

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(December 7-13, 2015)

- ADB grants \$1.2bln to support energy security; Intelligence chief Nabil's resignation accepted; Ghani receives unexpected welcome in Pakistan; Thirty One Afghan army cadets graduate from Indian Military Academy.**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on December 7 approved \$1.2 billion grants to reinforce ongoing energy projects in Afghanistan, provide new funds to boost supply and promote cross-border trade in energy. The grants include \$750 million from ADB's Special Funds resources, and up to \$450 million from the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund, which will be administered by the Manila-based bank. In a statement, ADB said the funds would be disbursed in multiple tranches, with the first amounting to \$275 million earmarked for release this year. The remaining tranches will follow through to 2025. Afghanistan's energy demand has grown by almost twice its economic growth rate from 2005 to 2012, and it taps around 80 per cent of its total supplies from neighbouring countries. The reliance on energy imports, small size of the domestic market, limitations in transmission and distribution networks and governance and financing weaknesses leave energy security highly vulnerable. In its first tranche, ADB will fund the last missing links for an expanded Turkmenistan-Afghanistan power interconnection, allowing the country to increase electricity imports for year-round supplies.¹

The ARG Presidential Palace confirmed President Ghani has accepted the resignation of National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief Rahmatullah Nabil's resignation. A statement by the Palace said "Mr. Nabil presented his resignation to the President of Afghanistan for approval today. Despite the President was not in favour of changes in this security department during the current situation, but he respected Mr. Nabil's demand and approved it." President Ghani will call for a meeting this evening to appoint the acting chief from within the National Directorate of Security, the statement said. Reports regarding the resignation of Nabil emerged this afternoon and followed an unusual statement posted on his official Facebook page. Nabil harshly criticized the Pakistani leadership's stance regarding the ongoing situation in Afghanistan and efforts to bring the Taliban group to negotiation table. Nabil said the innocent Afghan civilians were martyred and beheaded in Kandahar airfield, Khanshin district of Helmand, Takhar and Badakhshan at the same Nawaz Sharif was delivering his speech, once calling the enemy of Afghanistan as Pakistan's enemy.²

¹ "ADB Grants \$1.2bln to Support Energy Security", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, December 8, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13827

² "ARG: President Ghani Accepts Intelligence Chief Nabil's Resignation", *Khaama Press*, December 10, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/arg-president-ghani-accepts-intelligence-chief-nabils-resignation-1798>

Afghan political leaders warned President Ashraf Ghani not to smile when he reached Islamabad on December 9, but he soon found that to be hard going. As the Afghan president stepped off his plane at the airport, he appeared surprised to discover that the greeting party far exceeded the demands of protocol: The Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, and the country's military chiefs were on hand, along with many other dignitaries, as an honour guard blasted a 21-gun salute. It was the sort of welcome normally reserved for visits from prominent Pakistani allies like the president of China or the king of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Ghani had been under intense pressure not to attend conference, even though he was the co-host, with Pakistan, of the Heart of Asia conference, which was billed as an attempt to promote economic and security cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours and was expected to include representatives from every other country in South and Central Asia. The welcome was a clear measure that Pakistan badly wants to mend the relationship. But in a speech to his hosts shortly later, he again criticized Pakistan for failing to deprive the Taliban of safe havens here. We are fighting on behalf of all of you, but we are the ones who are suffering some of the worst atrocities," Mr. Ghani said.³

The Afghan National Army (ANA) cadets comprised the majority of the Foreign Gentlemen Cadets (FGCs) during the 137th graduation ceremony of the Indian Military Academy. Held in Dehradun city of India, 31 Afghan army cadets participated in the graduation ceremony along with 19 cadets from other countries. The 50 Foreign Gentlemen Cadets (FGCs) were part of 519 cadets graduated from the Indian Military Academy on December 12. Afghan army Jawad Ehsani quoted in a report by a local newspaper said the training at the IMA would help them neutralise terrorists in their country. Ehsani further added he would share warfare techniques and counter-insurgency skills with his fellow officers when he joins the Afghan army. This comes as 15 cadets of the Afghan National Army (ANA) completed their training at the Indian Army's Officers Training Academy and were commissioned as officers. The Afghan army cadets were among 279 cadets who passed out of the academy on Saturday during a parade in the presence of General Officer, Commanding-in-Chief of Army's Eastern Command, Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi.⁴

Pakistan

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Deadlock in relations with India eased to some extent; Pak-China joint military exercise begins; Impact of Indian construction on rivers to be evaluated; Lal Masjid cleric for Sharia in country; PM stresses robust cooperation for regional prosperity.**

Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz Monday said that deadlock in Pakistan-India relations have eased to some extent. Talking to the newsmen after attending a conference, he said that Indian External Affairs Minister Shushma Swaraj is arriving in

³ "Ghani Receives Unexpected Welcome in Pakistan", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, December 10, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13845

⁴ "31 Afghan Army Cadets Graduate From Indian Military Academy", *Khaama Press*, December 13, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/31-afghan-army-cadets-graduate-from-indian-military-academy-1804>

Islamabad on December 8 to attend the conference. She will also call on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for a meeting. He welcomed the arrival of Sushma Swaraj in Islamabad and said various matters with focus on resumption of composite dialogue between the two countries will be discussed during talks with the Indian minister. "This is a good beginning. The deadlock has eased to some extent," he said. The visit is part of efforts to restart peace dialogue plagued by militant attacks and distrust, he added. To a question, the advisor said that Afghan president is also arriving on December 9. The two-day ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process is beginning today here at the Foreign Office, with inaugural address by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz. The issues of regional and national security, peace and development in Afghanistan and the region will be discussed in the meeting, to be attended by representatives from Afghanistan, India, Tajikistan, United States, China and other countries. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani are scheduled to inaugurate the December 9 event.⁵

A two-week long joint training exercise 'YOUYI 5' between special forces of China and Pakistan started in Qingtongxia city of China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region on December 8. According to ISPR, the impressive opening ceremony was attended by senior military officers of special forces of Pakistan and People's Liberation Army (PLA). National anthems of both countries were played on the occasion. The joint exercise as part of Year of Friendship 2015 will focus on anti-terrorist operations, hostage and rescue, cordon and search operations. Take a look: Pak-China military relations to reach unprecedented heights: COAS. The joint exercise will enhance and further strengthen already deep military ties between Pakistan and China. The YOUYI 5 is being carried out in extreme weather conditions of northern China to impart and share Pakistan Army's experiences in war against terrorism.⁶

Having lost a couple of major international arbitrations in water disputes, the government has decided to carry out a comprehensive study to evaluate the impact of Indian construction on rivers flowing into Pakistan. The 2013 judgment by the International Court of Arbitration over the Kishanganga hydropower project dispute had gone against Pakistan, mainly because of inability of the authorities to provide data that could establish water uses inside areas under its control in Azad Kashmir as well as the project's environmental impact. The government's belated challenge to the Baglihar hydropower project before a neutral expert also could not yield desired results as the project structure was acknowledged as *fait accompli*. This is among some of the issues on which the provincial governments will submit their recommendations at a brainstorming session of stakeholders to be organised by the Water and Power Development Authority, according to official papers. The provincial governments and other stakeholders will also give their viewpoints regarding introduction of an effective

⁵ "Indian FM, Afghan President Arriving Today To Attend Heart of Asia Conference: Deadlock in Relations With India Eased To Some Extent: Pakistan", *Daily Times*, December 8, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-08/page-1/detail-0>

⁶ "Joint Military Exercise Begins in China", *Dawn*, December 9, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1225207/joint-military-exercise-begins-in-china>

mechanism for all kinds of water uses to ensure self-reliant operations and maintenance of irrigation and drinking water infrastructure.⁷

Red Mosque cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz on December 10 filed a writ petition in Supreme Court for the imposition of Sharia in the country. The petition asked for amending the constitution, if needed, for the early promulgation of Sharia and added that the government is violating Article 5 of the Constitution by not imposing Sharia. In his petition, Abdul Aziz stated that the articles related to Islam in the constitution should be immediately implemented along with the recommendation of Islamic Ideology Council. President, National Assembly speaker, Islamic Ideology Council chairman and all the four governors were made respondents in the petition filed by Maulana Abdul Aziz through his counsel, Advocate Tariq Asad. "The state of Pakistan was founded on a specific conviction and an ideology which means there would be a state where Muslims should have full opportunity to live according to their faith and creed, the resources and environment to promote Islamic polity and civilisation as that was its sole purpose as was explained in the two-nation theory, stated the petition. It further stated that the people of Pakistan are facing acute problems like political instability, corruption, economic crisis, identity crisis, legitimacy crisis, leadership crisis, decay of partnership among the federation and units, corruption in anti-corruption agencies, insecurity, anti-state foreign policy, lack of transparency in public budgets and the people of Pakistan are suffering as their fundamental rights are being violated particularly Article 9.⁸

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on December 12 that Pakistan wanted friendly relations with all countries and wished to hold talks with them on an equal basis for mutual peace and prosperity. "We believe that shared prosperity is real prosperity," he said. Pakistan, he said, was pursuing a policy of cooperation with regional countries, particularly its neighbours, for enhanced prosperity and connectivity in the region. Mr Sharif was speaking at a conference entitled "Policy of neutrality: international cooperation for peace, security and development", held here in connection with the 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan's policy of permanent neutrality. He lauded the host country's policy and urged all countries to show respect for other nations' beliefs and cultures, which was a vital component of neutrality. The prime minister described the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the CASA-1000 and road projects with Afghanistan as manifestations of his policy to improve regional connectivity. The key pillar of this policy, he said, was regional integration and connectivity. The International Road Transports conventions and the World Trade Organisation would help in promoting trade in the region, he added.⁹

⁷ "Impact of Indian Construction On Rivers To Be Evaluated", *Dawn*, December 10, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1225409/impact-of-indian-construction-on-rivers-to-be-evaluated>

⁸ "Lal Masjid Cleric Moves SC for Sharia in Country", *Daily Times*, December 11, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2015-12-11/page-1/detail-4>

⁹ "PM Stresses Robust Cooperation For Regional Prosperity", *Dawn*, December 13, 2015, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1226095/pm-stresses-robust-cooperation-for-regional-prosperity>

Bangladesh

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Exports accelerate to three-month high; Money laundering from Bangladesh hits decade high; Bangladesh gets 5 Russian choppers; Indian Coast Guard DG visits Chittagong; US Department of State delegation visits Bangladesh.**

Exports grew 13.63 per cent year-on-year in November, the highest in three months, riding on the sales of apparel items. Bangladesh raked in \$2.75 billion in export earnings in November 2015, which is 16.7 per cent higher than the target for the month, according to data from Export Promotion Bureau. The amount is also an improvement from the previous month, when \$2.37 billion was received. Of the receipts in November, garment exports alone accounted for \$2.22 billion, up 23.3 per cent from the previous month and 14.43 per cent from a year earlier. But receipts from almost all other major export items, including leather, dropped in November.¹⁰

Illegal capital flight from Bangladesh surged 33.78 per cent year-on-year to \$9.66 billion in 2013 through trade misinvoicing and other channels, according to a report of Global Financial Integrity (GFI). The highest in a decade, the amount was more than six per cent of the country's GDP and one-third of the export receipts in 2013. It is three times the size of average foreign aid Bangladesh received in recent times. Of the amount, \$8.35 billion or over 86 per cent was siphoned off through trade misinvoicing while the rest \$1.31 billion could not be traced in the balance of payments data. The illegal outflow stood at \$7.23 billion in 2012, according to a revised estimate of the GFI report. The Washington-based research and advisory organisation published the report titled "Illegal Financial Flows from Developing Countries: 2004-2013" on December 9. On average, \$5.59 billion was siphoned out of Bangladesh a year between 2004 and 2013.¹¹

Bangladesh's defence ministry has received five Mi-171Sh helicopters under a state credit contract of late 2013 from Russian Helicopters, a part of State Corporation Rostec, for use in UN humanitarian missions, transport, border security and regions facing complex problems. They are designed to combat armoured ground, surface, immobile and mobile small targets, carry out search and rescue operations, and transport up to 37 paratroopers, 4,000 kilogrammes of cargo and 12 injured persons on stretchers.¹²

Director General (DG) of Indian Cast Guard Vice Admiral HCS Bisht, AVSM called on Zonal Commander of Bangladesh Coast Guard (east zone) Captain M. Shahidul Islam at the latter's office in Chittagong on December 10. During the visit, he praised Bangladesh Coast Guard for

¹⁰ "Exports Accelerate To Three-Month High", *The Daily Star*, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/exports-accelerate-three-month-high-183445>.

¹¹ Karim, Rejaul Byron and Rahman, Md Fazlur, "Money Laundering From Bangladesh Hits Decade High", *The Dily Star*, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/money-laundering-hits-decade-high-185101>.

