

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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# I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

## A. South Asia

### Bangladesh

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Bangladesh to join Saudi-led anti-terror centre; India, Bangladesh begin land survey; Six wounded in blasts at mosque in Bangladesh naval base.**

Bangladesh has decided to join a Saudi Arabian initiative to set up “Counter-Terrorism Centre” along with other Muslim countries to fight terrorism and extremist ideology. “We have preliminarily consented to join the centre and asked for details of the proposed platform. The Saudi Government has agreed to send us further information on it,” State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam told *The Daily Star* on December 15. He said the issue was at a very early stage. “We need to discuss any initiative widely before joining it [the centre]. It can be discussed even in parliament.” Elaborating the Saudi move, Shahriar Alam said Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz has taken an initiative to establish a centre in Riyadh to coordinate efforts against terrorism and extremism. In this regard, he said Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir recently phoned Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmood Ali and made a request to join the centre as a founding member. The state minister said Bangladesh decided to join the centre along with other Muslim countries in line with the “zero tolerance” policy of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina against terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>1</sup>

Bangladesh and India have started demarcating the land in “adverse possessions” (AP) and raising pillars on the international border in Jalpaiguri district of north Bengal. The process will put an end to a humanitarian crisis triggered in 1947 following the erroneous omission of a police station in Jalpaiguri district by British lawyer Cyril John Radcliffe, while dividing the country. In June, Bangladesh and India agreed to put an end to the dispute on the basis of 2011 Protocol. The Protocol identified the disputed areas and the 2015 agreement agreed to complete the “ground demarcation” of the boundary in 2016. The Survey of India officers, headed by senior officer Biswanath Chakravarty, reached the village with border guards of both countries and initiated the process. Reportedly, “110 subsidiary pillars and 10 main pillars” will be constructed on the Berubari border. Pillars will be raised in five villages under South Berubari gram panchayat and in another adjacent Panchayat, Nagar Berubari, on the international border.<sup>2</sup>

At least six naval personnel were seriously wounded in explosions at the end of prayers on December 18 at a mosque inside a Bangladesh naval base in Chittagong. Two people were

<sup>1</sup> “Bangladesh To Join Saudi-Led Anti-Terror Centre”, *The Daily Star*, December 16, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-join-saudi-led-anti-terror-centre-188083>.

<sup>2</sup> “India, Bangladesh Begin Land Survey”, *The Hindu*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-bangladesh-begin-land-survey/article7997669.ece>.

arrested in connection with the blasts. Police said they had confessed to being members of banned militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh. Security forces also deactivated five unexploded bombs from the mosque in the port city of Chittagong, some 265 km (165 miles) southeast of Dhaka. It is the first time a mosque used by Bangladesh's Sunni Muslim majority has been attacked.<sup>3</sup>

## Sri Lanka

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka's national government's first budget passes with a two-third majority; Tamil People's Conference formed in Jaffna; Colombo Port handles over 5 million containers in 2015; Sri Lanka Navy arrests Indian fishermen; Sri Lanka mulls special zone for Chinese investment; Sri Lanka seeks loan facilities from China Exim Bank to construct Central Expressway segment; Lanka declared eligible for MCC assistance; US envoy Shannon visits Sri Lanka; Minister of Megapolis and Western Development, U.S. Ambassador discuss future infrastructure projects; US Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal arrives in Sri Lanka; Australia, Sri Lanka review bilateral relationship at Senior Officials' Talks; President Maithripala Sirisena visits Vatican on invitation of Pope Francis.**

The first budget of Sri Lanka's National Unity Government was approved in parliament with a two-third majority when the final vote was taken on December 19. Ending the Committee Stage Debate, the Third Reading of the Appropriation Bill (2016) was passed by the House with a majority of 109 votes. When a division by name was taken, 160 votes were cast in favour of the Bill while 51 votes were cast against it. The proceedings of the Budget 2016 started on November 20 2015 with the introduction of the Appropriation Bill in parliament by Minister of Finance Ravi Karunanayake.<sup>4</sup>

Northern Province Chief Minister C V Wigneswaran has been appointed as the head of a new organisation called 'Tamil People's Conference' comprising Tamil politicians and civil society members. The 'Tamil People's Conference' met on December 19 in Jaffna and discussed its future goals and also decided to form sub-committees which will handle various tasks. The main committee in the 'Tamil People's Conference' includes Tamil National Alliance members Dharmalingham Sidharthan and Suresh Premachandran and Tamil National People's Front leader Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam. The sub-committees appointed by the 'Tamil People's Conference' have been given a time frame during which it will submit proposals to address issues faced by the Tamils.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Six Wounded in Blasts at Mosque in Bangladesh Naval Base", *Channel News Asia*, December 18, 2015 at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/six-wounded-in-blasts-at/2360362.html>.

<sup>4</sup> "Sri Lanka's National Government's First Budget Passes with a Two-Third Majority", *ColomboPage*, December 19, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec19\\_1450533873CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec19_1450533873CH.php).

<sup>5</sup> "North CM Heads New Organisation on Tamil Rights", *Colombo Gazette*, December 20, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/20/north-cm-heads-new-organisation-on-tamil-rights/>.

Sri Lanka's Colombo Port for the first time in history has handled over 5 million twenty-foot-equivalent units container volume in 2015, according to latest figures in port services. In 2014, the Colombo Port handled a container volume of 4.908 million TEUs. It has been reported that 3,854 container vessels have come to Colombo Harbour during 2015, compared to the 3,742 arrived in 2014. Sri Lanka's Colombo Port has emerged as a growing transshipment hub capable of handling the increasing number of mega-ships vessels with capacities of 10,000 TEUs and up. CMA CGM Marco Polo, one of the world's largest container ships with a capacity of 16,020 TEUs arrived in Colombo in late September.<sup>6</sup>

Sri Lanka Navy has arrested six Indian fishermen along with an Indian fishing trawler poaching in Sri Lankan waters on December 20. Indian authorities said the six fishermen belong to Pudukkottai district. The arrested fishermen have been brought to Kankasanthurai along with the trawler and handed over to the officials of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Jaffna) for further action. The arrest came days after the Navy arrested four Indian fishermen along with their boat when they were fishing northwest of Delft Island on December 17. The Sri Lankan Navy had arrested 14 Tamil fishermen in November and detained their three fishing boats. The country had released 126 Tamil fishermen lodged in Lankan jail as a goodwill gesture. The Chief Minister of Indian state of Tamil Nadu J. Jayalalithaa asked the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to urgently take up the issue with the Sri Lankan authorities at the appropriate level and ensure the immediate release of the 41 fishermen, 56 fishing boats and fishing gear from Sri Lankan custody.<sup>7</sup>

Sri Lanka is considering a special zone in the South for Chinese investors as China looks to expand its investment in the island nation. In an interview to China's *Xinhua news agency*, the Chairman of the Board of Investments (BoI) Upul Jayasuriya has said that the government had decided to set up the zone in the southern town of Hambantota where China funded the construction of a harbour and an international airport. Sri Lanka has already conveyed its decision to China and is now awaiting a response, he said.<sup>8</sup>

Sri Lanka has sought loan facilities from China's Exim Bank to fund the construction of a segment of the Central Expressway from capital Colombo to Kandy in central hills. Cabinet spokesperson Dr. Rajitha Senarathne said the Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal made by Minister of Higher Education and Highways Lakshman Kiriella to examine the possibility of obtaining loan facilities from the EXIM Bank of China to construct the segment from Kadawatha to Kossinna. The cabinet has given the approval to obtaining proposals from Metallurgical Corporation of China for the construction work.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Colombo Port Handles over 5 Million Containers This Year", *ColomboPage*, December 20, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec20\\_1450631888CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec20_1450631888CH.php).

<sup>7</sup> "Sri Lanka Navy Arrests Six Indian Fishermen", *ColomboPage*, December 20, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec20\\_1450591095CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec20_1450591095CH.php).

<sup>8</sup> "Sri Lanka Mulls Special Zone for Chinese Investment", *ColomboPage*, December 19, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec19\\_1450511206CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec19_1450511206CH.php).

<sup>9</sup> "Sri Lanka Seeks Loan Facilities from China Exim Bank to Construct Central Expressway Segment", *ColomboPage*, December 17, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec17\\_1450367723CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec17_1450367723CH.php).

