway; Government constitutes a high level committee to review the Standard operating Procedure (SoP) and to fine tune anti-Maoists strategy.**

At least 14 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, including two officers, were killed and as many injured in a Maoist ambush that took place on December 1, near Kasalpara village in Sukma district of south Chhattisgarh. A joint squad of CRPF, its elite battalion-CoBRA and district force was attacked by a large group of armed rebels in the dense forests in insurgency hit south Bastar when they were returning to their base camp after combing and area domination operations spread over several days in the Chintagufa region, about 450 km from Raipur. The attack took place in the same base region of outlawed CPI Maoist, where 76 troopers were massacred in 2010. This is the second ambush on the force within 10 days in the same area. Reportedly, the Naxals have carried out the attack by putting innocent villagers as human shield. There were also reports

<sup>82</sup> Baweja, Harinder, "J&K Polls No Substitute For Plebiscite, Says Hafiz", *Hindustan Times*, December 5, 2014 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/1293365.aspx>

<sup>83</sup> Hussain, Masood and Aurora, Bhavna Vij, "21 Killed In Terror Attacks Ahead of PM Narendra Modi's Visit in Kashmir", *Economic Times*, December 6, 2014 at [http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-06/news/56779854\\_1\\_two-militants-slain-militants-eight-militants](http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-06/news/56779854_1_two-militants-slain-militants-eight-militants)

<sup>84</sup> Ganai, Naseer, "Bloody Friday: Two civilians Among 21 Killed As Militants Go On The Rampage in Kashmir", *Mail Today*, December 6, 2014 at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2862906/Bloody-Friday-Two-civilians-21-killed-militants-rampage-Kashmir.html>

of eight Maoists being killed in the encounter.<sup>85</sup> Maoists took away ten AK-47s, including three UBGL (Under Barrel Grenade Launcher) attached, 900 rounds, 30 grenades of UBGL, an Insas LMG with 300 rounds, an Insas rifle with one magazine, four bullet proof jackets, a GPS and two binoculars after the encounter.<sup>86</sup>

Meanwhile, the outlawed CPI (Maoist) has called for a 10-day “celebration” to mark the 14th anniversary of People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA). In a six-page press communiqué issued on December 1, CPI (Maoist)’s eastern regional bureau (ERB) and eastern regional command (ERC), appealed to its rank and file in the Bihar-Jharkhand Special Area Committee (BJSAC), North Chhattisgarh Special Zonal Committee (NCSZC), Eastern Bihar-North-eastern Jharkhand Special Area Committee (UUSAC), West Bengal State Committee and Assam State Organizational Committee to intensify their activities in the next 10 days beginning on December 2. Criticizing the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led-NDA government at the Centre, the ERB spokesperson Abhay asserted that FDI in railway, insurance and defence is nothing but an attempt to open gates for foreign investors so that they can gradually be given access to our mineral and natural resources. He claimed that the party is in a long drawn war and the time is apt for bringing all people’s movement under one umbrella. It stated that all three layers of PLGA would be strengthened through fresh recruitment and a special drive will be taken up during the 10-day celebrations starting from December 2.<sup>87</sup>

In another development, the CRPF, which lost 14 of its men in the Naxal ambush, has alleged that the National Technological Research Organisation (NTRO) unilaterally pulled back its Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which was deployed for surveillance over Sukma when the anti-Maoist operation was underway in December. Keeping in mind the Maoist build-up and the operations which were on for a fortnight in Sukma, the Operation Directorate of the CRPF had placed an advanced “indent” for UAV deployment over Sukma from 8am to 5pm for December 1. The NTRO’s UAV is operated by personnel from the Indian Air Force (IAF), who are on deputation to the agency. Reportedly, the agency is facing a crunch in pilots and observers, and one set of pilots and observers cannot work for over four hours. The NTRO has barely two set of people at the best of times.<sup>88</sup>

In the wake of Naxal attack in Sukma district, a high-level committee headed by K Vijay Kumar, former Director General of CRPF and presently Advisor to the Union Home Ministry on Naxalism, was constituted by the Government to review the Standard operating Procedure (SoP) and to fine

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<sup>85</sup> “Maoists Ambush Toll Now 14, Rajnath Singh To Visit Chattisgarh Today”, *India Today*, December 2, 2014 at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/maoists-kill-14-crpf-men-in-chhattisgarh-rajnath-to-visit-chhattisgarh-naxals-sukma/1/404680.html>

<sup>86</sup> Dahat, Pavan, “Delayed Arrival of IAF Choppers Hampered Rescue of CRPF Men”, *The Hindu*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sukma-encounter-naxals-took-away-sophisticated-arms/article6654978.ece>

<sup>87</sup> Deogharia, Jaideep, “10-Day Celebration To Mark PLGA Anniversary”, *The Times of India*, December 2, 2014 at [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/10-day-celebration-to-mark-PLGAanniversary/articleshow/45348234.cms?intenttarget=no&utm\\_source=TOI\\_AShow\\_OBWidget&utm\\_medium=Int\\_Ref&utm\\_campaign=TOI\\_AShow](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/10-day-celebration-to-mark-PLGAanniversary/articleshow/45348234.cms?intenttarget=no&utm_source=TOI_AShow_OBWidget&utm_medium=Int_Ref&utm_campaign=TOI_AShow)