¹² "Bangladesh Gets 5 Russian Choppers", *The Daily Star*, December 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-gets-5-russian-choppers-186442>.

playing an effective role in resisting smuggling and human trafficking through the sea route and sought cooperation from Bangladesh to prevent such kind of criminal activities.¹³

An US delegation led by Counsellor of the US Department of State Ambassador Thomas Shannon visited Dhaka on December 13 on a one-and-a-half day visit. Shannon was accompanied by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Desai Biswal, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia Manpreet Singh Anand. During the visit, the delegation met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her International Affairs Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi, and Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmood Ali and Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque. Security, trade, development and countering extremism dominated the talks. Shannon also addressed a seminar on "The US-Bangladesh Relationship: Working Together on Global Issue" organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.¹⁴

Sri Lanka

(December 7-13, 2015)

- IMF warns Lanka facing higher financial risks; PM insists no CEPA, new deal with India; Government defends de-listing Diaspora groups; EU housing project to benefit more than 300, 000; India gifts ICGS Varaha ship to Sri Lanka.**

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that despite continued access to international debt markets, trends in Sri Lanka suggest that financial risks for the country have increased. To mitigate these risks, the IMF says the authorities should take appropriate corrective actions to safeguard macroeconomic stability and lay the foundation for durable and inclusive growth.¹⁵

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament that Sri Lanka will not sign the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India. He said that the Sri Lankan Government is negotiating a new agreement on economic and technological cooperation with India. The Prime Minister said that under the new proposed agreement with India, local youth will get more job opportunities in Sri Lanka. Opposition member Dinesh Gunawardena urged the Prime Minister to have a discussion with the opposition before the new agreement is finalised with India. The Prime Minister agreed to the request and said he will have a meeting with the opposition before December 19 to discuss the new deal.¹⁶

The Government of Sri Lanka defended the de-listing of several diaspora groups and individuals earlier accused of having links to terrorism. State Defence Minister Ruwan Wijewardena, speaking in Parliament on December 8, said that the de-listing was carried out

¹³ "Indian Coast Guard DG Visits Ctg", *The Daily Star*, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/indian-coast-guard-dg-visits-ctg-186040>.

¹⁴ "US Dept of State Delegation Due Today", *The Daily Star*, December 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/us-dept-state-delegation-due-today-186466>.

¹⁵ "IMF Warns Lanka Facing Higher Financial Risks", *Colombo Gazette*, December 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/10/imf-warns-lanka-facing-higher-financial-risks/>.

¹⁶ "PM Insists No CEPA, New Deal with India, China", *Colombo Gazette*, December 9, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/09/pm-insists-no-cepa-new-deal-with-india-china/>.

following a comprehensive study conducted out on the groups and individuals by a high level committee. He said that the study concluded that the diaspora groups and individuals who were de-proscribed recently were not involved in terrorism related activities over the past three years.¹⁷

With a financial envelope of €14 million, more than 300, 000 people are expected to benefit from the support provided by the European Union to build houses and improve community infrastructure for internally displaced people and returnees. The activities will be implemented from 2016-2018 in nine selected divisions of the Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Batticaloa districts by Habitat for Humanity. This initiative dovetails on the earlier housing programmes for which the European Union contributed with €50 million in the districts of Killinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya and Batticaloa. Speaking during the signing of the project, Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, David Daly said, "The project contributes to a sustainable solution for returnee families with the specific objective of improving the living conditions and social cohesion of displaced people, returnees and their host communities."¹⁸

In a written reply in the Lok Shaba on December 10, India's Minister of State for Defence Rao Inderjit Singh said that Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Varaha was transferred on lease to Sri Lankan Navy in April, 2006. The lease was extended from time to time. On the request of Sri Lankan side, the ship was gifted to Government of Sri Lanka on a permanent basis in August 2015 as a goodwill gesture in line with India's commitment to enhance bilateral defence cooperation. No representation opposing the Government decision for gifting ICGS Varaha to Sri Lanka has been received in the Ministry.¹⁹

Maldives

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Chine provides free aid to renovate the Islamic Centre area; Dunya Maumoon meets Sri Lankan Prime Minister in Colombo; Shahare expresses India's interest in further contributing to Maldives' development; President: A peaceful region is integral to ensuring peaceful nations.**

The Chinese Government has provided free aid to renovate the Islamic Centre area with marble flooring to accommodate as many people as possible in prayer. China provided US\$ 1.14 million in free aid for the project. The cheque for free aid was presented by the Chinese

¹⁷ "Government Defends De-Listing Diaspora Groups", *Colombo Gazette*, December 8, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/08/government-defends-de-listing-diaspora-groups/>.

¹⁸ "EU Housing Project To Benefit More Than 300, 000", *Colombo Gazette*, December 7, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/07/eu-housing-project-to-benefit-more-than-300-000/>.

¹⁹ "Donation of Varaha Ship to Sri Lanka", *PIB*, December 10, 2015, Release ID :133045, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

Ambassador to the Maldives Wang Fukang the Housing Minister Dr. Mohamed Muizzu at a special ceremony held at the Housing Ministry.²⁰

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives Dunya Maumoon met with Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo. Discussions at the meeting were focused on strengthening bilateral relations. Earlier, Minister Dunya Maumoon urged not to allow any third country influence the relations between Maldives and Sri Lanka. She said that there have been reports in the Maldives media that some countries were applying pressure on the Sri Lankan government to publicly express concerns about the Maldives.²¹

High Commissioner of India to the Maldives Rajeev Shahare has expressed India's keen interest in further contributing to the development of Maldives. Shahare made this remark during a courtesy call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom at the President's Office on December 8. Speaking at the meeting, President Yameen noted that this year would mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Maldives and India. He expressed gratitude to the Indian government for its continuous support to the Maldives in the international arena and in all areas of development, and reassured the Maldives' commitment to strengthening India-Maldives relations.²²

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has called on South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to prioritize improving relations with its neighbours, and said that a peaceful region is integral to ensuring peaceful nations. This came in the President's message on the occasion of this year's SAARC Charter Day. President Yameen also reaffirmed the Maldives' commitment to the SAARC ideals and pledged to foster greater regional cooperation for the advancement of South Asia, and called on SAARC countries to put aside their differences and work together to realize their common goal for a better and more prosperous future.²³

B. East Asia

Japan

(December 7-13, 2015)

- India-Japan summit; Japan and North Korea meeting on abduction issue; Japan institutes a new Counterterrorism intelligence unit.**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited India from December 11-13. The Joint Statement on India and Japan Vision 2025: Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World was issued on December

²⁰ "Chine Provides Free Aid to Renovate the Islamic Center Area", *SunOnline*, December 9, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35117>.

²¹ "Dunya Meets with Sri Lankan PM", *SunOnline*, December 9, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35096>.

²² "Shahare Expresses India's Interest in Further Contributing to Maldives' Development", *SunOnline*, December 8, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35083>.

²³ "President: A Peaceful Region Is Integral To Ensuring Peaceful Nations", *SunOnline*, December 8, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35082>

12.²⁴ Both countries reiterated their pledge to realise a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. Several other agreements were signed including Agreement concerning transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation, Agreement concerning security measures for the protection of classified military information, Agreement on Amendment Protocol of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, Memorandum concerning the Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, MoC on High Speed Railways, MoC between Ministry of Railways and MLIT on Technological Cooperation in Rail Sector, MoU on technological cooperation between Research Designs and Standards Organization (RDSO) and Japan Railway Technical Research Institute (JRTRI) and Letter of Intent on the Strategic International Cooperative Programme between Department of Science and Technology of India and the Japan Science and Technology Agency²⁵. In an important development, Japan decided to give a \$12 billion loan for India's first high-speed train.²⁶

Reports suggested that in November 2015, Japan and North Korea held two unofficial working-level meetings in China including one in Shanghai on the abduction issue. During the meetings, Tokyo called for prompt and honest investigations of the abductees.²⁷

Following the Paris attacks, Japan instituted a new Counterterrorism intelligence unit under the PMO that will communicate with overseas agencies and gather information on cases and threats. The objective is to deepen cooperation with the intelligence agencies of other nations.²⁸

The Korea Peninsula

(December 7-13, 2015)

- South Korean Navy reportedly fired 10 rounds of warning shots; Uncertainties over Inter-Korean ties grow; Korea-New Zealand FTA to enter force; South Korea-Japan talks on comfort women issue; MoU on suspension of collection of taxes was signed.**

²⁴ "Joint Statement on India and Japan Vision 2025: Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World (December 12, 2015)", MEA, December 12, 2015 at http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26176/Joint_Statement_on_India_and_Japan_Vision_2025_Special_Strategic_and_Global_Partnership_Working_Together_for_Peace_and_Prosperity_of_the_IndoPacific_R

²⁵ "List of documents exchanged during the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to India in New Delhi (December 12, 2015)", MEA, GOI, December 12, 2015 at http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26177>List_of_documents_exchanged_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_Shinzo_Abe_of_Japan_to_India_in_New_Delhi_December_12_2015

²⁶ Jacob, Jayanth, "India, Japan Fast-Track Ties With Bullet Train, Civil Nuclear Deal", *Hindustan Times*, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/india-japan-ink-mou-on-civil-nuclear-energy-bullet-train/story-mKen9n93PKaGv85oeSmiwM.html>; and, "India and Japan ink three agreements for cooperation in Railway Sector", PIB, December 13, 2015, Release ID :133138, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

²⁷ "Japan, North Korea Secretly Held Abduction Talks in November", KYODO, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/12/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-north-korea-secretly-held-abduction-talks-in-november/#.VpNzHrZ961t>

²⁸ "Japan Launches Counterterrorism Unit To Liaise With Foreign Spy Agencies", KYODO, December 8, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/08/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-launches-counterterrorism-unit-liaise-foreign-spy-agencies/#.VpN6bbZ961t>

The South Korean Navy reportedly fired 10 rounds of warning shots aimed at a Chinese ship allegedly violating the western maritime border, known as the Northern Limit Line. Following this the Navy has strengthened surveillance near the NLL.²⁹

The vice minister-level talks initiated on December 11 in Gaeseong between the two Koreas failed following difference of opinion over several matters including the suspended tours to Mount Geumgangsan and the separated family issue. Seoul stress on the humanitarian cause of divided families and argues that this issue should not be clubbed together with the tour resumption issue. Tours were stalled following the death of a South Korean tourist in 2008.³⁰

Korea-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement is scheduled to come to force on December 20. The objective is to enhance bilateral trade considerably from the present \$2.85 billion. Reports suggest that eliminated tariffs on manufactured goods will help Korean businesses. Both agreed to eliminate tariffs including 45 per cent duty on kiwifruit, 89 per cent on butter, 40 per cent on beef, 15 per cent on wine and up to 11 per cent on processed wood products.³¹

The 11th South Korea-Japan talks on comfort women issue is secluded in Tokyo. Seoul demands a formal apology from Japan while Tokyo argues that legal responsibility has been settled in a 1965 during normalize diplomatic ties.³²

A New Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on suspension of collection of taxes during pendency of Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) was signed between India and South Korea. This MoU will relieve the burden of double taxation for the taxpayer in both the countries during the pendency of MAP proceedings. Earlier a meeting was held here today between Indian and South Korean delegations headed by Revenue Secretary, Government of India and Commissioner, National Tax Service, South Korea under the MoU for Mutual Co-operation between the countries. The New MoU was also signed in the said Meeting. Further, both sides noted that transfer pricing dispute cases will be taken-up for MAP under the revised DTAA between India and South Korea. This is a step towards ease of doing business in India for Korean companies as it will relieve economic double taxation and promote cross-border trade and investment.³³

²⁹ "Korean Navy Fires Warning Shots To Chinese Ship in West Sea", *Yonhap*, December 8, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151208000923>

³⁰ "Uncertainties Over Inter-Korean Ties Grow", *The Korea Herald*, December 13, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151213000469>

³¹ "Korea-New Zealand FTA to Enter Force on Dec. 20", *The Korea Herald*, December 14, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151213000405>

³² "Seoul, Tokyo To Hold Talks On 'Comfort Women' Issue", *Yonhap*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151211000658>

³³ "India and South Korea Signs a New Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Suspension Of Collection Of Taxes During Pendency of Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP); MoU To Relieve The Burden Of Double Taxation For The Taxpayer In Both The Countries During The Pendency of MAP Proceedings", *PIB*, December 9, 2015, Release ID :132879, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

C. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia

(December 7-13, 2015)

- **US to deploy spy plane in Singapore amid China tensions; US temporarily lifts trade restrictions on Myanmar shipping hubs; Vietnam aids Laos' military training; US strengthens Philippine alliance with military vehicle delivery.**

The United States agreed with Singapore on a first deployment of the U.S. P8 Poseidon spy plane in Singapore in December, in a fresh response to China over its pursuit of territorial claims in South China Sea (SCS). China, which is at odds with Washington over the SCS, said on December 8 that the move was aimed at militarizing the region. In a joint statement after a meeting in Washington on December 7, U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen welcomed the inaugural deployment of the aircraft in Singapore from December 7-14. The move came at a time of heightened tensions in the SCS. "I think this kind of increase in military deployment by the United States and pushing regional militarization does not accord with the joint long-term interests of the countries in this region," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying. The United States operates P8s from Japan and the Philippines, and has also conducted surveillance flights from Singapore's neighbour, Malaysia. The statement said that the P8 deployment in Singapore would "promote greater interoperability with regional militaries through participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises, while providing timely support for regional Humanitarian and Disaster Relief operations (HADR) and maritime security efforts." The United States and Singapore have long-standing defence ties and the announcement of the P8 deployment was part of an enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement signed by Carter and Ng, which also covers cooperation in fighting transnational terrorism and piracy.³⁴