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) held in Washington DC, Sri Lanka was selected as an eligible country for assistance from the fiscal year 2016, the Foreign Ministry said. This decision of the Board was conveyed by telephone to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, by the Chief Executive Officer of the MCC, Dana J. Hyde. Created by the US Congress in 2004 with strong bipartisan support, the MCC is an innovative US foreign assistance agency that operates on the principle of delivering assistance on the basis of a long-term consultative partnership with individual countries. The criteria for consideration in entering a partnership include a country's commitment to good governance, economic freedom and investment in citizens. The Foreign Ministry said that the selection of Sri Lanka as an eligible country for long-term partnership with the MCC is a demonstration of recognition of the progress made by Sri Lanka since January 2015 under the leadership of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.<sup>10</sup>

US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Designate) Thomas Shannon met Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Mangala Samaraweera on December 14 during his visit to Sri Lanka. After the meeting in a press conference Shannon announced that the first meeting of the U.S.-Sri Lanka Partnership Dialogue will take place in February 2016 in Washington, DC.<sup>11</sup> He also went to Trincomalee during the visit. Speaking in Trincomalee on December 15, he said that during his visit it was exciting to witness first-hand the important work that communities, civil society organisations, and local authorities across this island are undertaking to improve the living standards of Sri Lankans. He said the US will continue support to communities in the East, currently worth more than 3.2 billion Sri Lankan rupees (\$23 million).<sup>12</sup>

U.S. Ambassador to Colombo Atul Keshap met with Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Champika Ranawaka on December 18. During the meeting, Ambassador Keshap and Minister Ranawaka discussed future infrastructure projects essential to Sri Lanka's prosperity, energy production and environmental protection, and progress on the development of a new constitution.<sup>13</sup>

The United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal came to Sri Lanka on December 20 on a private visit.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Lanka Declared Eligible for MCC Assistance", *Colombo Gazette*, December 17, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/17/lanka-declared-eligible-for-mcc-assistance/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Remarks to Press by Under Secretary of State (designate) Ambassador Thomas Shannon after Meeting with Foreign Minister Samaraweera", *Embassy of the United States Sri Lanka & Maldives*, December 14, 2015 at <http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/sp-14dec15.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Lanka will be an Example to the World Says US", *Colombo Gazette*, December 15, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/15/lanka-will-be-an-example-to-the-world-says-us/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Minister of Megapolis and Western Development, U.S. Ambassador Discuss Future Infrastructure Projects", *ColomboPage*, December 18, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec18\\_1450446619CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec18_1450446619CH.php).

<sup>14</sup> "US Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal Arrives in Sri Lanka", *ColomboPage*, December 20, 2015 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_15B/Dec20\\_1450594049CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec20_1450594049CH.php).

The First Round of Senior Officials' Talks between Sri Lanka and Australia was held on December 16, 2015 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo. The Australian delegation was led by Deputy Secretary of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ric Wells, and the Sri Lanka delegation by Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ranjith Uyangoda. The talks broadly focused on bilateral trade, investment and economic diplomacy, development partnership, Sri Lanka's reconciliation process, including regional and multilateral issues. Identifying new areas of cooperation under Australia's future development assistance priorities for Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Government's new policies for growth and development, both sides agreed to further build on the added momentum in the bilateral partnership, follow-up on the discussions and regularly review progress. The next Senior Officials' Talks will be held in the first quarter of 2017.<sup>15</sup>

President Maithripala Sirisena who is in Vatican on a special invitation of Pope Francis participated in a banquet hosted by Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith Cardinal on December 15 at St Thomas Church in Livia Bella in Rome. President Sirisena thanking the Archbishop for hosting the banquet said that His Holiness Pope Francis' visit to Sri Lanka in last January was a great blessing for him. He further said that the current Vatican tour left him with unforgettable memories. Rev Valence Mendis -Bishop of Chilaw Diocese, Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan delegation participated in the event.<sup>16</sup>

## Maldives

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Defence Minister says that Maldivian forces would be active in Saudi led anti-terrorism coalition; Maldivian Government welcomes Nasheed's decision to appeal sentence; EU Parliament passes resolution against Maldives; Chinese companies invited to the Maldivian market; President Maumoon has met with Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister.**

Defence Minister Adam Shareef has said that the Maldivian armed forces would be actively taking part in the Saudi led anti-terrorism coalition. In an interview to the state media *PSM* on December 16, Minister Shareef said that the Government's decision to take part in the coalition of Islamic countries show the government's work to protect the faith. And he said that being accepted into a league of Arab countries show the trust in the Maldives by the Islamic countries. The Minister said that the Maldivian forces would be taking part in three ways in the coalition army including sharing the intelligence with the nations and actively on the field.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "When Pope Said 'President Sirisena Is Just Like Me' I Said 'No You Are Just Like President Sirisena,'" - Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith", *Asian Tribune*, December 16, 2015 at <http://asiantribune.com/node/88334>.

<sup>16</sup> "When Pope Said 'President Sirisena Is Just Like Me,' I Said 'No You Are Just Like President Sirisena,'" - Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith", *Asian Tribune*, December 16, 2015 at <http://asiantribune.com/node/88334>.

<sup>17</sup> "Defence Minister Says That Maldivian Forces Would Be Active in Saudi Led Anti-Terrorism Coalition", *SunOnline*, December 17, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35265>.

Government of Maldives has welcomed decision of former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed to appeal his 13-year jail sentence. Statement released by Foreign Ministry on December 13 said that government had always maintained that it was to the relevant judicial body that Nasheed needed to send his complaints to. And that government had always maintained it was Supreme Court that needed to consider advice of United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The Foreign Ministry said that Maldivian judiciary remained free of any influence.<sup>18</sup>

European Parliament has passed a resolution calling to release former President Mohamed Nasheed, former Vice-President Ahmed Adeen, former defence ministers Tholhath Ibrahim and Mohamed Nazim, Sheikh Imran Abdulla, and other political prisoners. European Parliament said on its website that members expressed deep concern about the gradual deterioration of democratic standards and increasingly authoritarian tendencies in the Maldives. Members also called on the EU Commission and member states "to issue comprehensive warnings about the Maldives' human rights record to tourists planning to go to the country" and asked the European External Action Service to monitor closely the human rights and political situation in the Maldives. The resolution was passed by 563 votes to 31, with 32 abstentions. Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon has said that the resolution at the EU parliament calling to seize the cargo of Maldivian businessmen close to the Maldivian Government may diminish the relationship between the Maldives and EU. Foreign Minister Dunya expressed concerns about the resolution on behalf of the government.<sup>19</sup>

State Minister of the Finance Ministry, Mohamed Ashmalee has said that the Chinese companies are welcome to join the Maldivian market like Samsung and Apple. Speaking at the World Internet Conference (Wuzhen Summit), State Minister Ashmalee said that the Maldives is an independent country with an independent culture and heritage but many believe that the country cannot do enough to develop the international economy since the Maldives is a small country. Noting that a country still requires development in a lot of sectors, State Minister Ashmalee said that the Maldives need help from *Microsoft*, *Google* and the Chinese companies.<sup>20</sup>

Former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has met with the Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and the Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Sri Lankan Parliament Complex on December 20. At the meeting, former President Maumoon invited the Sri Lankan Prime Minister to the organising committee of the Islam and Democracy in South

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<sup>18</sup> "Government Welcomes Nasheed's Decision To Appeal Sentence", *SunOnline*, December 14, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35209>.

<sup>19</sup> "EU Parliament Passes Resolution against Maldives", *SunOnline*, December 17, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35281>. "Dunya: Resolution may affect relations between EU and the Maldives", *SunOnline*, December 17, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35270>.

<sup>20</sup> "Chinese Companies Invited to the Maldivian Market", *SunOnline*, December 19, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35322>.

Asia conference in Sri Lanka next year and take part in the event and give a speech. Former President Maumoon made the visit while visiting Sri Lanka on a family visit.<sup>21</sup>

## B. East Asia

### China

(December 7-20, 2015)

- **Three more hydropower projects on the main stream of the Brahmaputra River in Tibet Autonomous Region have been approved for implementation by the Chinese authorities; US fighter planes flying near Nansha Islands serious threat to stability in the region; PLAN concludes a test in South China Sea; India-China to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism, drug-related crimes, cybercrimes, economic crimes, and illegal immigration activities; China starts work towards a global FTA; Chinese government announces new anti-terror guidelines; Chinese officials faked economic growth figures; Xi Jinping calls for complete control of CPC over the Party Schools; Beijing ready to grant new residence registrations; China calls for fighting poverty.**

According to reports, Zangmu hydroelectric project has been fully operationalized 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 River in Tibet Autonomous Region have been approved for implementation by the Chinese authorities. Government of India carefully monitors all developments on the Brahmaputra River. These four projects are considered to be Run of the River (RoR) hydro-electric projects. As a lower riparian State with considerable established user rights to the waters of the River, India has conveyed the views and concerns to the Chinese authorities, including at the highest levels of the Government of the People's Republic of China. India has urged China to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas.<sup>22</sup>

Two US B-52 strategic bombers flew into the airspace near the Nansha Islands on December 10. As a response to this the Chinese Ministry of National Defence stated that such actions always jeopardize the safety of the Chinese personnel. The Ministry further asserted that, "the United States immediately adopt measures to prevent such dangerous actions in order to prevent damaging relations between the two militaries and countries".<sup>23</sup>

On December 18, the Chinese Navy announced that the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) had conducted a combat exercise on December 16 in the South China Sea (SCS). The North Sea, East Sea and South Sea fleets had participated in this exercise. It was undertaken to

<sup>21</sup> "President Maumoon has Met with Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister", *SunOnline*, December 19, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35327>.