<sup>88</sup> Purohit, Jugal R, “CRPF Claims Anti-Naxal Operation Failed ‘Because UAV Pulled Out Mid-Way’”, *Daily Mail*, December 3, 2014 at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2858206/CRPF-claims-anti-Naxal-operation-failed-UAV-pulled-mid-way.html>

tune its' anti-Maoists strategy. The committee has been asked to go into minute details of December 1 incident in Sukhma to ascertain whether there was any lapse and suggest ways to avoid such incidents in future. Officials of the Home Ministry, the Intelligence Bureau, the CRPF and state governments will be part of the committee. Since the CRPF personnel, who were attacked in Chhattisgarh, were engaged in anti-Naxal operations for two weeks, the committee is expected to examine the fatigue factor of the forces.<sup>89</sup>

## Northeast India

(December 1-7)

- **Prime Minister Modi announces new projects for improving regional connectivity and power system in Northeast; North East to be made gateway of Southeast Asia; Land swap deal with Bangladesh; Myanmar team discusses regional cooperation; NE rebels flee Bangladesh crackdown.**

Inaugurating Nagaland's biggest annual Hornbill festival at Kohima on December 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the Centre would provide Rs 28,000 crore for laying new railway lines in the region focusing on improving connectivity to the northeast as well as to develop the "untapped" tourism potential of the area. The Prime Minister also said that the Centre has sanctioned Rs 5000 crore to provide 2G mobile coverage in this area for comprehensive telecom development plan of the northeast region. In addition, Rs 5000 crore has also been sanctioned for the northeastern region power system improvement project for six states, including Nagaland.<sup>90</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi also said that the northeastern region of India would be made gateway of Southeast Asia. An economic corridor would be established using northeast India, Myanmar and the adjoining regions.<sup>91</sup>

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a workers' meet of the BJP party held at the Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati on November 30, announced that his government would utilise the land transfer agreement with Bangladesh in a manner that might seem to be an immediate loss to Assam but serve the security interests of the State in the long term. He said that his government would utilise the agreement to seal all routes across the international border through which "illegal" Bangladeshi immigrants had been entering Assam and creating havoc in the State. However, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has been critical of both the BJP and the Asom Gana Parishad for opposing the land swap deal signed by the previous United Progressive Alliance government with Bangladesh. He has maintained that Assam will not lose land as projected by the two parties.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> "Govt To Review Counter-Naxal Strategy", *The Times of India*, December 4, 2014 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Govt-to-review-counter-Naxal-strategy/articleshow/45368063.cms>

<sup>90</sup> "PM Announces Rs 28,000 Crore for New Rail Projects in Northeast", *The Times of India*, December 1, 2014 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/PM-announces-Rs-28000-crore-for-new-rail-projects-in-northeast/articleshow/45331691.cms>

<sup>91</sup> "Northeast To Be Made Gateway Of Southeast Asia: Modi", *Business Standard*, December 1, 2014 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/northeast-india-to-be-made-gateway-of-southeast-asia-modi-114120100796\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/northeast-india-to-be-made-gateway-of-southeast-asia-modi-114120100796_1.html)

<sup>92</sup> Talukdar, Sushanta, "Land Swap to Ensure Assam Security: Modi", *The Hindu*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/prime-minister-narendra-modi-addresses-bjp-workers-meeting-in-guwahati/article6648656.ece>

Reportedly, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs on December 1 tabled its report recommending a Constitution Amendment Bill to enable the swapping of enclaves and end a 67-year-old dispute between the two countries. The swap will involve handing over 17,000 acres of land to Bangladesh in return for 7,000 acres in 111 enclaves in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. The number of people to be involved in the whole swap is approximately 52,000, of which about 15,000 are on the Indian side of the border. However, the swap will require an amendment to the Constitution (the 119th amendment) ratified by both Houses of Parliament with a two-thirds majority.<sup>93</sup>

In another development, a high powered delegation from Myanmar met top government officials and business representatives from Assam on December 3 in Guwahati to discuss different areas of co-operation. The delegates discussed the business potential in the region and the way to harness it. It also dwelt on the possibilities of cooperation in sectors such as education, power, tourism and food processing. The Myanmar delegation was led by the Chief Minister of Sagaing, Tha Aye, and the chief minister of Kachin, La John Ngan Sai.<sup>94</sup>

The Bangladesh government launched a massive drive against the Northeast militants, based in the interior areas of Chittagong Hill Tracts. As a result of the operation launched by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and a rapid action battalion on November 22, the National Liberation Front of Tripura rebels have fled the jungles of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. High-level sources in the Special Branch of Tripura police said that they had received feedback from sources across the border that in the past 12 days, six hideouts of NLFT, HNLC and NDFB militants had been destroyed resulting in the arrest of at least seven suspected NLFT militants and allegedly one each of HNLC and NDFB. After the operations commenced on November 22, senior NLFT commander Karna Debbarma was arrested the next morning from Dighinala area under Khagrachherri district. The operation is still continuing.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Haidar, Suhasini, "Bill Sought To Ratify Boundary Pact", *The Hindu*, December 2, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/bill-sought-to-ratify-boundary-pact/article6652471.ece>

<sup>94</sup> "Myanmar Team Discusses Regional Cooperation", *The Telegraph*, December 4, 2014 available at <http://www.telegraphindia.com/archives/archive.html>

<sup>95</sup> "NE Rebels Flee Bangla Crackdown", *The Telegraph*, December 5, 2014 at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141205/jsp/frontpage/story\\_19170196.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141205/jsp/frontpage/story_19170196.jsp)