The United States temporarily eased trade restrictions on Myanmar by allowing all shipments to go through its ports and airports for six months. The policy change, coming after Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in November in Myanmar's first nationwide free elections in 25 years, applied even to ports and airports controlled by entities on the U.S. sanctions blacklist. To bolster Myanmar's transition to democracy after decades of military rule, U.S. officials began lifting sanctions against the country after a civilian government was formed in 2011. But officials acknowledged that remaining U.S. sanctions against those with ties to Myanmar's military had the unintended consequence of halting "many, many dozens" of shipments. Major U.S. banks, such as Citigroup, Bank of America and PNC Financial were shying away from backing Myanmar trade after discovering that the Asia World port – one of the country's most important shipping terminals - was controlled by a businessman on America's sanctions blacklist. While the policy shift allowed financing of shipments through blacklisted trade hubs, banks were

³⁴ Brunnstrom, David, "U.S. To Deploy Spy Plane In Singapore Amid China Tensions", *Reuters*, December 8, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-singapore-southchinasea-idUSKBN0TQ2K720151208>

still barred from doing business directly with the banned firms. The move would lend a boost to Suu Kyi's party, and was potentially the single most important thing that US could do on the economic front immediately to give the NLD some breathing space over coming few months as it was expected to form government.³⁵

Military gears and training programmes worth nearly 577 million VND (26,200 USD) were handed over to the Mapping Department of the Laos People's Army by the General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) in Vientiane on December 8. Colonel Thongchan Vannasi said that the VPA's Mapping Department had supported and provided numerous gears and training programmes to Laos in the past years, helping the country's military and its mapping sector improve their professional competence. The colonel asserted that the act featured the special bond between the two countries' departments, militaries and people. He also pledged to effectively make use of the package in a view to increasing the professional competence, contributing to protecting and developing the country.³⁶

The U.S. said that it had delivered 77 armoured personnel carriers to the Philippines as Washington continued to strengthen security ties with one of its oldest Asian allies, amid security threats from Beijing in the SCS. Under a programme to distribute excess defence-equipment to friendly countries, the U.S. had agreed in 2012 to provide the Philippines with 114 second-hand carriers. The delivery, announced on December 10 by the U.S. Embassy in Manila, was the latest example of allied assistance to the country, which was rebuilding its obsolete military with limited resources in the face of growing external threats, notably from China in the disputed SCS. The defence pact had been delayed by a legal challenge, but the Philippines' Supreme Court would hold a special session on December 16 to decide whether the deal could finally move forward. The U.S. and the Philippines had been actively boosting military cooperation despite the legal obstacles. In particular, the U.S. had been conducting surveillance flights from Clark Air Base north of Manila to help the archipelago nation monitor its maritime territory. Australia and South Korea had also agreed to provide used military equipment to Manila, and Japan was studying a Philippine request to do likewise.³⁷

Oceania

(December 7-13, 2015)

- New Zealand, Australia lead Japan whaling protest; Philippines, Australia vow cooperation against Islamic militants.**

New Zealand led an international protest on December 7 against Japan's plans to resume killing whales in the Southern Ocean, while Australia said that it was considering further legal

³⁵ Schectman, Joel and Torbati, Yeganeh , "U.S. Temporarily Lifts Trade Restrictions On Myanmar Shipping Hubs", *Reuters*, December 7, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-myanmar-sanctions-trade-idUSKBN0TQ2IM20151207>

³⁶ "Vietnam Aids Laos' Military Training", *Vietnamnet*, December 9, 2015 at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/148520/vietnam-aids-laos-military-training.html>

³⁷ Moss, Trefor, "U.S. Strengthens Philippine Alliance With Military-Vehicle Delivery", *The Wall Street Journal*, December 10, 2015, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-strengthens-philippine-alliance-with-military-vehicle-delivery-1449744017>

action. Prime Minister John Key said that New Zealand's ambassador to Tokyo delivered a "strong" formal message from 33 countries, including the United States and Australia, to Japan. "We consider that there is no scientific basis for the slaughter of whales and strongly urge the government of Japan not to allow it to go ahead," Key said in a statement. A Japanese whaling fleet set sail for the Antarctic last week, despite environmentalists slamming the move as a "crime against nature". Tokyo said in November that it planned to kill 333 minke whales for scientific research this season, despite a worldwide moratorium and opposition led by Australia and New Zealand. The fleet's departure marked the end of a year-long suspension prompted by a United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in 2014 that the annual hunt was a commercial venture masquerading as research. Australia, which hauled Japan before the ICJ in 2010 in a bid to end the annual hunt, would continue to raise concerns, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said. "We are working with other like-minded nations to build international consensus against Japanese whaling," Bishop said in a statement. "We are also exploring options for further legal action." Tokyo claimed that it was trying to prove the whale population was large enough to sustain a return to commercial hunting, and said that it had to kill the mammals to carry out its research properly. New Zealand, which said Mexico, South Africa and EU member countries also joined the formal protest, said that it would press for an end to "this outdated practice". Australia made clear lethal research was unnecessary. "The science is clear: all information necessary for management and conservation of whales can be obtained through non-lethal methods," Bishop said. Environmentalists from Sea Shepherd Australia vowed to pursue the Japanese fleet and aimed to intervene in any slaughter of the animals.³⁸

Australia agreed on December 10 to help the Philippines improve its surveillance, intelligence and forensic investigation to prevent Paris-style attacks by Islamist militants in Southeast Asia. At least five Islamist militant groups in the southern Philippines had pledged allegiance to Islamic State, a militant group that has taken control of swathes of Iraq and Syria. Canberra and Manila would step up exchange of information, concentrating on the flow of Southeast Asian militants travelling to and from Syria and Iraq. The increased cooperation was discussed by top Philippine police officials with Australian Justice Minister Michael Keenan and Federal Police Commissioner Neil Gaughan, who were on a tour of Southeast Asia. Counter terrorism officials from both countries were worried over the presence of about two million Filipino contract workers in the Middle East, some of whom were in Iraq and Syria and who might be inspired by Islamic State.³⁹

³⁸ "New Zealand, Australia Lead Japan Whaling Protest", *The Hindu*, December 8, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/new-zealand-australia-lead-japan-whaling-protest/article7958979.ece>

³⁹ "Philippines, Australia Vow Cooperation Against Islamic Militants", *The Economic Times*, December 10, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-10/news/68930835_1_islamic-state-islamic-militants-southern-philippines

India and Southeast Asia

(December 7-13, 2015)

- India's cabinet has approved MOU between India and Indonesia in the field new and renewable energy cooperation; Objective of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship; Imphal-Mandalay bus service launched; Culture Minister inaugurates India-Laos conference in New Delhi; Second South and Southeast Asian (SASEAN) Chief of Defence Forces' Dialogue concluded in Malaysia, India represented by Air Chief Arup Raha.**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Indonesia in the field of new and renewable energy. The MoU was signed in Jakarta last month during Vice President, Shri M. Hamid Ansari's visit to Indonesia. The objective of the MoU is to establish the basis for a cooperative institutional framework to encourage and promote technical bilateral cooperation on new and renewable energy issues on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and reciprocity. The areas of cooperation will focus on capacity building, exchange of scientific and technological information and data, transfer of technology on non-commercial basis, development of joint research or technical projects on subjects of mutual interest, encouragement and promotion of investment, encouragement of policy dialogue and other areas as may be agreed upon by the two countries.⁴⁰

On December 9, India's Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region Jitendra Singh in Lok Sabha in a written reply to a question said that the objective of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby ending the economic isolation of the States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh.⁴¹

Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh on December 9 flagged off a tourist bus from Imphal. It would go up to Mandalay in Myanmar. The bus carried 27 passengers including five officials of the Ministry of Road Transport. It would be run on an experimental basis. While more and more people from India wanted to travel to Myanmar there were many Manipuri origin settlers in that country who longed for visiting India. Officials hoped the bilateral ties would improve once there is regular service. Meanwhile, India is planning to open 'visa on arrival' facility in Manipur for the benefits of the travellers from South East Asian countries.⁴²

Union Tourism and Culture Minister of India Mahesh Sharma said on December 11 that India valued its relations with Laos as the two countries shared a long history of cultural

⁴⁰ "Memorandum of Understanding between India and Indonesia in the Field New And Renewable Energy Cooperation", PIB, December 9, 2015, Release ID :132890, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁴¹ "Act East Policy", PIB, December 9, 2015, Release ID :132847, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁴² Laithangbam, Iboyaima, "Imphal-Myanmar Bus Service Launched", *The Hindu*, December 9, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/imphalmyanmar-bus-service-launched/article7965462.ece>

relations over centuries. Inaugurating an international conference on 'India-Laos: Inter-Cultural Relations', he said, "Laos is a peace-loving country and we value our relation with Laos in a big way. We have a long heritage and cultural relations over centuries." Stating that India had several cultural linkages in Indonesia, Laos and other East Asian countries such as sculptures and temples, Sharma said, "A lot needs to be done with regard to existence of our cultural heritage present in those parts of the world." The event organised by Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts was attended by delegates from Laos, Cambodia, France, Vietnam as well as scholars from various parts of the country. The Minister hoped that the deliberations of the conference would have an impact on history, research and other aspects of India-Laos cultural relations. Ambassador of Lao People's Democratic Republic Southam Sakonhninhom narrated the elements of cultural linkages between his country and India as he appreciated the organisers for holding the seminar on the subject.⁴³

Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha, who is also the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), pitched for increased cooperation and collective action among SAARC and ASEAN countries in the exchange of information, building of infrastructure and strengthening of capabilities. He was speaking at the 2nd South and Southeast Asian (SASEAN) Chief of Defence Forces' Dialogue which was held in Malaysia on December 7-8. Raha also emphasised on the use of technology by armed forces. Talking on the subject of 'Regional Security Environment', the air chief said that a broad scan of the evolving geo-political environment clearly indicated a pre-eminent shift in global strategic centre of gravity to the Asia-Pacific regions. "We hope to see increased cooperation and collective action to exchange information, build infrastructure and strengthen capabilities. In this manner, we would gain from each other's strengths and understand each other better for lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the ASEAN region," he said. Pointing to challenges, the air chief talked about exploitation of technology by the armed forces. In this regard, he mentioned that DRDO was working towards self-reliance in defence systems and strategic independence. On promoting affordable and cogent military solutions, he said that India had decided to accelerate indigenous defence manufacturing through its 'Make in India' initiative.⁴⁴

D. Russia

Russia: National

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Russia says flight tests of the 'fifth generation' fighter aircraft 'practically completed'; Deputy Prime Minister says Russia has the potential to make Northern Sea Route operational throughout the year; Russia equips six military bases in the Arctic; Economy Minister revises Russia's GDP forecast; Former exiled Russian Oligarch**

⁴³ "Culture Minister Inaugurates India-Laos Conference in Delhi", *Business Standard*, December 11, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/culture-minister-inaugurates-india-laos-conference-in-delhi-115121100510_1.html

⁴⁴ "Air Chief Calls For Enhanced Security Ties Among SAARC, ASEAN", *Business Standard*, December 8, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/air-chief-calls-for-enhanced-security-ties-among-saarc-asean-115120801236_1.html

Khodorkovsky charged with 2 murders; Over 2 million Russians fall below poverty line; OPEC raises forecast for Russia's oil output in 2015 to 10.77 million barrels per day; Russia to increase fundamental research financing to US\$ 2 billion in 2016.

Deputy Defence Minister Yuri Borisov has said, on December 7, that the tests confirming the flight characteristics of Russia's fifth-generation PAK FA (Prospective Airborne Complex of Frontline Aviation) fighter jet have been completed. He added that Russia will purchase only a squadron of PAK FA fighter jets and compensate this with a larger order for Sukhoi Su-35 fighters.⁴⁵

Vice-Premier Dmitry Rogozin has said that Russia has all the possibilities to make the Northern Sea Route operational round the year and in any season. He stated 'I believe Russia has big prospects and large advantages precisely through the Northern Sea Route...it is important that our structures and bodies responsible for the Northern Sea Route and the administration of the Northern Sea Route should be generators of ideas rather than the bodies stating facts and they should elaborate proposals on creating those technologies that will help make the Northern Sea Route operational round the year and in any season...we have all technological possibilities for this...the ambitious tasks of developing the Northern Sea Route are a priority for Russia along with the task of ensuring mobility and transport accessibility.' Earlier, in his state of the nation address, President Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of the competitiveness of the Northern Sea Route, which should become a link between Europe and the Asia-Pacific Region. Russia has also invited China to take part in delivery of cargos to the Northern Sea Route.⁴⁶

Russia has completed equipping its six military bases in the Arctic. These include bases on the islands of Kotelny (New Siberian Islands), Alexandra Land (part of the Franz-Joseph Land archipelago), Sredny (Severnaya Zemlya), as well as in the Rogachevo settlement (Novaya Zemlya), on Cape Schmidt and Wrangel Island (part of the Chukotka autonomous area). The infrastructure includes administrative and housing complexes — closed-cycle military towns, aerodromes and combat positions of the Arctic units. *Itar-Tass* quoted a government official as saying 'in 2016, he told *TASS*, the military will continue to build and improve Arctic infrastructure and furnish the northern forces with personnel, weapons and equipment. "Reinforcement of the troops groups in the Arctic zone is planned to be completed by the end of 2016, and during 2017 it is planned to complete the construction of the remaining infrastructure facilities and improve the airfield network, to create in the Arctic by 2018 self-contained mobile groups of troops.'⁴⁷