<sup>22</sup> "Dam on Brahmaputra River by China", *PIB, GOI*, December 7, 2015, Release ID :132646, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> "US Flight Near Islands 'Serious Military Provocation': Chinese Defence Ministry", *China Daily*, December 19, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/19/content\\_22751642.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/19/content_22751642.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

achieve an element of surprise like in real warfare and thus the drill headquarters did not release information to two of the participating sides.<sup>24</sup>

At the invitation of the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, Union Home Minister visited China in November, 2015. In Beijing, Union Home Minister held meetings with the Minister of Public Security of People's Republic of China and the Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party. He also called on the Chinese Premier. During the discussions, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism, drug-related crimes, cybercrimes, economic crimes, illegal immigration activities and other transnational crimes as well as encourage long-term, healthy and stable development of law enforcement cooperation between them. A consensus was reached to establish a High Level Meeting Mechanism led by the Home Minister of India and the Minister of Public Security of China, to be held in Beijing and Delhi once every two years.<sup>25</sup>

On December 17, the Chinese State Council released guidelines on ways to speed up the implementation of its free trade agreement (FTA) strategy. The primary aim of this is to garner a global free trade network. China today has 14 FTA with 22 countries and regions and is in the process of negotiating more. According to the Ministry of Commerce asserted that the, "strategy was a "necessary choice" for China to adapt to global economic trends, deepen reforms and foster a more open economic framework".<sup>26</sup>

The Chinese security chief Meng Jianzhu announced nine national anti-terrorism guidelines to coordinate security forces at an anti-terrorism work conference in Urumqi, Xinjiang on December 17. Meng said that, "the guidelines are aimed at coping with changes and trends in the fight against terrorism at home and abroad. China is closely integrating its efforts with the international battle against terrorism after an increasing number of domestic attacks were plotted overseas on the Internet".<sup>27</sup>

According to the *Xinhua News Agency*, several local officials in China's Northeast region accepted to fudging growth figures for the last few years. The real numbers were much lower than the ones reported. According to an official, "If the past data had not been inflated, the current growth figures would not show such a precipitous fall".<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese President Xi Jinping has asked the Party Schools to accept the complete leadership of the CPC. He said that, "To realize the goal of building a moderately prosperous

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<sup>24</sup> "PLA Navy Tests Readiness in S. China Sea", By Zhao Lei, *China Daily*, December 19, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/19/content\\_22750852.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/19/content_22750852.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

<sup>25</sup> "Visit of Home Minister to China", *PIB*, December 15, 2015, Release ID :133290, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> "China Aims To Expand Global FTA Network", *China Daily*, December 17, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/17/content\\_22736982.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/17/content_22736982.htm), accessed December 21, 2015

<sup>27</sup> "Govt Announces New Anti-Terror Guidelines Following Paris Attacks" By Cui Jia, *China Daily*, December 14, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/14/content\\_22705147.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/14/content_22705147.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

<sup>28</sup> "Officials Admit To Faking Economic Figures", By Zheng Yangpeng, *China Daily*, December 14, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/14/content\\_22705255.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/14/content_22705255.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

society and the Chinese dream of great national rejuvenation, the key is to mould a troop of officials that are as strong as iron in belief, faith, discipline and sense of responsibility". He further added that the schools should uphold the complete leadership.<sup>29</sup>

According to a draft regulation by the Legal Affairs Office of the Beijing Municipal Government, Beijing may be ready to allow non-residents to get a household registration through credit point system. As per the draft, "criteria for obtaining a hukou include having a Beijing residential permit, being less than 45 years old, having paid social insurance in the capital for at least seven consecutive years and having no criminal record". But the draft does not state how many points are required to get the registration.<sup>30</sup>

On December 7, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council released a poverty alleviation instruction. According to the document, "there should be more targeted and precise measures, as well as ways to ensure poor people in rural areas have access to food, clothes, basic education, medical care, and a safe home by 2020". This is following the government announcement that it plans to lift 70 million poor out of poverty by 2020.<sup>31</sup>

## C. Southeast Asia

### ASEAN

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Disaster management within ASEAN; Negotiations on RCEP.**

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen requested the ASEAN members to work together in the time of natural disasters and emergencies so that the people living along the borders can be rescued through a coordinated action. He made this call during the ASEAN ministerial meeting for disaster management at Phnom Penh. Cambodia's opposition party, Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) supported this request and mentioned that as Cambodia lacks human and capital resources, it should have collaboration in case an emergency needs to be handled efficiently.<sup>32</sup>

ASEAN trade ministers met at the side-line of World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Nairobi and instructed their officials to take steps that would ensure fruitful negotiations in the next round of meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), to be held in Brunei in mid-February, 2016. It would help them to conclude the agreement within

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<sup>29</sup> "Xi Demands CPC's Absolute Leadership over Party Schools", *China Daily*, December 12, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/12/content\\_22699965.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/12/content_22699965.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

<sup>30</sup> "Capital Opens Door To Hukou Applicants", By Xu Wei/Wang Xiaodong/Zheng Jinran, *China Daily*, December 11, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/11/content\\_22686608.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/11/content_22686608.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

<sup>31</sup> "China Releases Blueprint on Fighting Poverty", *China Daily*, December 8, 2015 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/08/content\\_22658556.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/08/content_22658556.htm), accessed on December 21, 2015

<sup>32</sup> Hul Reaksmey, "Hun Sen Calls for ASEAN Cooperation in Times of Disaster", *Voice of America (VOA)*, Phnom Penh, December 16, 2015, at <http://www.voacambodia.com/content/hun-sen-calls-for-asean-cooperation-in-times-of-disaster/3105429.html>, accessed on December 21, 2015.

2016 deadline. Malaysia's International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed chaired the meeting. He said,

"It was also agreed that all member states will support Iman Pambagyo, the trade negotiating committee chair and RCEP coordinator for Asean. If need be, our officials will meet before the upcoming round of negotiations in Brunei.." <sup>33</sup>

The final round of RCEP negotiation will take place in Laos in September 2016.

## Southeast Asia

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Hun Sen visited Thailand; Meeting on Dawei Deep Sea Project and SEZ; EU Resolution against Malaysia's human rights situation; South Korea-Vietnam free trade deal; Japan-Indonesia security talk; Manila-PNG direct flight.**

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen visited Thailand after a period of 12 years and hence, the visit may bring in a thaw in their edgy relationship. Both sides signed several agreements during this visit and one of them was on labour mobility and employment which demonstrates the significant role played by the Cambodian workers in Thai economy. Border disputes on Preah Vihear temple along Thai-Cambodia border often upset both authorities and therefore, bilateral ties at the level of economy seem important to strengthen their relationship. <sup>34</sup>

Representatives from Thailand, Japan and Myanmar met with each other in Bangkok to further discuss about the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), to be developed in Dawei, Myanmar. Each of these three partners will contribute 6 million baht for development of the port and the SEZ in Myanmar. Myanmar and Thailand jointly started the project with MoUs signed in 2008 and 2012 and Japan was involved since early this year. <sup>35</sup>

The European Union has passed a resolution against the human rights situation in Malaysia, condemning the country for its proposed National Security Bill. It also urged that Malaysia should release all political prisoners, withdraw the anti-sodomy law and protect the rights of the LGBT people. Malaysia's foreign ministry mentioned in a statement that Malaysia would engage with the EU in the next possible opportunity. The statement added that Malaysia

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<sup>33</sup> Mergawati Zulfakar, "Asean Wants a RCEP Trade Deal By The 2016 Deadline", *The Star Online*, December 17, 2015, at <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/12/17/asean-wants-a-rcep-trade-deal-by-the-2016-deadline/>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Ron Corben, "Thailand Cambodia Strengthen Ties", *Voice of America*, December 20, 2015, at <http://www.voanews.com/content/thailand-cambodia-strengthening-ties/3110777.html>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> "Japan's Participation in Thai-Myanmar Dawei Economic Zone to Boost Confidence in Project", *The Japan Times*, December 15, 2015, at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/15/business/japans-participation-thai-myanmar-dawei-economic-zone-boost-confidence-project/#.VnkirU-YGVp>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

respects human rights and it emphasise on duties and responsibilities that come with freedom.<sup>36</sup>

Vietnam came to terms with South Korea through a free trade agreement which became effective from December 20. In 2014, the bilateral trade between Korea and Vietnam was recorded at 28 billion USD in 2014, almost 57 times higher than 1992. South Korea was recorded as the third largest trading partner of Vietnam, followed by China and US. On the other hand, Vietnam is South Korea's sixth largest export market. South Korea's investments in Vietnam were totalled at 4377 projects worth 43.6 billion USD, as of October 2015. South Korea's investments in Vietnam are mainly concentrated in areas like industrial manufacturing and processing, real estate, retail and wholesale and construction.<sup>37</sup>

Japan's first *two-plus-two* security talk with Indonesia was held on December 17 in Tokyo. This came amid tensions with China over SCS issues. Indonesia is the first ASEAN nation which is having such a kind of meeting with Japan. US, Britain and Australia are other three countries that share similar talks with Japan. The foreign and defence ministers from Japan and Indonesia met each other during the talk. Besides having conversation on SCS disputes, where Japan and Indonesia share no common clash, both sides discussed about upgradation of their maritime capabilities.<sup>38</sup>

Philippines Airlines has started a direct flight connecting Manila and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The thrice-a-week flight will be a part of Philippines Airline's expansion plan in the Pacific. Besides trade and tourism, this connectivity will enable the Filipino working professionals in PNG to visit their homeland with ease. Around 30,000 Filipinos are working in PNG. Besides, it will give PNGians an opportunity to connect with rest of the world through Manila.<sup>39</sup>