Russia's Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev has forecasted that Russia's GDP will contract by 3.7 per cent by the end of the year while inflation is expected to be around

⁴⁵ "Flight Tests of Russia's 5th-Generation Fighter Jet "Practically Completed"" , *Itar-Tass*, December 7, 2015, at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/842077>

⁴⁶ "Deputy PM: Russia Has Potential To Make Northern Sea Route Operational Round The Year" , *Itar-Tass*, December 7, 2015, at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/841947>

⁴⁷ "Russia Completes Equipping Of Six Military Bases In Arctic — General Staff Source" , *Itar-Tass*, December 7, 2015, at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/841935>

12.5 per cent. Ulyukayev's GDP forecast is more optimistic than in the previous months — in September he had estimated that it will contract by 3.9 per cent.⁴⁸

Exiled former Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky has been charged with masterminding two murders in the 1990s. The former Yukos CEO stands accused of organizing the 1998 murder of the mayor of oil town Nefteyugansk, Vladimir Petukhov, and the attempted murder of his bodyguard, Vyacheslav Kokoshkin. Khodorkovsky, who formally resides in Switzerland, was earlier summoned for questioning on the case. Meanwhile, a spokeswoman for Khodorkovsky, has said that her 'Khodorkovsky considered the accusations to be unfounded and would not change his plans over the warrant.' Khodorkovsky spent more than a decade behind bars after being stripped of his Yukos assets. He was pardoned by Russia's President Vladimir Putin in December 2013. Since his release, Khodorkovsky has been a vocal critic of the Kremlin, saying that a "revolution" in Russia is inevitable and can happen as soon as 2018.⁴⁹

According to data released by the Rosstat state statistics service on December 10, 2.3 million Russians fell into poverty in the first nine months of 2015. The total number of Russians living below the official poverty lines — those with monthly incomes of less than 9,662 roubles (US\$ 140) — increased to 20.3 million people between January and September. The poverty rate in Russia in those nine months rose to 14.1 per cent, compared to 12.6 per cent registered during the same period last year.⁵⁰

The Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) has on December 10 raised its forecast for oil production in Russia in 2015 by 20,000 barrels per day to 10.77 million barrels per day. It has also raised its forecast for oil output in Russia in 2016 by 10,000 barrels per day to 10.7 million barrels per day. It stated that Gazprom, Bashneft and operators of the PSA (Production Sharing Agreement) remain the leaders in oil production while Lukoil and Rosneft's production continued to decline. The largest increase in production is expected in the north of Russia and Eastern Siberia.⁵¹

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said on December 10 that Russia will scale up fundamental research financing to 135 billion roubles (US\$ 2 billion) in 2016. He stated 'it is impossible to support strong and efficient economy without achievements in the field of science and technology.'⁵²

⁴⁸ "Economy Minister Revises Russian GDP Forecast", *The Moscow Times*, December 9, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/economy-minister-revises-russian-gdp-forecast/552385.html>

⁴⁹ "Former Russian Oligarch Khodorkovsky Charged With 2 Murders", *The Moscow Times*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/khodorkovsky-charged-with-2-murders/552563.html>

⁵⁰ "Over 2 Million More Russians Fall Below Poverty Line", *The Moscow Times*, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/over-2-million-more-russians-fall-below-poverty-line/552514.html>

⁵¹ "OPEC Raises Forecast For Russia's Oil Output In 2015 To 10.77 Mln Barrels/Day", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2015, at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/843029>

⁵² "Russia To Increase Fundamental Research Financing To \$2 Bln in 2016 — PM", *Itar-Tass*, December 11, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/science/843031>

Russia: International

(December 7-13, 2015)

- **Putin orders to destroy any targets that threaten Russian military in Syria; Russian and Iranian diplomats discuss implementation of Vienna provisions on Syria; Russia says demand for setting date of Assad's resignation contradicts international law; Putin invites British experts to examine black box of downed Su-24 fighter jet; Russia says Turkish troops' presence in Iraq without Baghdad's permission is unacceptable; Cyprus will let Russian warplanes use its airports; Russia accuses the US of trying to block efforts to prevent arms race in space; Russian and Pakistani navies commence drills in the Arabian Sea; Gazprom will not completely suspend gas transit through Ukraine post 2019; Finance Minister Siluanov says IMF's decision to lift the ban on loans to nations with overdue sovereign debts was made to 'prejudice' Russia; Russia to explore energy cooperation with North Korea; Russia expresses concern over NATO's growing activity in South Caucasus; Finland and Georgia accuse Russia of violating their airspace.**

President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russian military to destroy any targets that threaten Russian armed forces in Syria. He stated 'I order to act very tough. Any targets that threaten Russian forces or our infrastructure on the ground should be immediately destroyed.' Putin warned against 'those who will again try to organize any provocations against our servicemen...we have already taken additional measures to ensure security of Russian servicemen and air base. It was strengthened by new aviation groups and missile defence systems, strike aircraft will now carry out operations under cover of fighter jets.' He also asked the defence ministry to coordinate actions in Syria with Israel's command post and the US-led international coalition.⁵³

Russian Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhai Bogdanov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian have on December 8 discussed the implementation of the Vienna decisions on Syria, the settlement of crisis in Yemen and the situation in Lebanon.⁵⁴

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that the demand for setting aside a date on when Syrian President Bashar Assad should step down runs counter to international law and democracy. He stated 'for the time being partners link the full mobilization of the anti-terrorist potential with Bashar Assad's resignation...there are nuances, though: they no longer demand his disappearance in an instant, they permit his participation in the transitional political process, but they wish to see some deadline, a date when Assad will stop performing his powers....we believe that this kind of approach is artificial and in conflict with international law and the rules of democracy...we all put our signatures within the

⁵³ "Putin Orders To Destroy Any Targets That Threaten Russian Military in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, December 11, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/843243>

⁵⁴ "Russian, Iranian Diplomats Discuss Implementation Of Vienna Decisions on Syria", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842260>

framework of the Vienna process to the need for recognizing the right of the Syrian people to decide the future of Syria on their own. This should be our point of departure.⁵⁵

Russian President Vladimir Putin has invited British experts to examine the black box from the Su-24 bomber that was downed by Turkey last month. Putin made the offer during a phone conversation with British Prime Minister David Cameron when he called to offer Putin his condolences after the incident.⁵⁶

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that the presence of Turkey's forces in Iraq without Baghdad's approval is unacceptable. It stated 'the illegal presence of Turkish forces in Iraq near Mosul is a very serious factor of tensions.' On December 4, Turkey had sent around 130 soldiers, tanks and artillery weapons to northern Iraq where Ankara is training Kurdish peshmerga fighters for attacks on Mosul which has been seized by the Islamic State.⁵⁷

Cypriot Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides has said, on December 8, that Cyprus and Russia are finalizing a deal in which Russian military planes will be permitted to use the country's airports in case of emergency. A similar agreement is currently being discussed with France, which is also performing air strikes on Syria.⁵⁸

Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that the US has been trying to block efforts by the international community to prevent an arms race in outer space. The Ministry stated 'support for our document by an overwhelming majority of UN member-states (129 countries voted for it) confirmed the exceptional importance and timeliness of the initiative...It is noteworthy that the number of co-authors of our resolution at the current session grew to 40 countries...the sole country that remains opposed to the gist of our initiative is the United States, which has for many years and in utter isolation been trying to block consistent efforts by the international community for preventing an arms race in outer space.' Earlier, the 70th UN General Assembly session had on December 7 voted for Russia's resolution that called for no-first placement of weapons in outer space.⁵⁹

The crew of the Russian Navy's Vice-Admiral Kulakov, an Udaloy-class destroyer has on December 7 commenced the Arabian monsoon-2015 anti-drug joint exercises with Pakistan in the Arabian Sea.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ "Demand for Setting Date Of Assad's Resignation Contradicts International Law — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842700>

⁵⁶ "Putin Invites British Experts to Examine Black Box of Downed Su-24", *The Moscow Times*, December 9, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putin-invites-british-experts-to-examine-black-box-of-downed-su-24/552367.html>

⁵⁷ "Russia Says Turkish Troops' Presence In Iraq Without Baghdad's Permission 'Unacceptable'", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842352>

⁵⁸ "Cyprus Will Let Russian Warplanes Use Its Airports – Minister", *The Moscow Times*, December 9, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/cyprus-will-let-russian-warplanes-use-its-airports---minister/552213.html>

⁵⁹ "Moscow Accuses US of Trying To Block Efforts For Preventing Arms Race In Space", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842308>

⁶⁰ "Russian, Pakistani Navies Commence Drills in Arabian Sea", *Sputnik International*, December 7, 2015 at <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151207/1031370037/russia-pakistan-navy-drills-arabian-sea.html#ixzz3uNeGMHWy>

Gazprom's Deputy Chairman of the Management Committee Valery Golubev has said that the agency will not completely suspend gas transit through Ukraine post 2019. He stated 'some countries will receive gas via Ukraine in any case, Moldova, for instance... Gazprom "has no task" to totally suspend gas transit via Ukraine.' Golubev added that the price of gas for Ukraine will amount to US\$ 230 per 1,000 cubic meters in the Q1 of 2016 without discount.⁶¹

Russia's Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has said that the IMF's decision to lift the ban on loans to nations with overdue sovereign debts was made to 'prejudice' Russia and in order to legalize opportunity for Kiev not to pay its debts. He added that Russia will defend its rights as a lender and will approach the relevant courts. Siluanov stated that IMF's decision appeared hasty and biased.⁶²

A Russian delegation headed by Deputy Energy Minister Anton Inyutsyn has visited Pyongyang on December 10 with the objective to explore energy collaboration between two countries. The key issues discussed involved electric power cooperation. Russia has stepped up its engagement with North Korea in 2015 with the year being celebrated as 'Year of Friendship'. There have also been frequent contacts between the parliamentary and government officials including cultural, sport, youth and public organisations.⁶³

Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karassin has said that Russia is worried by NATO's growing activity in South Caucasus and Georgia's potential membership of the military organisation. He stated 'we are worried by NATO's mounting activity in the region and Tbilisi's desire to get membership of that military and political block.'⁶⁴

Finland's border service has said that a Russian helicopter had violated Finnish airspace on December 11. The helicopter had strayed 9 kilometres into Finland's airspace. Meanwhile, Georgia has also accused a Russian helicopter of violating Georgian airspace.⁶⁵

India-Russia Relations

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Russian Deputy Prime Minister holds meeting with Prime Minister Modi in New Delhi; Rogozin says India-Russia 'in vanguard of struggle against international terrorism'; India and Russia conduct joint naval exercises.**

⁶¹ "Russia's Gazprom has no Task Of Totally Suspending Gas Transit Via Ukraine — Official", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/842269>

⁶² "IMF's Decision Made To Prejudice Russia — Russia's Finance Minister", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/842469>

⁶³ "Russian Delegation To Look To Energy Cooperation with North Korea", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/842893>

⁶⁴ "Russia Worried By NATO's Growing Activity In South Caucasus – Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/842892>

⁶⁵ "Finland Accuses Russia of Violating Airspace", *The Moscow Times*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/finland-accuses-russia-of-violating-airspace/552559.html>

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin on December 8. Mr. Modi conveyed that India attached the highest importance to the strategic and privileged partnership with Russia and stated that he looked forward to visit Russia in the near future for a productive and historic Annual Summit with President Putin. He also expressed confidence that the visit would raise bilateral relations between the two countries to a new level.⁶⁶

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said on December 8 that 'India and Russia are on the one side of the barricades...they are also in the vanguard of fighting international terrorism.' He stated 'Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Moscow late in December to attend a summit. The visit will have a deep meaning. It is extremely important for discussing joint actions and the creation of a broad counter-terrorism coalition and also for exerting joint efforts in conditions when the two countries have not only found themselves on the one side of the barricades but are in the vanguard of this struggle (against terrorism)...the Indian prime minister is going to visit Moscow at a very important and troublesome period of time. It is not surprising that everything we discussed in New Delhi today largely concerned struggle against terrorism and radical forms of Islam....the Indian side fully supported Russia's (anti-terror) efforts, including those directed at fighting the most radical manifestations of religious terrorism — the Islamic State (IS)....India has enormous, and even dramatic, experience in waging this struggle.'⁶⁷

The eighth Indian-Russian naval exercise (Indra Navy) has taken place in the Bay of Bengal, during December 7-12. Russian navy comprised of Project 1164 Varyag guided missile cruiser, Project 956 (Sovremenny-class) Bystry destroyer, Boris Butoma oceangoing tanker and Alatau rescue tug. The two navies practiced protection of surface ships from submarines and fire against surface and air targets.⁶⁸

E. The United States of America

National

(December 7-13, 2015)

- U.S. military says it had successfully tests missile defence system; On Omnibus Bill Negotiations, Carter says further delaying such funding will do real harm; House passes 5-day spending bill to avert government shutdown; New poll shows nearly 60 percent of Americans oppose Republican presidential candidate Trump's proposal to ban Muslims; From the White House, the Pentagon, world leaders and Muslim advocacy groups criticise Trump's proposal to ban Muslims; FBI says the two California mass shooters were radicalized before they met online; President Obama urges**

⁶⁶ "PM Receives the Deputy PM Dmitry Rogozin of Russia", PIB, December 8, 2015 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=132783>

⁶⁷ "India, Russia in Vanguard Of Struggle Against International Terrorism — Russian Deputy PM", Itar-Tass, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/842387>

⁶⁸ "Russian Warships Come To India For Indra Naval Drill", Itar-Tass, December 8, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/841865>

Americans to stand strong in face of terrorism; House Republicans accused the Obama administration of misleading Congress about releasing five Taliban detainees in exchange for captive Bergdahl; Obama's unilateral executive actions could open a door for successors; New polls suggest no matter what Trump says, he remains the top pick of conservative Republican voters.

On December 10, the U.S. military said that it had successfully shot down a missile off the coast of Hawaii, in a test of a missile defence system designed to protect NATO forces in Europe from attack. The Missile Defence Agency said the Aegis weapon system fired an interceptor missile after radar detected the target. The SM-3 interceptor moved into the target's path and destroyed it. Defence contractor Raytheon said the test's success keeps the Aegis Ashore programme on track for deployment in Romania by year's end. Raytheon said it's expected to operate in Poland in 2018.⁶⁹

US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter in a statement on Omnibus Bill Negotiations said that "At a time when our security environment demands a dynamic and agile military, it is vital that negotiations on Capitol Hill arrive at an agreement to fund all of government for the remainder of the fiscal year, consistent with the funding levels set in the budget agreement achieved earlier this year." Defence Secretary Carter said, "Further delaying such funding will do real harm." He added, "a continuing resolution is a straight-jacket for the Department of Defence. It prevents us from fielding a modern, ready force in a balanced way, while embracing reform to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is well spent. It harms our ability to ensure the lasting defeat of ISIL and to confront the many complex national security challenges around the world. Failure to act sends the wrong message to our troops, our allies and our enemies." "There will be ample opportunities for extraneous policy fights in the future, but at this time, Congress must set aside such fights and prioritize our security by funding all of government", Carter said.⁷⁰

Compared to recent high-stakes government funding showdowns in the U.S. House of Representatives, December 11th House action was calm and understated. After only a few minutes of debate, the House passed a short-term, 5-day spending bill by a quick voice vote. Since the Senate passed a similar measure on December 10, the bill is expected to be quickly signed by President Barack Obama to prevent any agencies from shutting down after December 11th midnight. New House Speaker Paul Ryan has reassured his Republican members that budget negotiators will reach an agreement next week.⁷¹

⁶⁹ "US Military Successfully Tests Missile Defence System", VOA News, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-military-successfully-tests-missile-interceptor/3098424.html>

⁷⁰ "Statement from Secretary of Defence Ash Carter on Omnibus Bill Negotiations", DoD News, Release No: NR-464-15, December 8, 2015 <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/633403/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-on-omnibus-bill-negotiations>

⁷¹ Saine, Cindy, "House Passes 5-Day Spending Bill to Avert Government Shutdown", VOA News, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/house-passes-five-day-spending-bill-to-avert-shutdown/3099480.html>

According to a new *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* poll, nearly 60 percent of Americans oppose Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's proposal to bar Muslims from entering the United States. Fifty-seven percent of all adults surveyed disagreed with Trump's proposal, versus 25 percent who agreed. Among Republican Party members, however, Trump's proposal won 42 percent approval. By contrast, 75 percent of Democrats and 55 percent of independents – members of neither major U.S. political party – said they oppose Trump's call for a ban on all Muslim visitors. A separate *Associated Press* survey found 8-in-10 Republican voters think Trump is decisive and competent – two characteristics that matter most for them – although the Republican front-runner drew lower ratings when those same voters were asked to rate his likability, compassion and honesty.⁷² The poll was taken before he called for a ban on Muslims coming into the United States and does not reflect the furore that has turned some leading Republican figures, at least, against him.⁷³

From the White House, the Pentagon, world leaders and Muslim advocacy groups there has come a barrage of criticism for billionaire Donald Trump after the leading U.S. Republican presidential candidate called for a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the United States.⁷⁴ One of the most well-known Muslims in the United States appears to have joined the rising chorus of criticism of U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump over his proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States. In a short statement issued on December 9 titled "Presidential Candidates Proposing to Ban Muslim Immigration to the United States," former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali urged his fellow Muslims to push back against "those who use Islam to advance their own personal agenda."⁷⁵ The Pentagon earlier warned against fuelling the Islamic State's narrative of a U.S. war with Islam, in a swipe at rhetoric by Republican presidential candidate Trump that has triggered outrage around the world.⁷⁶

The head of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) says the two shooters in last week's California massacre were radicalized before they met online and started discussing jihad and martyrdom about two years ago. Meanwhile, several news organizations reported on

⁷² "Most in US Oppose Trump's Call to Close Borders to Muslims", *VOA News*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/most-in-us-oppose-trumps-call-to-close-borders-to-muslims/3099198.html>; and, "Muslim Business World to Trump: 'You're Fired'", by Hilmi Hacaloglu, Tapdig Farhadoglu, and Sirwan Kajjo, *VOA News*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/muslim-business-world-trump-you-are-fired/3099560.html>

⁷³ "Republican Voters on Trump: No Compassion, No Problem", *Associated Press*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republican-voters-on-trump-no-compassion-no-problem/3098732.html>

⁷⁴ Hannas, Chris and Bredemeier, Ken "Trump's Anti-Muslim Demand Sparks Sharp Backlash", *VOA News*, December 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-anti-muslim-demand-sparks-sharp-backlash/3094732.html>

⁷⁵ "Muhammad Ali Denounces Anti-Muslim Rhetoric", *VOA News*, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/muhammad-ali-denounces-anti-muslim-rhetoric/3096782.html>

⁷⁶ "Anti-Muslim Rhetoric Undermines US Security, Pentagon Says", *Reuters*, December 08, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/anti-muslim-rhetoric-undermines-us-security-pentagon-says/3094606.html>

December 9 that law enforcement officials said that an associate of Farook's told investigators a 2012 attack in the U.S. was planned but later abandoned.⁷⁷

In his weekly address on December 12, President Obama said he knows Americans are asking "What can I do?" in the wake of the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino. Obama said, "One of the most important things we can do is to stay true to who we are as Americans." He said terrorists "are trying to divide us along lines of religion and background. That's how they stoke fear. That's how they recruit." He urged Americans to "reject bigotry – in all of its forms," saying "prejudice and discrimination" help the Islamic State group and "undermines our national security."⁷⁸

U.S. House Republicans accused the Obama administration of misleading Congress about its efforts to release five Taliban detainees held at Guantanamo Bay in exchange for captive U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in a report released on December 10, the same day it was announced the soldier's case would be the topic of a popular podcast. The report by Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee said the Obama administration also did not comply with a law that requires Congress be given a 30-day notice about transferring detainees from the prison. In the Bergdahl exchange, the report said, the Taliban leaders were told of their release two days before the Pentagon told congressional leaders about the exchange. Also, it said the five men were put on a plane to Qatar less than three hours after Bergdahl was released.⁷⁹

While the White House has condemned Donald Trump's call for a ban on Muslim immigrants as "disqualifying" and "toxic," President Barack Obama may have only himself to blame if a President Trump ever succeeds in putting his plan, or some version of it, into action. In his efforts to work around Congress, Obama has made the aggressive use of executive power, particularly on immigration, an increasingly effective and politically accepted presidential tool. While legal scholars are divided on whether Obama has accelerated or merely continued a drift of power toward the executive branch, there's little debate that he's paved a path for his successor. The unilateral steps he took to raise environmental standards, tighten gun control measures and ease the threat of deportation for millions of immigrants in the U.S. illegally, may serve as precedent for moves they won't cheer.⁸⁰

New polls suggest that no matter what he says, Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump remains the top pick of conservative Republican voters less than eight weeks before the first votes are cast in Iowa on February 1. The latest *New York Times-CBS News* national

⁷⁷ Richman, Mike, "FBI Chief: California Shooters Radicalized Long Before Attack", VOA News, December 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/fbi-chief-california-shooters-radicalized-long-before-attack/3095301.html>

⁷⁸ "Obama Urges Americans: Stand Strong in Face of Terrorism", VOA News, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-urges-us-to-stand-strong-in-face-of-terrorism/3100155.html>

⁷⁹ "US House Report: Obama Administration Misled on Bergdahl Swap", VOA News, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-house-report-obama-administration-misled-on-bergdahl-swap/3097717.html>

⁸⁰ "Obama's Executive Actions Could Open a Door for Successors", Associated Press, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obamas-executive-actions-could-open-a-door-for-successors/3098684.html>

poll shows Trump leading the Republican presidential field with 35 percent support, far ahead of Texas Senator Ted Cruz at 16 percent and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson at 13 percent. The latest state polls show Trump well ahead in New Hampshire, competing with Cruz for the lead in Iowa, and building a solid lead in South Carolina.⁸¹ But things could change. "(Trump's) persona is brash and speak-your-mind," said Kirby Goidel, who works on public policy research at Texas A & M University, adding that Trump and his supporters seem to think "it is o.k. if you are wrong as long as you are saying things that need to be said."⁸²

International: Asia

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Deputy Secretary of State Blinken travels to Afghanistan; U.S. asks nations for specific capabilities to fight ISIL; Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq; Issuance of Burma General License (GL) 20; US strongly condemns ISIL's multiple suicide attacks in the town of Tel Tamer in Hasaka Province; DCA will provide a new framework for an expanded US-Singapore defence relationship; Pentagon has confirmed Abu Nabil died as a result of a U.S. military airstrike in Libya; Abdirahman Sandhere, a senior leader of the al Qaeda-affiliated group al-Shabaab, is dead; Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Tucson (SSN 770) arrives at Subic Bay; US designation of North Korea entities pursuant to Executive Order 13382.**

As per US Department of State report, Deputy Secretary Blinken has arrived in Afghanistan to meet with President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, and other senior Afghan government officials. The Deputy Secretary's trip to Kabul follows on from his participation in the Heart of Asia ministerial on December 9 in Islamabad that focused on a regional effort to ensure a secure, sovereign, and prosperous Afghanistan. While in Kabul, the Deputy Secretary will also meet with members of Afghanistan's Parliament and alumni of U.S. exchange programmes, it stated.⁸³

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. said on December 7 that if any country, in the wake of the attacks in Paris, doesn't think the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is a problem, "then they are not thinking hard enough". Dunford discussed the campaign against ISIL and efforts to enhance the coalition dedicated to defeating the terror group during an interview with reporters at the Naval Support Activity in Bahrain. Dunford would like to see more Sunni forces dedicated to the effort against ISIL. He said, "My assessment is that the Sunni Arab forces from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf would be

⁸¹ Malone, Jim, "Trump Poll Surge Continues Despite Backlash Over Muslim Ban", VOA News, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-poll-surge-continues-despite-backlash-over-muslim-ban/3097643.html>

⁸² Flakus, Greg, "Trump Tops Polls, But Cruz on the Rise", VOA News, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/donald-trump-tops-polls-ted-cruz-on-rise/3097872.html>

⁸³ "Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken Travel to Afghanistan December 10", US Department of State, Washington, DC, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250517.htm>

helpful in Iraq and Syria". And the leaders of those nations know of this assessment and are studying proposals.⁸⁴

On December 11, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted five strikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and fighter, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.⁸⁵

The US Department of State on December 7 stated in response to reports of unintended interruptions of Burmese trade due to sanctions concerns with a key Rangoon port, the Treasury Department issued General License 20 (GL 20) that GL 20 is a technical fix to support exports to and from Burma, while maintaining the integrity of U.S. sanctions and pressure on Specially Designated Nationals (SDNs). It said that "GL 20 is aimed at solving a discrete set of problems connected to use of critical infrastructure, as sanctions concerns were disproportionately affecting exports to and from Burma. GL 20 addresses this by authorizing certain ordinarily incident transactions with SDNs in relation to exports to or from individuals or entities not subject to sanctions."⁸⁶

The State Department press secretary John Kirby in a statement on December 12 said, "The United States strongly condemns ISIL's multiple suicide attacks in the town of Tel Tamer in Hasaka Province, which targeted and killed scores of Syrian civilians, including at a hospital and marketplace. We offer our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of this barbaric act of mass murder." Kirby said, "This attack once again displays the type of horrific atrocities that ISIL has perpetrated against tens of thousands of innocent people across Syria and Iraq and affirms the need for international resolve to strengthen those on the ground fighting ISIL." He stressed that "The United States remains committed to working with our partners in Syria, Iraq, and the international community to bring an end to ISIL's depravity and ultimately destroy this terrorist organization".⁸⁷

On December 7, US Secretary of Defence Carter and Singapore Minister for Defence Dr. Ng Eng Hen met in the Pentagon to sign the enhanced defence cooperation agreement (DCA) that will provide a new framework for an expanded defence relationship between the two nations. "During their meeting, Secretary Carter and Dr. Ng reaffirmed the excellent and long-standing bilateral defence relationship between the United States and Singapore. Dr. Ng expressed appreciation for the United States' support for the SAF's training detachments in the United States", as per the Joint Statement. "Secretary Carter thanked Singapore for the

⁸⁴ "Dunford: U.S. Asking Nations For Specific Capabilities To Fight ISIL", *US CENTCOM*, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/dunford-u.s.-asking-nations-for-specific-capabilities-to-fight-isil>