## India and Southeast Asia

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Secretary General Visited India; ISRO launched satellites from Singapore;**

Secretary General of ASEAN, Mr. Le Luong Minh visited India between December 10 and December 13 on the invitation of EAM, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj. The foreign minister of India spoke about maritime cooperation, connectivity, cyber security and innovation as potential areas of cooperation between both sides. H.E. Le Luong Minh mentioned that India and

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<sup>36</sup> Sumisha Naidu, "EU Resolution on Malaysia's Human Rights Issues 'Unfortunate, Hasty'", *Channel News Asia*, December 20, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/eu-resolution-on-malaysia/2363728.html>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> "Vietnam-RoK Free Trade Agreement Becomes Effective", *Vietnamnet.vn*, December 21, 2015, at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/149014/vietnam-rok-free-trade-agreement-becomes-effective.html>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "Japan, Indonesia To Hold 1st '2-Plus-2' Talks Amid China Tensions", *The Mainichi*, December 3, 2015, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151203/p2g/00m/0dm/029000c>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> "Philippines Airline Begins Manila - Port Moresby Flights Today", *Papua New Guinea Today*, December 17, 2015, at <http://news.pngfacts.com/2015/12/philippines-airline-begins-manila-port.html>, accessed on December 23, 2015.

ASEAN need to gear up their relationship in an order that India can contribute towards ASEAN vision of 2025 by implementing the ASEAN-India Plan of Action 2016-2020. The secretary general also met representatives from several business chambers in Delhi and delivered a speech at the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) on ASEAN-India partnership.<sup>40</sup>

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has put Singapore's first commercial earth-observation satellite in space. The 400 kg satellite, named as TeLEOS I, was launched on Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). The mission is named as PSLV -C29. TeLEOS was joined by five other smaller satellites from Singapore. These make ISRO's count of foreign satellites to 57.<sup>41</sup>

## D. Russia

### Russia: National

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Foreign oil traders to get access to Russian market in 2016; Putin signs law allowing Russia to declare decisions of European Court of Human Rights unconstitutional; Seven Russian banks start issuing first cards of Mir payment system; Russia successfully test-fires strategic Sineva missile; Russia's budget deficit to touch US\$ 21billion in 2016; Russia plans construction of new hydropower plants on Kuril Islands; Russia's Strategic Missile Force will double number of launches in 2016; Launch programme of converted Russian-Ukrainian missiles suspended; First LNG plant in Siberia to start operations in August 2016; Putin calls development of new engine remarkable event in domestic aircraft-making; Putin says Russia's expenses on military drills partly re-directed to operations in Syria.**

Deputy Head of Russia's Federal Antimonopoly Service Anatoly Golomolzin has said on December 17 that foreign oil traders will receive access to the Russian market in 2016. He added that the 'decision to attract foreign participants to the local market was made within the project to launch Russian benchmark in trading of oil export contracts'. The St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange together with Energy Ministry, Central Bank, Finance Ministry, Economic Development Ministry, Federal Antimonopoly Service and oil companies have been involved in creating a new Russian oil benchmark for almost 2 years. The benchmark will provide the budget and Russian oil companies with extra revenues of \$0.5-1 a barrel. Dollar will be used in calculations at the initial stage. The Russian rouble, the euro and

<sup>40</sup> "Secretary General of ASEAN Visits India", *ASEAN web*, at [http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/secretary-general-of-asean-visits-india?category\\_id=27](http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/secretary-general-of-asean-visits-india?category_id=27), accessed on December 21, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> "ISRO Launches Six Singaporean Satellites", *The Indian Express*, December 17, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/technology/science/isro-launches-six-singaporean-satellites/>, accessed on December 22, 2015.

the yuan may be used later. The Russian benchmark is also planned to be used for calculation of oil export duties.<sup>42</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has on December 15 signed a law amending the Federal Law "On the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation." According to the document, the Russian Constitutional Court is allowed to declare decisions of international courts, including the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) unenforceable if they contradict the Russian Constitution.<sup>43</sup>

Russia's Central Bank and the National System of Payment Cards (NSPC) have on December 15 announced the launch of first cards of the Mir payments system by 7 Russian banks. These include Gazprombank, MDM Bank, Moscow Industrial Bank, Svyaz-bank, RNCB (operating in Crimea and Rossiya and SMP Bank. The second group of 21 banks - participants of the pilot project has already started testing the cards and plan to complete it before the end of 2015.<sup>44</sup>

A Russian nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine 'Verkhoturys' has successfully test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) "Sineva" in the Barents Sea on December 12. The ICBM was directed towards the Kura rocket test range in Kamchatka in Russia's Far East and was launched from an underwater position. This was the fourth test of a strategic sub-launched missile Russia has conducted this year. In September and October 2015, two Bulava missile tests were conducted. In November, a Delta IV-class submarine, the Tula, successfully test-fired a 'Sineva' strategic missile.<sup>45</sup>

Deputy Finance Minister Maxim Oreshkin has said on December 11 that Russia's budget deficit is expected to reach 1.5 trillion roubles (US\$ 21.7 billion) in 2016 with an oil price baseline of US\$ 40 a barrel. The deficit will be 2 per cent of the GDP.<sup>46</sup>

The government of the Sakhalin Oblast plans to build a cascade of small hydropower plants on the Kuril Islands. This was stated by the press service of the region's governor Oleg Kozhemyako on December 16. It added that 'power plants are needed to eliminate energy deficit that emerged because of new fish processing plants'.<sup>47</sup>

Commander Col Gen Sergey Karakayev has said on December 16 that Russia's Strategic Missile Force will hold 16 missile launches in 2016. This is double the number of launches in 2015. He stated 'next year, 16 launches are planned, of which two launches for the purpose of

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<sup>42</sup> "Foreign Oil Traders To Get Access To Russian Market In 2016 — Official", *Itar-Tass*, December 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/844729>

<sup>43</sup> "Putin Signs Law Allowing Russia To Declare Decisions of ECHR Unconstitutional", *Itar-Tass*, December 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/844067>

<sup>44</sup> "Seven Russian Banks Start Issuing First Cards Of Mir Payment System — NSPC", *Itar-Tass*, December 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/844121>

<sup>45</sup> "Russian Nuclear Sub Successfully Test-Fires Strategic Sineva Missile", *RT*, , December 12, 2015 at <https://www.rt.com/news/325744-russia-ballistic-missile-launch/>

<sup>46</sup> "Russia's Budget Deficit to Reach \$21Bln in 2016 – Finance Ministry", *The Moscow Times*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-budget-deficit-to-reach-21bln-in-2016--finance-ministry/552575.html>

<sup>47</sup> "Russia Plans Construction Of New Hydropower Plants On Kuril Islands", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/844402>

extending the service life and 14 launches for the purpose of holding experimental tests of missile systems being developed, providing strategic missiles with combat capabilities and as part of training to practice control of the Russian Armed Forces'.<sup>48</sup>

Commander Col Gen Sergey Karakayev has said on December 16 that the launch programme of the Russian-Ukrainian Dnepr converted missiles has been suspended. The Dnepr rocket was last launched on March 26, 2015, from Yasny launch base in Russia's Orenburg region (in the Urals). It powered into orbit the South Korean Kompsat-3A communications satellite.<sup>49</sup>

Russia's Sibir-Energo will invest US\$ 13.3 million into development of the first liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in Siberia. The first stage of the modular plant is scheduled to be launched in August 2016. The design and technology has been provided by China's Cosic. Gazprom's existing main gas line will be the gas supply source.<sup>50</sup>

President Vladimir Putin has said, on December 17, that the new Russian-made PD-14 engine is an important event in domestic aircraft-making. He stated 'this is the first product of this type since the late 1980s. The new engine will help Russia develop the domestic aircraft-manufacturing industry further, including the Ilyushin Il-96 plane. The PD-14 engine's sustainability and possibilities allow us to develop a whole family of medium-and long-haul planes'. The Russian President also mentioned plans to develop domestic civil aircraft-making. He specifically referred to the Russian-Chinese project of developing a wide-body airliner based on the MS-21 plane and the project of developing regional aviation on the basis of the Il-114 aircraft.<sup>51</sup>

President Vladimir Putin has said, on December 17, that Russia has re-directed part of its expenses on military exercises to military operations in Syria with no additional strain on the state budget. He stated 'we are simply re-directing these funds to the military operation in Syria. It would be hard to imagine a better military exercise. Therefore, in fact, we can continue training there for quite a long period of time without any significant damage to our budget'.<sup>52</sup>

## Russia: International

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **US Secretary of State John Kerry visits Moscow; Russia to support Free Syrian Army in its offensive against the Islamic State; Putin vows to 'immediately destroy' any threat to Russian forces in Syria; Egypt says no evidence that suggests Russia's A321 plane was**

<sup>48</sup> "Russia's Strategic Missile Force will Double Number Of Launches in 2016 — Commander", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/844525>

<sup>49</sup> "Launch Programme Of Converted Russian-Ukrainian Missiles Suspended — Commander", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/844553>

<sup>50</sup> "First LNG Plant In Siberia To Start Operations In August 2016", *Itar-Tass*, December 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/845222>

<sup>51</sup> "Putin Calls New Engine Remarkable Event In Domestic Aircraft-Making", *Itar-Tass*, December 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/845031>

<sup>52</sup> "Russia's Expenses On Military Drills Partly Re-Directed To Operation in Syria — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, December 17, 2015 <http://tass.ru/en/defense/844922>

**brought down by a terrorist attack; Russian and Bahraini Foreign Ministers discuss developments in Middle East and bilateral ties; Lavrov says political transition in Syria can take 18 months; Russia calls for immediate closure of Syrian-Turkish border; Russia says Syrian terrorists list compiled by Jordan is contradictory; Russia unveils Islamic State's oil supplies to Turkey; Russia's Drug Control Agency says Afghan heroin is trafficked by the IS to EU via Turkey; Ukraine to start trade blockade of Crimea; Putin says Russia ready to restore relations with Georgia; Lukashenko satisfied with Belarus-Russia cooperation within the Union State; Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visits China.**

The US Secretary of State John Kerry has visited Moscow on December 16 wherein he held discussions with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin. The key topics discussed involved developments in Syria, Ukraine and fight against terrorism. *Itar-Tass* noted that 'the three-hour meeting between Putin and Kerry resulted in no breakthroughs in bilateral ties but the sides discussed in detail and brought closer their positions on the settlement in Syria and Ukraine and the fight against terrorism'. After talks, Kerry said the United States is not seeking to isolate Russia but wants to cooperate with Moscow in the fight against terrorism and to jointly solve the Syrian problems.<sup>53</sup>

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said on December 14 that Russia supports a few factions of the Free Syrian Army in their offensive against the Islamic State. Earlier the Chief of Russia's General Staff, Valery Gerasimov had said that more than '5,000 troops of the Free Syrian Army have been pushing ahead with offensive operations in four provinces - Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Raqqah. To support these groups Russian planes carry out 30-40 strikes a day. The groups also get weapons, ammunition and other material supplies'.<sup>54</sup>

Russian President Putin has said, on December 11, that Russia's military will 'immediately destroy' any target threatening them in Syria, representing a strong warning to Turkey following its shooting down of a Russian warplane at the Syrian border. Speaking at a meeting with senior commanders in Moscow, Putin said the military should respond with full force to any 'further provocations', adding that additional aircraft and air defence weapons have been sent to the Russian base near Latakia.<sup>55</sup>

The Head of Egypt's Central Air Traffic Accident Authority, Ayman al-Muqaddam has said on December 14 that investigators have not found any evidence that proves the involvement of terrorists in the crash of Russia's Metrojet plane over Sinai on October 31. The Kremlin has declined to comment on this statement.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Putin-Kerry Talks In Moscow Focus On Syria, Ukraine, Fight Against Terrorism", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/844380>

<sup>54</sup> "Kremlin Confirms Russia Supports Free Syrian Army Forces In Their Offensive Against IS", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/843832>

<sup>55</sup> "Putin Vows To 'Immediately Destroy' Any Threat To Russian Forces in Syria", *The Guardian*, December 11, 2015 at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/putin-immediately-destroy-target-threatening-russia-syria>

<sup>56</sup> "Egypt Says No Evidence Russia's A321 Plane Was Brought Down By Terrorist Attack", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/843880>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Bahraini counterpart Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa have, on December 15 in Moscow, discussed the situation in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf and bilateral ties. Mr. Lavrov emphasised on the need to 'solve conflicts through a broad nation-wide dialogue without foreign interference and imposing schemes that are away from the regional reality'. The two leaders also discussed cooperation in multilateral formats including the strategic dialogue of Russia-Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Its fourth round is expected to be held in Moscow in 2016.<sup>57</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said on December 19 that the political transition in Syria is possible within 18 months as mentioned by the United Nations Security Council's resolution. He stated 'we want that process not to last forever, we have agreed guidelines'.<sup>58</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on December 19, during the United Nations Security Council meeting which saw the adoption of a resolution on Syria that the Syria-Turkey border will be closed without delay. He stated 'I hope those working on the ground and those helping them from the air will deal with that issue without delay'.<sup>59</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that the list of Syrian terrorist organizations compiled by Jordan is contradictory. He stated 'taking into account the rather motley composition of the Vienna group, within the framework of which many countries occupy diametrically opposite positions, the list is very contradictory...groups that shelled Russia's embassy in Damascus should be put on the terrorist list of Syria...we agreed on criteria, so that clearly terrorist groups could be added to the Islamic State (banned in Russia) and Jabhat al-Nusra...this work (to specify the list of terrorist groups) will continue, we hope [these groups] will replenish the UN Security Council's antiterrorism list'.<sup>60</sup>

Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin has said on December 18 that the Islamic State earns approximately US\$ 1.5 million a day from illicit exports of oil with majority of energy resources sold via Turkey. He stated 'the sales of hydrocarbons are organized with the mediation of shadow economic structures and smugglers buy oil for cash in the extraction areas. They cross the borders freely and establish direct contacts with the leaders of the ISIL and agree on deals. The majority of oil products are sold via Turkey and in most cases oil is shipped by thousands of road tankers traveling through the checkpoints of Karkamis, Akcakale and others. A range of Turkish companies, including Serii in Konya and Sam Otomotiv in Antakya, are involved in the supplies for the Islamic State group'. Earlier, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution

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<sup>57</sup> "Russian, Bahraini Foreign Ministers To Talk Middle East, Bilateral Ties", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/844388>

<sup>58</sup> "Lavrov Believes Political Transition In Syria Could Take 18 Months", *Itar-Tass*, December 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/845463>

<sup>59</sup> "Lavrov Hopes For Immediate Closure Of Syrian-Turkish Border", *Itar-Tass*, December 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/845469>

<sup>60</sup> "Syria Terrorists List Compiled By Jordan Is Contradictory — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, December 19, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/845470>

obliging countries to curb financing and providing any other support to IS, Al-Qaeda and affiliated persons, groups, enterprises and organizations.<sup>61</sup>

The Head of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service Viktor Ivanov has said that the Islamic State is involved in trafficking Afghan heroin through Turkey. He stated 'significant flows of Afghan heroin are smuggled to European Union states through Turkey while oil flowed in the opposite direction'.<sup>62</sup>

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk has said, on December 16, that Ukraine has made a decision to start trade blockade of Crimea. He stated 'the decision of the cabinet of ministers prohibiting all supplies from Crimea to Ukraine and vice versa, except personal items, socially important foods and humanitarian aid, will be carried into effect in 30 days'.<sup>63</sup>

President Vladimir Putin has said on December 17 that Russia is ready to restore relations and to abolish visas with Georgia. He stated 'we are ready to restore relations. Territorial integrity of Georgia is first of all the business of the Georgian, the south-Ossetian and Abkhazian people'. Putin added that Russia will accept any decision Georgia will agree with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>64</sup>

Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko has said, on December 15 during a meeting with President Putin in Moscow, that Minsk is satisfied with the level of cooperation with Russia under the framework of the Union State. The two sides discussed the development of integrational relations, economic challenges and access for Belarusian goods to the Russian market. They also deliberated upon the developments in Ukraine and West Asia.<sup>65</sup>

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has expressed confidence that Russian-Chinese relations are 'at the high point right now'. He made this statement during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang in Beijing on December 17. The two countries signed more than 30 agreements during the 20<sup>th</sup> Russia-China heads of government meeting. They cover banking, finance, investment, energy and high technology sectors. The highlights of the meeting were a) Russia-China Investment Fund (RCIF) approving fifteen deals worth US\$ 5 billion; b) Sinopec and Rosneft MoU on oil and gas projects in eastern Siberia, c) CNPC and Gazprom agreement on the design and construction of cross-border section of China-Russia

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<sup>61</sup> "Russia Unveils Schemes Of Islamic State's Oil Supplies to Turkey to UN", *Itar-Tass*, December 18, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/845182>

<sup>62</sup> "Russia's Drug Control Service Has Data Afghan Heroin Trafficked by IS through Turkey to EU", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/844482>

<sup>63</sup> "Ukraine's Government Decides To Stage Trade Blockade of Crimea", *Itar-Tass*, December 16, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/844510>

<sup>64</sup> "Putin: Russia Ready To Cancel Visa Regime with Georgia", *Itar-Tass*, December 17, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/844900>

<sup>65</sup> "Lukashenko Satisfied With Belarus-Russia Cooperation within Union State", *Itar-Tass*, December 15, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/844256>

east route natural gas pipeline; d) China Development Bank and Vnesheconombank agreement on a 10 billion yuan (US\$ 1.56 billion) loan.<sup>66</sup>

## India-Russia Relations

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Indian Cabinet approves OVL's US\$ 1.26 billion stake buy in Russian field; MoU in energy saving and energy efficiency among BRICS countries.**