⁸⁵ "Military Strikes Continue Against ISIL Terrorists in Syria and Iraq", *US CENTCOM*, December 12, 2015, Release # 20151212-01 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/dec-12-military-strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-and-iraq>

⁸⁶ "Issuance of Burma General License 20", *US Department of State*, Washington DC, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250427.htm>

⁸⁷ "U.S. Condemns Terrorist Attack in Hasaka, Syria", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250581.htm>

logistical support that it provides to United States military aircraft and vessels in the region under the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), which is founded on the shared belief that a strong United States presence in the Asia-Pacific is vital for peace, prosperity and stability." The Joint Statement further said, "Secretary Carter and Dr. Ng also noted that it was timely for both countries to elevate defence relations through an enhanced DCA to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1990 MOU and the 10th anniversary of the SFA between the United States and Singapore."⁸⁸

The Department of Defence has confirmed that Abu Nabil, aka Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi, an Iraqi national who was a longtime al Qaeda operative and the senior ISIL leader in Libya, is dead as a result of a U.S. military airstrike in Libya undertaken on November 13. The DoD stated, "While not the first U.S. strike against terrorists in Libya, this was the first U.S. strike against an ISIL leader in Libya and it demonstrates we will go after ISIL leaders wherever they operate."⁸⁹

Meanwhile, the DoD also confirmed that Abdirahman Sandhere, also known as "Ukash," a senior leader of the al Qaeda-affiliated group al-Shabaab, is dead as a result of a U.S. military airstrike in Somalia undertaken on December 2. Two other al Shabaab-affiliated associates were also killed in the strike that specifically targeted Abdirahman Sandhere. It said, "Ukash's removal from the battlefield is a significant blow to al-Shabaab and reflects the painstaking work by our intelligence, military, and law enforcement professionals." It added, "This is an important step forward in the fight against al-Shabaab, and the United States will continue to use the tools at our disposal -- financial, diplomatic, intelligence and military -- to dismantle al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups who threaten United States, interests and persons."⁹⁰

The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Tucson (SSN 770) arrived at Subic Bay December 6, for a visit as part of its Indo-Asia-Pacific deployment. With a crew of approximately 150, Tucson will conduct a multitude of missions and showcase the latest capabilities of the submarine fleet. "USS Tucson will provide unique capabilities in support of the theatre commander's strategies during the length of our deployment," said Cmdr. Michael Beckette, the Tucson's commanding officer. The submarine's crew operates with a high state of readiness and is always prepared to tackle any mission that comes their way. For many of the crew members, this was their first time visiting the Philippines.⁹¹

⁸⁸ "Joint Statement by U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter and Singapore Minister for Defence Dr. Ng Eng Hen", *US DoD*, Release No: NR-461-15, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/633200/joint-statement-by-us-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-and-singapore-minister-fo>

⁸⁹ "Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on Nov. 13 Airstrike in Libya", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-463-15, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/633221/statement-from-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-on-nov-13-airstrike-in-libya>

⁹⁰ "Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on Dec. 2 Airstrike in Somalia", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-462-15, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/633220/statement-from-pentagon-press-secretary-peter-cook-on-dec-2-airstrike-in-somalia>

⁹¹ "USS Tucson Visits Subic Bay during Indo-Asia-Pacific Deployment", By Lt. j.g. Jimmy Dinh, *US PACOM*, December 08, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/633366/uss-tucson-visits-subic-bay-during-indo-asia-pacific-deployment.aspx>

To further impede North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programmes, the Department of State has announced on December 8 the designation of North Korea's Strategic Force for its contribution to North Korea's WMD-related activities. The Strategic Force has been designated pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13382 ("Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and Their Supporters"). The State Department further stated that "The Strategic Force conducted multiple ballistic missile launches during 2014. Specifically, it conducted the launches of two short-range Scud-class ballistic missiles, test-fired two medium-range No Dong-class ballistic missiles, and conducted the launch of a short-range ballistic missile. All missiles had a range of 500km or greater. The launches of these missiles materially contributed to North Korea's ballistic missile programme." It said, "North Korea's nuclear and missile proliferation activities violate UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), and 2094 (2013), destabilize the region, and undermine the global non-proliferation regime."⁹²

India-US Relations

(December 7-13, 2015)

- **Gen. Robinson's visit further enhances military ties between the U.S. and India; US PACOM Commander, Admiral Harris meets Defence Minister Parrikar at Hawaii, headquarters; PM Modi and President Obama emphasize their strong commitment to address issues related to Climate Change; Pacific Air Forces Airmen showcases aeromedical evacuation capabilities of the C-17 Globemaster III as they host Defence Minister Parrikar; Admiral Harris and Parrikar discuss the growth of the strategic partnership between the two nations; Defence Secretary Carter and Parrikar in their third meeting discuss a broad range of bilateral defence cooperation; Carter says India-US defence relationship will become an anchor of global security; US has updated its policy on gas-turbine engine technology transfer to India; Defence relationship is poised to grow over the coming year; India purchases Chinook heavy lift helicopters from US.**

Gen. Lori J. Robinson, Pacific Air Forces commander, arrived in India December 4 to meet with Indian defence officials and discuss mutual cooperation during the first PACAF commander's visit to the nation since 2011. Robinson is visiting at the invitation of Air Chief Marshall Arup Raha, India's senior ranking military officer, for a series of base visits, cultural exchanges and military-to-military engagements throughout India. Robinson said, "I'm truly grateful to be invited to see the Indian Air Force up close and learn more about their mission... We have much to learn from one another, and I'm sure this trip will provide a great opportunity to expand our developing partnership." This trip is designed to further enhance

⁹² "Designation of North Korea Entities Pursuant to Executive Order 13382", US Department of State, Washington, DC, December 8, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250478.htm>; and, "Designation of North Korea Entities Pursuant to Executive Order 13382", By Office of the Spokesperson, US PACOM, December 09, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/ 5693/Article/633526/designation-of-north-korea-entities-pursuant-to-executive-order-13382.aspx>

military ties between the U.S. and India at a key time in the U.S. government's strategic rebalance in the Pacific. Strengthening ties between U.S. and Indian forces is a key focus area for U.S. Pacific Command. As PACOM's air component, PACAF seeks to improve compatibility between the U.S. and Indian air forces in order to better response to regional crises.⁹³

In a milestone event on December 7, Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., Commander, United States Pacific Command, met with India Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar at Camp Smith, Hawaii, in the first-ever visit by an India Defence Minister to the Hawaii-based headquarters. In the meeting, Adm. Harris and Minister Parrikar discussed the growth of the strategic partnership between the two nations and how routine, regular and predictable engagements strengthen that partnership. The two also emphasized the importance of expanded maritime security cooperation within the context of broader military-to-military ties, especially in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. The two leaders discussed the continuance of the maritime security cooperation, the potential for joint U.S. – India maritime patrols, and the value of foundational agreements such as a logistics support agreement and a communications and information security memorandum of agreement.⁹⁴

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a telephone call from US President, Mr. Barack Obama, on December 8. The Prime Minister conveyed his condolences to President Obama on the loss of lives in the recent shooting incident in California. The conversation focused on the ongoing Conference of Parties (CoP21) in Paris. Both leaders underscored their strong commitment to address issues related to Climate Change being discussed in the Paris conference through constructive engagement, without impeding the progress of developing countries. They agreed to stay in regular touch.⁹⁵

Pacific Air Forces Airmen showcased aeromedical evacuation capabilities of the C-17 Globemaster III as they hosted India Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar and Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Arun K. Singh Dec. 7, as a part of a U.S. Pacific Command visit designed to enhance the U.S.-Indian partnership. "It is an honour to host Minister Parrikar and Ambassador Singh and discuss how the Indian and U.S. air forces can further enhance their cooperation," said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Mark Dillon, PACAF vice commander. During talks earlier in the day, U.S. Navy Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., U.S. PACOM commander, and Minister Parrikar discussed the growth of the strategic partnership between the two nations and how routine, regular and predictable engagements strengthen that partnership. The two also emphasized the importance of expanded maritime security cooperation within the context of broader military-to-military ties, especially in the Indo-Asia-

⁹³ "Pacific Air Forces Commander Arrives in India", By Headquarters Pacific Air Forces Public Affairs, US PACOM, December 07, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/633205/pacific-air-forces-commander-arrives-in-india.aspx>

⁹⁴ "Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Meeting With India Minister of Defence", U.S. PACOM, December 07, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/633260/commander-us-pacific-command-meeting-with-india-minister-of-defence.aspx>

⁹⁵ "Prime Minister's Telephonic Conversation with US President", PIB, December 9, 2015, Release ID :132789 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

Pacific. For its part in the visit, PACAF Airmen offered an in-depth AE demonstration with one of India's newest aircraft, the C-17. The Indian air force has the world's 2nd largest fleet of C-17s, behind the U.S., and these aircraft have already proven their value in supporting international response to regional crises. During India's OPERATION MAITRI, IAF used six C-17s and five C-130s, among other airlift assets, to bring personnel and supplies into Nepal alongside PACAF C-17s. By demonstrating AE capabilities of the C-17, Airmen here are providing Indian defence officials an understanding of how they can better leverage their C-17 fleet in a variety of contingency scenarios to include natural disasters.⁹⁶

The Joint Statement which was released on December 10 after India's Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar and Defence Secretary Ash Carter's third meeting stated that "Minister of Defence of India Manohar Parrikar made an official visit to the United States at the invitation of U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter from December 7-10 that included visits to multiple U.S. facilities including U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), the Pentagon, and a visit with Secretary Carter to observe flight operations aboard the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69)." The statement noted, "At the Pentagon, Minister Parrikar and Secretary Carter held their third meeting. They discussed the India-U.S. defence relationship and broader India-U.S. strategic partnership, and focused on ways to maintain the strong momentum of security and defence engagement, including means to further move the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) forward. Secretary Carter and Minister Parrikar expressed satisfaction with DTTI progress to date." It added, "They committed to identifying additional projects for possible co-development and co-production of high technology items that meet the transformational intent of DTTI".⁹⁷

The defence partnership between the United States and India will become an anchor of global security, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said on December 10 in a joint news conference with Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar. Following a meeting between the defence leaders, Carter said Parrikar's first official visit to the Pentagon is a sign of the growing strength of the defence ties between the two democracies. The two leaders in June signed the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative, which Carter described as a framework that charts a course for the U.S.-India relationship for the next decade, fosters technology cooperation, works to build industry-to-industry ties and identifies opportunities for the co-development and co-production of defence systems. The growing strategic partnership between the United States and India is rooted in shared ideals, mutual interests and a spirit of innovation, the secretary said. The secretary said he and Parrikar also discussed the importance of India's participation in U.S. military exercises such as Malabar, Rim of the Pacific, and for the first time in eight

⁹⁶ "PACAF Airmen Demonstrate C-17 Medical Capability during Indian Defence Minister Visit", By Capt Nicole White, US PACOM, December 09, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/633539/pacaf-airmen-demonstrate-c-17-medical-capability-during-indian-defense-minister.aspx>

⁹⁷ "US-India Joint Statement on the visit of Minister of Defence Manohar Parrikar to the United States", US DoD, Release No: NR-468-15, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/633748/us-india-joint-statement-on-the-visit-of-minister-of-defence-manohar-parrikar-t>

years for India, participation in Red Flag, which Carter called "the premier air-to-air combat exercise."⁹⁸

The United States has updated its policy on gas-turbine engine technology transfer to India, a move that should lead to expanded cooperation in production and design of jet-engine components, a joint statement said on December 10. U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter informed Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar of the decision during the latter's visit to Washington this week and said it was made possible by the strengthening relationship between two countries. "As a result of this policy update, the Secretary is confident that the United States will be able to expand cooperation in production and design of jet-engine components," the joint statement said.⁹⁹

The military relationship between India and the U.S. is poised to grow over the coming year, with military exercises expanding as a number of technology transfer programmes enter a higher level. Speaking at the Pentagon on Dec. 10, U.S. Defence Secretary Ash Carter and Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar pledged that the next year will see the relationship continue to expand, including India's return to the Red Flag military exercise, its first participation in eight years. "The pace is picking up. We've done so much more in the last year, probably than we've done in the 10 years before that," Carter said. "And I'm guessing that in the next 10 months, we will do yet again more than we've done in the last year." That includes taking technology transfer programmes from agreement into application.¹⁰⁰

India's Minister of State for Defence Rao Inderjit Singh in a written reply in Lok Sabha on December 10 said that Government of India has signed contract with M/s Boeing USA and Letter of Agreement (LOA) with US Government on 28th September, 2015 for purchase of Apache Attack Helicopters. A contract with M/s Boeing, USA has also been signed on 28th September, 2015 for purchase of Chinook heavy lift helicopters. Defence equipment are imported as per the operational requirements of the Armed Forces. However, actual cash outgo depends on delivery of equipment / reaching of laid down milestones before release of funds. During the last three years i.e. 2012-13 to 2014-15 contracts and Letter of Agreement (LOA) worth Rs. 7285.72 crores have been signed with vendors from USA and the US Government.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ "Carter Calls U.S.-India Defence Partnership 'Anchor of Global Security'", By Terri Moon Cronk, US PACOM, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/633760/carter-calls-us-india-defense-partnership-anchor-of-global-security.aspx>

⁹⁹ "U.S. Updates Jet-Engine Know-How Switch Coverage with India", *Star daily Standard*, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.stardailystandard.com/breaking/us-updates-jet-engine-technology-transfer-policy-with-india/64835/>

¹⁰⁰ "Carter, Parrikar Pledge Expanded U.S.-Indian Relations", *Defence News*, December 12, 2015 at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/leaders/2015/12/12/parrikar-carter-india-us-technology/77098050/>

¹⁰¹ "Purchase of Helicopters from USA", *PIB*, December 10, 2015, Release ID :133054, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(December 7-13, 2015)

- **India-Pak NSAs meet in Bangkok; Six jawans injured as Militants attack CRPF convoy in Anantnag; Two militants killed in Pulwama encounter; J&K to set up commission for implementation of National Food Security Act.**

The National Security Advisors (NSAs) of India and Pakistan met in Bangkok on December 6 and held discussions on various issues of mutual interest, including terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting between the two NSAs - who were accompanied by Foreign Secretaries of their respective nations - was an outcome of the short meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the United Nations Climate Conference in Paris recently. "Discussions were held in a candid, cordial, and constructive atmosphere, and covered peace and security, terrorism, J&K and other issues, including tranquillity along the Line of Control (LoC)," stated a joint press statement issued following their meeting. "They are guided by the visions of two leaders for a peaceful stable and prosperous South Asia, and it was agreed to carry forward the constructive engagement," the statement added.¹⁰²

At least six CRPF jawans were injured when unidentified militants opened fire on their convoy on Srinagar-Jammu national highway in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on December 7. Militants fired at a CRPF bus, which was part of a convoy on way to Jammu from Srinagar, near Green Tunnel at Samthan in Bijbehara, 50 kms from Srinagar, said a police officer.¹⁰³

Two militants were killed and four persons, including two Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, were injured in a brief shootout in Pampore area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district on December 8. The slain militants were identified as Shakir Showkat Bhat son of Showkat Ahmad Bhat of Nowpora, Sopore and another militant is said to be a foreigner. DIG, South Kashmir, Nitesh Kumar said the slain militants had to carry out a Fidayeen attack in Srinagar and were intercepted by a joint team of security forces. He said that the duo was involved in an attack on CRPF convoy on December 7 at Bijbehara in which six CRPF men were injured.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² "Indo-Pak NSAs Meet In Bangkok, Discuss Terror, J&K", *Business Standard*, December 6, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/indo-pak-nsas-meet-in-bangkok-discuss-terror-j-k-115120600611_1.html

¹⁰³ "Militants Attack CRPF Convoy In Anantnag, Six Jawans Injured", *The Times of India*, December 7, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Militants-attack-CRPF-convoy-in-Anantnag-six-jawans-injured/articleshow/50072142.cms>

¹⁰⁴ Bukhari, Fayaz, "2 Militants Killed, 2 CRPF Men Among 4 Injured", *Daily Excelsior*, December 8, 2015 at <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/2-militants-killed-2-crpf-men-among-4-injured/>

The Jammu and Kashmir government has decided to set up a State Food Commission to oversee execution of the National Food Security Act (NFS), which the state will implement "directly" from February 1, and has begun a massive drive to enrol more than 1.19 crore beneficiaries. Giving details, J&K Consumer Affairs & Public Distribution (CAPD) Minister Chowdhary Zulfkar Ali said 74.13 lakh persons from poor and marginalised sections of the society will be provided ration at highly-subsidised rates --Rs 2 per kg for atta and Rs 3 per kg for rice. "Another 45 lakh people will be provided atta at Rs 8 per kg and rice at Rs 10 per kg," he added. The CAPD Minister also described as "major achievement" the government's decision to disburse ration as per the 2011 Census, which was earlier being provided to people according to 2001 Census, as the move will benefit lakhs of new beneficiaries.¹⁰⁵

Northeast India

(December 7-13, 2015)

- New deal with Centre likely in six months: Pro-talk ULFA leader; India conveys concern to China; NDFB (S) militant killed in encounter in Assam; Security forces arrest militants in lower Assam; recovered arms & ammo; Sulfa eyes Assembly poll in Assam; Manipur CM flags off trial run of Imphal-Mandalay bus service; MTFA rebels arrested in Chirang, BTAD.**

The ongoing tripartite peace process among the pro-talk faction of ULFA, Assam government and the Centre may likely see a new agreement being signed in six months, a senior ULFA leader said. "Our peace process is going on very smoothly. Recently we have had nice talks with the central government and there are no differences as of now... we have mutually agreed on several issues. We are likely to see a solution in the next six months," Raju Baruah, a senior member of ULFA's pro-talk faction, told IANS. Emphasising on the need to include deported ULFA leader Anup Chetia in the peace process, Raju Baruah, the former deputy commander-in-chief of the outfit, said Chetia would join the peace talks once his judicial custody is over.¹⁰⁶

In the wake of China planning to build four hydroelectric projects on River Brahmaputra, India has urged China to ensure that the interests of downstream states are not harmed by any activities in the upstream areas. India has conveyed its concern to the Chinese authorities, Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Uma Bharti said in a Rajya Sabha reply, adding that as a lower riparian state, India has considerable established user rights to the waters of River Brahmaputra. According to reports, the Zangmu hydroelectric project was fully operationalised in October, 2015. The outline of the 12th Five Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China indicates that three more hydropower projects on the main stream of the Brahmaputra in the

¹⁰⁵ "JK to Set Up Commission for FSA", *Greater Kashmir*, December 9, 2015 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/front-page/jk-to-set-up-commission-for-fsa/203732.html>

¹⁰⁶ "New Deal With Centre Likely In Six Months: ULFA Leader", *The Assam Tribune*, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec0715/at042>

Tibet Autonomous Region have been approved for implementation by the Chinese authorities, Bharti said.¹⁰⁷

An NDFB (Songbijit) militant was killed in an encounter with security forces at Silaimatha forest area in Assam's Kokrajhar district on December 8, IGP Dr L R Bishnoi told *PTI*. An AK-47 rifle with two magazines, 44 rounds of ammunition, two bags, two mobile phones, extortion notes, a solar power plate, clothes, blankets and some other materials were recovered from the slain insurgent. The deceased has been identified as Nerswn Brahma alias Naidaw, a cadre trained in Bangladesh, who was involved in the 2012 Bodo-Muslim violence, the IGP said.¹⁰⁸

Seven militants belonging to NDFB (Songbijit), NSCN (IM) and National Liberation Front of Bengalis were apprehended during a joint operation by the police and the Army in lower Assam's Udaguri district. The Police and the Army's 40 Field Regiment from Borengjuli launched an operation on December 8 and apprehended NDFB(S) insurgents identified as Ashique Daimary and Nerswn Boro from Tangla and recovered one 36 Indian hand grenade from their possession, IGP LR Bishnoi told *PTI*. Based on their input, another operation was launched today at village Goroibari under Udaguri police station and NSCN (IM)'sergeant major' Vihuto Sumi, National Democratic Front of Bodoland(S) insurgent Jipirush Narzary, NLFB 'deputy commander-in-chief' Ajit Biswash, NDFB cadres Lalchand Mandal and Ratanlal Mazumdar were apprehended, Bishnoi said. One 7.65 pistol, two magazines and 50 rounds of assorted ammunition were recovered from Jipirush Narzary, while the same arms and ammunition were also recovered from Ajit Biswash, the IGP added.¹⁰⁹

Ulfa cadres who fought an armed battle for "sovereign Assam" and later surrendered are now planning to contest 2016 Assam Assembly election in at least 10 seats as Independents and support a new regional party in other constituencies. The All-Assam Surrendered Ulfa Samittee - an umbrella body of the former rebels – on December 8 announced that they are planning to contest the polls as over 7,000 cadres who laid down their arms since 1992-93 had not been properly rehabilitated. The Samittee complained that of the 7,392 Ulfa cadres who laid down arms, only 165 were given ex gratia of Rs 1.5 lakh each by the government.¹¹⁰

A trial run of Imphal-Mandalay bus service was flagged off by Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh in Imphal on December 9. With an aim to boost connectivity with neighbouring South Asian countries, a 27-member team of officials from both State and Central Governments will study the condition of the 579 km long route via Tamu, Kalay,

¹⁰⁷ "India Conveys Concern To China", *The Assam Tribune*, December 8, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec0815/at054>

¹⁰⁸ "NDFB(S) Militant Killed In Encounter In Assam's Kokrajhar District", *The Economic Times*, December 8, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ndfbs-militant-killed-in-encounter-in-assams-kokrajhar-district/articleshow/50087635.cms>

¹⁰⁹ "Seven Militants Arrested In Army, Police Joint Operation", *Business Standard*, December 9, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/seven-militants-arrested-in-army-police-joint-operation-115120901038_1.html

¹¹⁰ "Sulfa Eyes Poll Plank", *The Telegraph*, December 9, 2015 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1151209/jsp/northeast/story_57423.jsp#.VoubqbZ97cs

Monywa till Mandalay in Myanmar. Currently there is no direct road link between India and Myanmar.¹¹¹

Acting on an Intel tip off, a joint team of the Army and state police arrested three cadres of Muslim Tiger Force of Assam (MTFA) in Chirang district of BTAD on December 12. Three 7.65mm pistols, two magazines, a crude bomb and some incriminating documents were seized from them.¹¹²

Left-wing Extremism

(December 7-13, 2015)

- Newly developed UAV has been deployed for internal security; Two hardcore Naxals held in Chhattisgarh, Telangana; Five security personnel were injured in Naxal ambush in Chhattisgarh; Andhra Police recovered 200 live detonators in Visakhapatnam; Chhattisgarh Armed Force jawan killed in Naxal attack.**

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) – ‘Nishant’ and the same has been inducted in Army. Also, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) has initiated activities for the design, development and manufacture of UAVs. UAV are the most advanced systems for obtaining the real-time imagery of the ground and is useful in the internal security scenario. Presently, CRPF has a holding of 10 Micro-UAVs (NETRA) which have been deployed in LWE affected states, including Chhattisgarh. Besides National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) is also providing their UAV coverage to CRPF for operations in LWE areas. Also, one Mini-UAV of BSF has been deployed in the LWE affected areas in Odisha.¹¹³

Two hardcore Naxals, carrying a bounty of Rs. 5 lakh each, were arrested from separate places by the police on December 6. “One cadre identified as Ludru Tamo (26), a deputy commander of Aader LOS (local operation squad) was nabbed from Geedam town of Dantewada district, while another, Muchaki Hadma (21), belonging to Malangir area committee of Maoists in Dantewada, was held from Bhadrachalam of Telangana,” Dantewada Superintendent of Police, Kamlochan Kashayp, told PTI.¹¹⁴

Five security personnel, including two STF jawans, were injured on December 8 when Naxals ambushed a team of security forces in the restive jungles of Chhattisgarh’s insurgency-hit Sukma district, police said. Police also claimed to have gunned down at least 15 ultras in the skirmish although no bodies were recovered from the spot. “The exchange of fire took place

¹¹¹ Samom, Sobhapati, “Trial Run Of Imphal-Mandalay Bus Service”, *The Assam Tribune*, December 10, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1015/oth051>

¹¹² “3 Cadres Of Muslim Terror Outfit Held”, *The Times of India*, December 13, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/3-cadres-of-Muslim-terror-outfit-held/articleshow/50160150.cms>

¹¹³ “Use of UAV for Internal Security”, PIB, December 8, 2015, Release ID :132765, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

¹¹⁴ “Two Naxals Held in Chhattisgarh, Telangana”, *The Hindu*, December 7, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/two-naxals-held-in-chhattisgarh-telangana/article7956015.ece>

between a joint team of Special Task Force (STF), state's District Reserve Group (DRG) and rebels when security forces were out on an anti-Naxal operation in Kistaram area," Inspector General of Police (anti-Naxal operations) Deepanshu Kabra said.¹¹⁵

Andhra Pradesh Police has confirmed the seizure of 200 live detonators in Visakhapatnam and arrested a person on charges of supplying explosives to Maoists. The recoveries were made when a police patrol team became suspicious of a van. During a search operation, 200 live detonators were found along with iron shells, pipes and wire bundles. Police arrested S K Dawood who claimed to be a cement merchant of G.K. Veedhi village. Visakhapatnam Superintendent of Police Koya Praveen said Dawood had a long liaison with Maoist rebels. Police also suspect Dawood's role in the abduction of three leaders belonging to the ruling Telugu Desam Party two months ago from the same G.K. Veedhi village.¹¹⁶

A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) jawan was killed when Naxals attacked the policemen near their camp in Narayanpur district on December 10. As per preliminary information, a group of armed ultras fired on a team of security personnel while they were patrolling outside the CAF's camp at Amdai village under Chhotedongar police station limits. This led to a gun-battle between the two sides, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Abhishek Meena said. However, after a short encounter, the Naxals fled to the dense forests, he said. "CAF constable Ashwini Singh Rajput was martyred in the incident," the SP said.¹¹⁷

III. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(November 30-December 13, 2015)

- India at the Paris Summit; PBC Working Group recommendation that PBF should get 1 per cent of PK budget gets Indian support; ITU's report on connectivity shows mixed results for India; "Hidden epidemic" of AIDS among youth to trouble India; India to observe UN day of preventing violence against women; Focus on financial commitments as Climate Change Summit moves towards agreement; India in the General Assembly; Statements of the Mission in Geneva; India-related facts in UN Reports.**