The Indian Cabinet has on December 16 approved ONGC Videsh Ltd buying 15 per cent stake in Russia's Vankor oilfield for US\$ 1.26 billion. OVL, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), will get 4 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas for the stake in Vankorneft. This is the first overseas acquisition by an oil PSU since the NDA regime came to power in May 2014. The field has recoverable reserves of 2.5 billion barrels. Rosneft, Russia's national oil company, holds 100 per cent stake in Vankorneft. The acquisition is subject to relevant board, government and regulatory approvals and is expected to be completed by 2016-mid. Vankor is Rosneft's (and Russia's) second largest field by production and accounts for 4 per cent of Russian production. The daily production from the field is around 4,42,000 barrels per day of crude oil. Upon completion of the deal, OVL will have two seats on the board of Vankorneft. Rosneft, whose stake in the project will come down to 85 per cent, will however keep full control of the general infrastructure of Vankor cluster, including oil pipeline Vankor-Purpe.<sup>67</sup>

Indian Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval to an MoU signed between India and its BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) counterparts for strengthening and further developing of energy saving and energy efficiency cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. The MoU provides the following areas of cooperation in the field of Energy Savings and Energy Efficiency:

- Joint scientific and technological research,
- Conferencing and holding of lectures and seminars;
- Capacity building and technology transfer;
- Technology development, sharing policies and best practices; and,

<sup>66</sup> "Russia, China Sign Over 30 Agreements During Medvedev's Visit", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, December 18, 2015 at [https://rbth.com/business/2015/12/18/russia-china-sign-over-30-agreements-during-medvedevs-visit\\_552239](https://rbth.com/business/2015/12/18/russia-china-sign-over-30-agreements-during-medvedevs-visit_552239)

<sup>67</sup> "Cabinet Approves OVL's \$1.26 Billion Stake Buy In Russia's Field", *The Economic Times*, December 16, 2015 at [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/50209947.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/50209947.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

- Encouragement of use of energy efficient and energy saving approaches and instruments in the work of the business entities of the BRICS countries, carried out within the BRICS countries in Consultation with the host country.<sup>68</sup>

## E. The United State of America

### National

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **DoD extends its military, technological and operational edge well into the future; State Department and DHS collaborate closely on adjudications related to the K-1 visa classification; Americans cannot give in to fear from terrorism: President Obama.**

In a speech at the Centre for a New American Security's National Security Forum on December 14, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work said that the Defence Department's civilian and military leadership is pursuing a significant and enduring effort to extend its military, technological and operational edge well into the future. Work noted that this push into the future is driven by a pressing need to modify the defence programme to meet evolving threats in the national security environment. The effort includes new approaches to evaluating and offsetting the conventional strengths of potential adversaries, a commitment to U.S. allies and friends, and a drive to innovate. During the period between 1999 and 2014, Work said, the United States was the world's only great power and the sole military superpower. "This gave us enormous freedom of action, but the circumstance is changing" he said, "The unipolar world is starting to fade and we have a more multipolar world in which U.S. global leadership is likely to be increasingly challenged." For the United States, Work added, "the most stressing [challenge] is the re-emergence of great power competition."<sup>69</sup>

The Department of State (State) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) collaborate closely on adjudications related to the K-1 visa classification, as they do in many other immigration matters. As directed by the President, and in light of the evolving security environment, State and DHS are undertaking a review of the K-1 visa process.<sup>70</sup>

Americans cannot give in to fear from terrorism, President Barack Obama said in a televised address from the National Counterterrorism Centre in McLean, Virginia on December 17. The president also said that counterterrorism professionals are working around the clock to deter threats directed at the United States. Obama spoke following a meeting at the centre hosted by Director of National Intelligence Jim Clapper. Vice President Joe Biden, Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson were among the participants.

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<sup>68</sup> "Memorandum of Understanding in Energy Saving And Energy Efficiency Among BRICS Countries", *PIB*, December 16, 2015, Release ID :133404 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>69</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "DoD Extends Technological, Operational Edge Into the Future", *DoD News*, December 14, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/634115/dod-extends-technological-operational-edge-into-the-future>

<sup>70</sup> "K-1 Visa Process and State-DHS Review", Fact Sheet, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250746.htm>

“At this moment, our intelligence and counterterrorism professionals do not have any specific and credible information about an attack on the homeland,” the president said. However, the president said the nation is now experiencing “a new phase of terrorism, including lone actors and small groups of terrorists like those in San Bernardino.” Obama said lone actors and small groups of terrorists “are harder to detect, and that makes them harder to prevent.” He added, “But just as the threat evolves, so do we. We are constantly adapting, constantly improving, and upping our game, getting better.”<sup>71</sup>

## International: Asia

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Defence Secretary Carter Afghanistan mission remains a top priority; Afghan army is working to gain skills to continue the battle against diverse adversaries; Carter: Coalition will prevail over the ISIL; US and Iraq discuss ways to increase pressure on the ISIL and to accelerate coalition progress against the terror group; Progress against ISIL in degrading their ability to profit from oil activities; U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq; Kurdish peshmerga forces define the indigenous fighters needed to accelerate defeat of the ISIL; US and ICOM have launched the Emergency Red List of Libyan cultural objects at risk; Representatives from 10 partner nations gathered in Honolulu for a two-day cooperative strategy forum; US and Japan agreed in principle to a new five-year package of host-nation support.**

Work over the past year has put Afghanistan on a better path forward, and the mission there remains a top priority, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said on December 18. Carter and Afghan Defence Minister Muhammed Masoom Stanekzai spoke during a press briefing in Jalalabad after a meeting on the security situation in Afghanistan and the partnership between the nations into the years ahead. Carter is on a weeklong trip to the Middle East to meet with defence leaders and thank U.S. and coalition troops for their service and sacrifice, especially during the holiday season. “The U.S. presence that will be sustained here at [forward operating base] Fenty will continue to serve both these missions,” Carter said, “and represents the importance we place in our continued partnership with Afghanistan and the enduring nature of U.S. interests here.” Carter said the coalition constantly seeks ways to increase the Afghan forces’ capability and capacity.<sup>72</sup>

After a summer of hard fighting, the Afghan army is working to gain skills they’ll need to continue the battle against diverse adversaries, the commander of the NATO Resolute Support Mission and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan said. Army Gen. John F. Campbell spoke in Bagram, Afghanistan, with reporters traveling with Defence Secretary Ash Carter, noting that

<sup>71</sup> Garamone, Jim, “Obama: Counterterrorism Experts Stand Vigilant Watch”, *DoD News*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637242/obama-counterterrorism-experts-stand-vigilant-watch>

<sup>72</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, “Carter: Afghanistan Mission Remains a Top Priority”, *DoD News*, December 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637501/carter-afghanistan-mission-remains-a-top-priority>

Carter and acting Afghan Defence Minister Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai had met with him earlier for what he called a very good bilateral meeting. Campbell, who's been on the ground in Afghanistan for 17 months, said the Afghan army had just been through a tough fighting season.<sup>73</sup>

On December 16, Defence Secretary Ash Carter said in Baghdad that he is confident the coalition will prevail over the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). As part of a weeklong trip to the Middle East, Carter met with U.S. troops in Baghdad, where he thanked them for their service and stressed the importance of their mission. "This fight has to be fought. It's for civilization against evil. It's for America against its enemies," he said. Carter said he and the American people are grateful for the service and sacrifice of the men and women in uniform. That gratitude is especially important to note, he said, over the holidays. He pointed out that people back home are able to enjoy a safe holiday because of the service and sacrifice of those deployed far away. The troops are protecting the United States and "defeating an enemy that has to be defeated," he said. Those efforts, the defence secretary said, will "leave a better world for everyone, for your children."<sup>74</sup>

Defence Secretary Carter also discussed with Iraqi leaders ways to increase pressure on the ISIL and to accelerate coalition progress against the terror group. In Baghdad, Carter met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, as well as U.S. and coalition leaders during the visit. The secretary received a progress update from U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Sean McFarland, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, and from the U.S. embassy team. "So I was able to get an update from him, and also to emphasize to him our desire ... to accelerate and strengthen our campaign here," Carter told reporters traveling with him.<sup>75</sup>

The coalition fighting the ISIL has made significant progress in degrading the terrorists' ability to profit from their oil activities, a senior U.S. official said on December 15. The coalition has targeted infrastructure, and trucks that transport the oil, the official said, speaking to reporters on background at the Pentagon. Oil is the single largest revenue generator for the terrorist group, he noted. "The cost of that barrel now has increased for ISIL to be able to sell it, and the entire operation is less effective," the official said.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "Afghan Forces Remain Resilient Against Multiple Adversaries, Commander Says", *DoD News*, December 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637500/afghan-forces-remain-resilient-against-multiple-adversaries-commander-says>

<sup>74</sup> Ferdinando, Lisa, "'We Will Win' ISIL Fight, Carter Tells Troops in Baghdad", *DoD News*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637178/we-will-win-isil-fight-carter-tells-troops-in-baghdad>

<sup>75</sup> Garamone, Jim, "Carter, Iraqi Leaders Discuss Ways to Increase Pressure on ISIL", *DoD News*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637167/carter-iraqi-leaders-discuss-ways-to-increase-pressure-on-isil>

<sup>76</sup> Ferdinando, Lisa, "Progress Made in Degrading ISIL Oil Revenues, Official Says", *DoD News*, December 15, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/636401/progress-made-in-degrading-isil-oil-revenues-official-says>

Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on December 19. They conducted three strikes in Syria and 17 strikes in Iraq.<sup>77</sup>