At the 10-day Paris Climate Change Summit that commenced on November 29, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India was facing the consequences of climate change and was

¹¹⁵ "Five Security Personnel Injured In Naxal Ambush In Chattisgarh", *The Indian Express*, December 8, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/five-security-personnel-injured-in-naxal-ambush-in-chattisgarh/>

¹¹⁶ "Police Recovers 200 Live Detonators in Visakhapatnam", *Business Standard*, December 9, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/police-recovers-200-live-detonators-in-visakhapatnam-115120900828_1.html

¹¹⁷ "Chhattisgarh Armed Force Jawan Killed In Naxal Attack", *The Economic Times*, December 10, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/chhattisgarh-armed-force-jawan-killed-in-naxal-attack/articleshow/50118276.cms>

therefore keen to contributing to a cleaner environment while it pursues development.¹¹⁸ He also highlighted the thrust on renewables.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, it was also announced by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways that India will ensure implementation of Bharat Stage emission norms - BS V and BS VI- ahead of the earlier dateline of April 1, 2022 and April 1, 2024 respectively. The former will now be enforceable from 2019 and the latter 2021.¹²⁰ India urged the developed countries to provide the finances required for the developing countries to adapt to clean technologies.¹²¹ At the release of the *State of the Forest Report 2015* the Minister for Environment Prakash Javadekar stated that afforestation will be key to increasing India's carbon sink. He said this would help India get to the 2.5-3 billion tonnes carbon sink it has mentioned in its INDCs.¹²² Environment and Forest Secretary Ashok Lavasa made a strong pitch for keeping to the accepted norm of maintaining temperature rise at 2 degree Celsius over that of pre-industrial era. He also pointed out that India's per capita dependence on fossil fuels is much less compared to developed countries and that all countries continue to be more coal-dependent than they would admit.¹²³

In a General Assembly debate on the lesson learnt from peacebuilding missions of the UN, Deputy PR, Bhagwant S Bishnoi expressed India's support for the suggestion in the draft report of the Peace Building Commission Working Group that 1 per cent of the peacekeeping budget be allocated to the Peace Building Fund.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ "Address by Prime Minister at the Inauguration of the India Pavilion at COP21", Paris, November 30, 2015 MEA, GOI, at http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26072/Address_by_Prime_Minister_at_the_Inauguration_of_the_India_Pavilion_at_COP21_Paris_November_30_2015. Also see, "Climate Change Not Of India's Making, Rich Nations To Blame: Modi", November 30, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/climate-change-not-of-india-s-making-rich-nations-to-blame-modi/story-e1Bz5hUGR1CFNNiczGVCWP.html>

¹¹⁹ "Remarks by Prime Minister at the Launch of the International Solar Alliance during COP 21 summit inParis", November 30, 2015, MEA, GOI, at http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26070/Remarks_by_Prime_Minister_at_the_Launch_of_the_International_Solar_Alliance_during_COP_21_summit_in_Paris_November_30_2015PM. Also see "Modi Opens India Pavilion at Paris with Focus on Renewables", November 30, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/PM-Modi-opens-India-Pavilion-at-Paris-with-focus-on-renewables/articleshow/49984150.cms>

¹²⁰ "India to Implement BS-VI Emission Norms by 2021", November 30, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cd/India-to-implement-bs-vi-emission-norms-by-2021-115113000546_1.html

¹²¹ "Climate Finance On Agenda: Don't Shift Responsibility On Funds, India Tells Developed Nations", *The Indian Express*, December 4, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/climate-finance-on-agenda-dont-shift-responsibility-on-funds-india-tells-developed-nations/>

¹²² "India To Achieve More Than Its Committed INDC Target: Javadekar", *Zee News*, December 4, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/eco-news/india-to-achieve-more-than-its-committed-ndc-target-javadekar_1830594.html. Also see, "Higher Forest Cover Has Deepened India's Carbon Sink", *The Hindu Business online*, December 4, 2015, at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/higher-forest-cover-has-deepened-indias-carbon-sink/article7949530.ece>. For the full statement by the Minister at the Paris summit see, "India to Ensure CBDR Principle is Respected and Rich Nations Pay Back their Debt for Overdraft on Carbon Space: Javadekar", *Business Standard*, December 6, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/government-press-release/india-to-ensure-cbdr-principle-is-respected-and-rich-nations-pay-115120600684_1.html

¹²³ "Coal Dependence: India Hits Back, Asks West For Effective Solutions", *Hindustan Times* December 5, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/coal-dependence-india-hits-back-asks-west-for-effective-solutions/story-1J7O3IgoUBUbxqT6Tl0ApK.html>

¹²⁴ "Intervention by Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative, in the Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on the Draft Report of the PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned Entitled "Institution

The International Telecommunications Union's annual report titled *Measuring the Information Society Report 2015* ranks India at 131, a drop from 125 in 2010 on its ICT Development Index (IDI). On the other hand, mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in India was 74.48 in 2014, an increase from 62.4 in 2010. Also, the percentage of households with computers was 13 per cent in 2014, a substantial growth from 6.1 per cent in 2010; and the percentage of households with access to internet was 15.33, growing three times from 4.2 in 2010. Moreover, the percentage of individuals using the Internet has increased from 7.5 per cent in 2010 to 18 per cent in 2014.¹²⁵

A report of the Asia-Pacific Inter-Agency Task Team on Young Key Populations, which includes UNICEF and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS titled 'Adolescents: Under the Radar in the Asia-Pacific AIDS Response', states that India, together with Pakistan and China, are among the 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region that account for 98 per cent of adolescents (in the age group of 10-19 years) living with HIV. The report warned of the "hidden epidemic" in the region.¹²⁶ On the AIDS Awareness Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Union Government will provide restore funding for the nation-wide programme since State governments do not have clarity on the issue.¹²⁷

India joined the worldwide observance of the day for preventing physical, emotional and psychological abuse of women and will therefore observe the 25th of every month as 'orange day', this being the colour of hope, dignity and respect. Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri said that on that day, the India Gate will be lit up in orange colour.¹²⁸

At the ongoing Paris Summit on Climate Change, India's Environment Minister, Prakash Javadekar, indicated that India may contribute to the climate change fund if the developed countries fulfilled their part of the bargain by giving the promised \$100 billion annually from 2020 for adaptation to climate change in developing countries. He also argued for an agreement that will have a strong monitoring mechanism to oversee countries' pledges.¹²⁹ The group of BASIC countries, of which India is part, also made a strong case for non-dilution of

¹²⁵ "Building: The Challenges for the UN System", December 2, 2015, at 2015 <https://www.pminewyork.org/adminpart/uploadpdf/81654PBC%20stmtnt%20DPR%20Dec%202,2015.pdf>

¹²⁶ "India Ranks 131 on Global Index of ICT Access: Report", December 1, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-01/news/68688448_1_idi-internet-access-cent-global-growth

¹²⁷ "'Asia-Pacific Region Faces Epidemic of HIV among Adolescents'", *The Times of India*, December 1, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Asia-Pacific-region-faces-epidemic-of-HIV-among-adolescents/articleshow/49992268.cms>

¹²⁸ "India Restores Federal Funding for AIDS Programme after Criticism", *Reuters*, December 1, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-aids-india-idUSKBN0TK4WC20151201>

¹²⁹ "Sumitra Mahajan Inaugurates Event To Commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Delhi", *The Times of India*, December 4, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/events/delhi/Sumitra-Mahajan-inaugurates-event-to-commemorate-the-International-Day-for-the-Elimination-of-Violence-against-Women-in-Delhi/articleshow/50027600.cms>

¹²⁹ "COP21: India Says It May Contribute To Climate Fund", December 8, 2015, at <http://asiancorrespondent.com/2015/12/cop21-india-says-it-may-contribute-to-climate-fund/>

the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR).¹³⁰ The G77-China group of 134 countries also firmly backed India's stand.¹³¹ Three Indian institutes, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), IIT-Bombay and Tata Institute for Social Sciences, urged the developed nations to consider India's growth requirements before deciding on limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius up to 2100. Such a requirement would mean India will have to cap emissions by 2020 and peak them by 2030. This in itself would require massive technological and financial support from the developed world.¹³² A third in the series of United Nations comics, titled *Chakra Climate Change*, with an Indian hero was released during the summit.¹³³ One achievement came with the US doubling its financial contribution to the climate fund, taking it to \$800 million.¹³⁴ A deal was agreed to on December 12, 2015, and Indian officials said they were satisfied with it as their concerns regarding differentiated responsibilities and financing were addressed.¹³⁵ However, the mechanism for deciding who is developed or developing and ensuring that developed countries pay more for the climate fund had to be left to the future.¹³⁶ The CSE however said that the removal of the phrase "historical responsibility" from the agreement was a big loss for the developing world.¹³⁷

In the General Assembly, India's legal advisor M Koteswar Rao participated in a discussion on the UN Convention on Law of Seas and emphasised the importance of safeguarding the marine environment.¹³⁸ Deputy PR Bhagwant S Bishnoi participated in a discussion on the

¹³⁰ "Take Lead In Cutting Emissions: BASIC to Developed Nations", *Zee News*, December 8, 2015, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/eco-news/take-lead-in-cutting-emissions-basic-to-developed-nations_1832203.html

¹³¹ "Developed Nations Have Been Unhelpful, India Role Constructive at Climate Summit: G-77 Chief", *NDTV News*, December 11, 2015, at <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/head-of-g-77-china-group-a-bloc-of-134-nations-backs-india-in-paris-1253481>

¹³² "Indian Experts Urge World Powers to Set Climate Targets Mindful of Poor", *Hindustan Times*, December 10, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/indian-experts-urge-world-powers-to-set-climate-targets-mindful-of-poor/story-gbwVkyXLCvEvpwePhhs17K.html>

¹³³ "Climate Change Comic With Indian Superhero Launched in Paris", *The Economic Times*, December 10, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-10/news/68930427_1_climate-change-cop21-indian-superhero

¹³⁴ "US Pledges \$800 Million For Climate To Close Rift with India", December 10, 2015, at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/CxkAcsVxNjvF1AHRHsyugK/US-pledges-800-million-for-climate-to-close-rift-with-India.html>

¹³⁵ "Statement Delivered by H.E. Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister of State (IC) for Environment, Forests and Climate Change at the Closing Plenary of the UNFCCC COP-21 in Paris", December 12, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2338>.

¹³⁶ "Paris Climate Deal: Final Draft Ready; India Takes Tough Stand", *Hindustan Times*, December 12, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world/final-draft-of-paris-climate-deal-ready-for-adoption-france/story-TcGxe9p63HHfiDmt0kqTzO.html>. Also see "Paris Climate Talks: Why India is a Key Player", *Hindustan Times*, December 12, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/paris-climate-talks-why-india-is-a-key-player/story-UpUYZNsAUpPQ32Jz5hoLBL.html> and "India Welcomes Final Climate Deal Draft, Says Concerns Have Been Addressed", *The Indian Express*, December 12, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-welcomes-final-climate-deal-draft-says-concerns-have-been-addressed/>

¹³⁷ "Paris Climate Deal Weak And Unambitious: CSE", *The Tribune*, December 13, 2015, at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/paris-climate-deal-weak-and-unambitious-cse/170328.html>

¹³⁸ "Statement by Mr. M. Koteswara Rao, Legal Adviser, on Agenda Item: 79(a) Oceans and the Law of the Sea at the Seventieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly", December 08, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2336>

implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development on the 20th anniversary of the Copenhagen declaration and 15 years after the General Assembly special session on the subject. He spoke about India's efforts to bring about inclusive growth.¹³⁹

India's PR to the Permanent Mission of India in Geneva, Ajit Kumar, participated in a function commemorating 50 years of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He underscored the important role of the organisation in armed conflicts and stated the felt need for humanitarian law on non-international armed conflict, strengthening of national institutions providing security and justice and safety of humanitarian actors and legal limits of their work in conflict areas.¹⁴⁰

An advisory note issued by the UNESCAP and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES) had predicted that southern India will see higher levels of rainfall due to the effect of El Nino 2015-16. The impact of the El Nino on the returning monsoon was predicted earlier and it is now speculated that the excessive rains in Chennai may have been a result of this.¹⁴¹ A World Bank supported study being carried out by Delhi-based Natural Resource Management Consultants (NRMC) on "Women's Land Rights Mapping in India" has found that women's share of farm holdings has increased by 24 per cent over the last decade, as compared to 13 per cent for men. As a result, women own 16.5 million hectares of farmland which is 10.3 per cent of the total.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ "Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative, on Agenda Item 28 (a) Implementation of outcome of World Summit for Social Development and 24th Special Session of the General Assembly at the United Nations General Assembly", December 11, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2337>

¹⁴⁰ "Statement by India Delivered by H.E. Mr. Ajit Kumar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India at the General Debate - 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent", December 8, 2015, at <http://www.pmindiaun.org/pages.php?id=1214>

¹⁴¹ "Southern India Likely To See Higher Than Normal Rainfall: United Nations", *The Economic Times*, December 11, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-11/news/68959907_1_el-nino-normal-rainfall-south-asia

¹⁴² "Steady Growth of Women as Farmland Owners in a Decade", *Hindustan Times*, December 12, 2015, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/steady-growth-of-women-as-farmland-owners-in-a-decade/story-7ko5CQiPjXNv5QdvnOa0iO.html>