The Kurdish peshmerga forces define the indigenous fighters needed to accelerate defeat of the ISIL in Iraq and Syria, Defence Secretary Ash Carter told reporters in Irbil, Iraq, on December 17. After meeting with U.S. and coalition troops, and Iraqi government leaders, the secretary told reporters traveling with him that the Kurdish peshmerga comprise “a capable and motivated force [the U.S.] can enable.” Carter is in the middle of a weeklong trip to the Middle East, where – acting on President Barack Obama’s instructions -- he’s exploring opportunities to hasten defeat of ISIL. The secretary has taken opportunities to meet with Iraqi leaders and thank U.S. and coalition troops for their service, especially during the holiday season.<sup>78</sup>

The U.S. Department of State and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) have launched the Emergency Red List of Libyan Cultural Objects at Risk. The Emergency Red List alerts law enforcement and the collecting community to the types of Libyan cultural objects that are vulnerable to being looted and trafficked. It serves as an important tool in the fight against trafficking by transnational crime organizations and Foreign Terrorist Organizations, such as ISIL.<sup>79</sup>

Gaining a better understanding of each other’s viewpoints and fostering improved future collaboration was the focus in Honolulu on December 14, as representatives from 10 partner nations gathered for a two-day cooperative strategy forum. The forum, co-hosted by the chief of naval operations, took place at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies. In a keynote speech, Navy Adm. Scott Swift, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, shared his expectations of those operating in the waters of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Swift said, “I’m focused on the behaviour of all naval and maritime forces in the region, not on any specific country”. He added, “I expect all naval and maritime forces, including my own, to operate responsibly, safely and in full compliance with international law.”<sup>80</sup>

The United States and Japan agreed in principle to a new five-year package of host-nation support for U.S. armed forces stationed in Japan, Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis told reporters on December 16. Under the cost-sharing agreement, Japan will spend about 189.9 billion yen annually, or about \$1.6 billion, Davis said, adding that Japan’s funding

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<sup>77</sup> “Coalition Strikes Continue Against ISIL in Iraq, Syria”, *DoD News*, December 19, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637504/coalition-strikes-continue-against-isil-in-iraq-syria>

<sup>78</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, “Carter: Kurdish Peshmerga Forces Vital to Speed ISIL’s Defeat”, *DoD News*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637258/carter-kurdish-peshmerga-forces-vital-to-speed-isils-defeat>

<sup>79</sup> “U.S. Department of State Partners With International Council of Museums To Fight Illicit Traffic of Libyan Cultural Heritage”, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 16, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250691.htm>

<sup>80</sup> “Cooperative Strategy Forum Focuses on Pacific Maritime Security”, *DoD News*, December 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637046/cooperative-strategy-forum-focuses-on-pacific-maritime-security>

maintains “a stable level.” The agreement takes effect April 1, 2016, and will directly support the operational readiness of U.S. forces in Japan, a DoD official said.<sup>81</sup>

## India-US Relations

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Critical for Pakistan to improve its relations with India; Ambassador Verma speaks on progress of India-US relations; Obama thanks for Modi's positive role and leadership in the successful outcome of COP 21; US lawmaker alleges Islamist terror groups, supported by Islamabad's security services, destabilise Afghanistan and threaten India.**

Richard G. Olson, Special US Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Pakistan that it is critical for Pakistan to improve its relations with India, and the entire region will benefit substantially from increased economic cooperation between the two neighbours, on December 17. Olson said, "It is also critical that Pakistan improve relations with its other neighbour India". "We hope the recent high-level talks between Indian and Pakistani officials and the announcement of the resumption of formal dialogue will be used to reduce tensions and increase ties between the two nations," he said. "More broadly, the entire region stands to benefit substantially from increased economic integration," Olson said in his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.<sup>82</sup>

US ambassador to India, Richard R Verma met the vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof. Girish Chandra Tripathi at his residence on December 16. During the courtesy meeting, VC apprised US ambassador about the quality of education imparted at BHU and mentioned about the newly established India Study Centre for which the government of India has made a big grant. He also discussed the water and river project that the varsity is running. To this, US ambassador showed keen interest in the collaborative endeavours between the US and BHU and committed himself to supporting further enhancement of this academic collaboration. Later, ambassador Verma presented his views on India-US relations at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, BHU. Pondering upon the main issues of India US relations, Verma mentioned the various ups and downs that the two countries had in their mutual relations. He conceived, the Indo-US relations have come a long way since India's Independence and are at a particularly high point currently. He shared that today, India-US has 30 different dialogue portals and 80 significant partnerships running. That President Obama has met PM Modi six times during last one year, which is reasonably a very high number and have a dedicated line to have conversations directly, a line that has been used just last week for about an hour.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cronk, Terri Moon, "U.S., Japan Agree to Host-Nation Support for U.S. Troops", *DoD News*, December 16, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/637009/us-japan-agree-to-host-nation-support-for-us-troops>

<sup>82</sup> "Critical for Pakistan to improve ties with India: US", December 17, 2015 at <http://www.oneindia.com/international/critical-pakistan-improve-ties-with-india-us-1958536.html>

<sup>83</sup> "US Ambassador To India Meets BHU Vice-Chancellor", *The Times of India*, December 17, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/US-ambassador-to-India-meets-BHU-vice-chancellor/articleshow/50218771.cms>

The President Barack Obama has thanked Prime Minister, Narendra Modi for his positive role and leadership in the successful outcome of COP 21. In a telephonic call to the Prime Minister on December 16, he said India played a critical role in making Climate Change Paris Summit an historic success. The Prime Minister shared with President Obama the concerns of the Indian IT industry and professionals on the proposed legislation in the U.S. Congress relating to H1B and L1 visas.<sup>84</sup>

Describing Pakistan as a terrorist haven, a top US lawmaker has alleged Islamist terror groups, supported by Islamabad's security services, destabilise Afghanistan and threaten India. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, "Pakistan was to be a key ally in combating Islamist militancy, becoming a leading recipient of US aid in the nearly 15 years since," Ed Royce (R-CA), the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said on December 16. "But while the US was quick to embrace Pakistan-Pakistan has hardly reciprocated," he said in his opening statement at the hearing on "The Future of US-Pakistan Relations." "Pakistani governments have come and gone, but Pakistan has remained a terrorist haven, with its security services supporting what it considers to be 'good' Islamist terrorist groups," Royce said. "These 'good' groups - under Pakistan's calculus - destabilize Afghanistan and threaten neighbouring India," he said.<sup>85</sup>

## II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

### National

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Justice L Narasimha Reddy to head judicial committee constituted to look into the implementation of OROP; Government gives its approval for women to join as Short Service Commission officers in the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force.**

The Central Government has appointed Justice L Narasimha Reddy, retired Chief Justice of Patna High Court to head the Judicial Committee constituted to look into the implementation of One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme for the Ex-Servicemen. One of the important Terms of Reference for the Committee shall be to examine and make recommendations for the removal of anomalies that may arise in the implementation of the OROP as notified by the Government on November 7, 2015. The Committee shall take into account the financial impact of its recommendations while making its recommendations. The Committee shall make its

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<sup>84</sup> "US President Barack Obama Calls Up the PM; Thanks For His Positive Role And Leadership In The Successful Outcome of COP 21", *PIB*, December 16, 2015, Release ID :133414, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

<sup>85</sup> "Pakistan Backed Terrorist Groups Threaten India: US Lawmaker", *Business Standard*, December 17, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/pakistan-backed-terrorist-groups-threaten-india-us-lawmaker-115121700255\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/pakistan-backed-terrorist-groups-threaten-india-us-lawmaker-115121700255_1.html); and, "US Lawmakers Lash Out At Pakistan For Terrorist Safe Havens World", *NDTV News*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-lawmakers-lash-out-at-pakistan-for-terrorist-safe-havens-1255858>

recommendation within six months of the date of its constitution. It may, if necessary, give interim reports to the Government on any of the matters related to its terms of reference. The Committee will devise its own procedure and may call for such information and take such evidence, as may be considered necessary.<sup>86</sup>

The Minister of State for Defence Rao Inderjit Singh has informed the Rajya Sabha that the government has accorded its approval for women to join as Short Service Commission officers in the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force on experimental basis for a period of five years. As per the scheme, such women trainees undergoing Stage-I training at Air Force Academy would be assessed for their suitability for entry into fighter stream. Based on the suitability and willingness, these women trainees would be selected for Stage-II training in the fighter stream on successful completion of which these women trainees would be commissioned into the fighter stream. Significantly, no such approval has been accorded for induction of women into the combat streams of the Army and Navy.<sup>87</sup>

## International

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **US Air Force withdraws the 12 Boeing F-15C Eagle fighters it had deployed from Turkey; South Korea's Defence Acquisition Programme Administration formally selects Lockheed Martin to upgrade South Korean F-16 project.**

Reports say that the US Air Force (USAF) has withdrawn from Turkey the 12 Boeing F-15C Eagle fighters that it had deployed in November. The fighters have returned to their home base of Royal Air Force (RAF) Lakenheath five weeks after they were deployed to Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey on November 7. The F-15s were deployed after the government of Turkey requested support in securing the sovereignty of Turkish air space. Since their arrival in November, the F-15Cs flew invaluable training missions with Turkish counterparts. This deployment served not only as an immediate response to a request from an ally, but as an exercise for the US Air Force ability to deploy aircraft and airmen on short notice to Turkey, if ever needed.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, according to reports, South Korea's Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA) has announced its formal selection of Lockheed Martin to upgrade the Republic of Korea Air Force (RoKAF) F-16C/D Block 50/52 fighter aircraft. DAPA confirmed the Lockheed Martin upgrade also includes installation of Northrop Grumman's AN/APG-83 scalable agile beam radar. The programme, which also features the modernisation of the aircraft's avionics, networking capabilities and weapons fit, covers the upgrade of 134 F-16C/Ds at a cost of approximately USD1.5 billion. The selection of the two

<sup>86</sup> "Govt Appoints Justice L Narasimha Reddy to Head Judicial Committee on OROP," *PIB*, December 14, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133166>

<sup>87</sup> "Women Pilots in the Armed Forces," *PIB*, December 15, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133249>

<sup>88</sup> "US Withdraws Eagle Fighters from Turkey," *IHS Jane's*, December 16, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56725/us-withdraws-eagle-fighters-from-turkey>

US companies comes one year after DAPA cancelled a contract with BAE Systems to upgrade the aircraft. DAPA had cited a cost increase of about USD730 million as the reason for cancellation.<sup>89</sup>

### III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

#### Jammu & Kashmir

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Anti-NFSA protests rock Srinagar; Hizbul Mujahideen militant arrested in Kashmir; NC leader shot dead by VDC member in Rajouri, J&K.**

The J&K government's decision to implement National Food Security Act (NFSA) in the state from February 1 has triggered violent protests in parts of Srinagar. Large number of people on December 14 took out protest rallies in Lal Chowk and its adjacent areas against the government decision to implement National Security Bill alleging that the NFSA implementation would leave out lakhs of poor people and deprive them of subsidized ration. "The entitlement promised will be less than currently available to people under BPL and other category. It is 35 kg at present while the current bill will give only 5 kg of grains per person per month," said Farooq Ahmad, a protestor. The Bill hoodwinks the poor people in the name of Food Security. People will face shortage of grains if only 5 kg rice will be given on subsidy," said another protestor Kareem Illahi. However, Director CAPD, Abdul Rashid Var told Rising Kashmir that implementation of Food Security Bill will ensure food grains to every person rather than uniform quantity for each ration card. "5 kg per soul is the uniform scale all over India and it will also ensure that every person gets equal quantity of ration," he said.<sup>90</sup>

Falak Noor, an 'A' category Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) militant was arrested by security forces from a forest area in Handwara area of Kupwara district on December 18, a police official said. Noor was active in north Kashmir area for the past two years, the official added.<sup>91</sup>

A youth leader of National Conference (NC) was allegedly shot dead by a member of village defence committee (VDC) after the duo had an altercation over distribution of ration in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir. Ishtyaq Ahmed (26) was shot dead by VDC member Kewal Sharma in Potha village of Kalakote Tehsil of Rajouri district on December 19, a police

<sup>89</sup> "Lockheed Martin formally selected for South Korean F-16 upgrade project," *IHS Jane's*, December 16, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56709/lockheed-martin-formally-selected-for-south-korean-f-16-upgrade-project>

<sup>90</sup> Hassan, Manzoor-ul, "Protest Rock City Over NFSA Implementation", *Rising Kashmir*, December 15, 2015 at <http://risingkashmir.in/news/protest-rock-city-over-nfsa-implementation/>

<sup>91</sup> "Hizbul Mujahideen Militant Arrested in J&K", *Business Standard*, December 19, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/hizbul-mujahideen-militant-arrested-in-j-k-115121900559\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/hizbul-mujahideen-militant-arrested-in-j-k-115121900559_1.html)

officer said, adding that locals apprehended the accused and handed him over to the police. A case has been registered and the accused arrested, his rifle confiscated by the police, he said.<sup>92</sup>

## Northeast India

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Centre explores stern measures against erring NE states; Fifteen hurt as Tripura strike evokes mixed response; Anup Chetia gets bail in two TADA cases; UALA inks peace agreement with Meghalaya government.**

In a development that should alarm the northeastern states (NES), the Centre is exploring the option of penalising the states for withholding Central funds for more than three months. The recommendations are part of the 186th Report of the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER) and the Action Taken Report of the government submitted to the Parliament recently.<sup>93</sup>

At least 15 people were injured in clashes and around 2,000 picketers arrested as a 12-hour shutdown was observed in tribal-dominated areas of Tripura on December 16. The dawn-to-dusk strike was called by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) to demand carving out of a separate State for indigenous tribes from Tripura. "At least 15 people, including supporters of IPFT and ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist, were injured in a clash between bandh supporters and rival political parties and businessmen," a police official said.<sup>94</sup>

ULFA general secretary Anup Chetia was granted a bail on December 17 in connection with two TADA cases against him. Chetia, however, continues to be in judicial custody in connection with a CBI case. He was also charge sheeted in connection with another SOU (Assam Police) case.<sup>95</sup>

The militant outfit United A'chik Liberation Army (UALA), on December 18, inked the "agreed text of settlement" with Meghalaya government in presence of Chief Minister Mukul Sangma and Home Minister Roshan Warjri. The government also called on all other outfits to shun violence and come to the talks table with a time line of six months. The settlement between the State Government and UALA was signed at a ceremony held at Circuit House in Tura, Meghalaya. UALA Chairman Novembirth Marak alias Chiindik and general secretary Nagra D Shira were the signatories for the outfit, while, the government representatives were commissioner and secretary Garo Hills Division Peter Ingty and commissioner and secretary,

<sup>92</sup> "Youth NC Leader Shot Dead by VDC Member in Rajouri", *Business Standard*, December 20, 2015 at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/youth-nc-leader-shot-dead-by-vdc-member-in-rajouri-115122000502\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/youth-nc-leader-shot-dead-by-vdc-member-in-rajouri-115122000502_1.html)

<sup>93</sup> "Panel for Stern Steps Against Erring NE States", *The Assam Tribune*, December 14, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1415/at050>

<sup>94</sup> "Tripura Strike Evokes Mixed Response, 15 Hurt", *The Assam Tribune*, December 17, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1715/oth053>

<sup>95</sup> "Anup Chetia Gets Bail in 2 TADA Cases", *The Assam Tribune*, December 18, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1815/at053>

Political department, J Lyngdoh. The outfit was formed in 2012 with the demand for a separate Garoland to be carved out of the Meghalaya state.<sup>96</sup>

## Left-wing Extremism

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Nineteen Naxals surrendered in Chhattisgarh, say Police; Maoists kill two youths in Chhattisgarh; Maoist commander gunned down in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh; Kolkata-based engineer held for supplying arms to Maoists; Combing operations stepped up in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.**

As many as 19 ultras, including two senior rank cadres, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Kondagaon district on December 13, police said. Altogether 19 rebels turned themselves in before senior police officials citing disappointment with the ideology of the outlawed Maoist movement and increasing pressure of the security forces, Kondagaon Superintendent of Police J.S. Watti told *PTI*. Two dreaded rebels Hemchand Mandavi alias Ballu (35), who was deputy commander of Chargaon LOS (local operation squad) of Maoists and Jairam Korram (36) who was heading Mandoda CNM (Chetna Natya Manch- a cultural wing of the Naxals) were among the surrendered rebels, the officer added.<sup>97</sup>

Two youths, including a school student, were allegedly killed by Naxals in Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh on December 16. The duo was killed on the suspicion of police informers, police said. The bodies of the youths, identified as Manish Yadav and Pakhel Gond, bearing bullet injuries were found on December 16 near Kumharwada village under Bakarkatta police station limits, said Rajnandgaon S P Sundarraj P.<sup>98</sup>

A Maoist commander was allegedly gunned down on December 18 in an exchange of fire with Police in insurgency-hit Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh. The body of Ranader, a commander-rank cadre, clad in "uniform" was recovered after the skirmish took place between a team of District Reserve Group (DRG) and ultras in forests under Bayanar police station limits, Inspector General of Police Bastar Range, SRP Kalluri, told *PTI*.<sup>99</sup>

A 50-year-old engineer from Kolkata has been arrested for allegedly providing arms and communication equipment to Maoists at Saranda forest in Jharkhand. The suspect, Bhaskar Chakraborty, was a favourite of former Maoist military chief Kishanji, who was killed in West Midnapore in November 2011. ADG (operations) S N Pradhan said Bhaskar was nabbed by

<sup>96</sup> Dey, Biplab Kr, "UALA Inks Peace Agreement With Govt", *The Assam Tribune*, December 19, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1915/oth053>

<sup>97</sup> "19 Naxals Surrender In Chhattisgarh", *The Hindu*, December 14, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/19-naxals-surrender-in-chhattisgarh/article7984666.ece>

<sup>98</sup> "Naxals Kill School Student in Chhattisgarh", *The Hindu*, December 16, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/naxals-kill-school-student-in-chhattisgarh/article7996442.ece>

<sup>99</sup> "Maoist Commander Gunned Down in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, December 18, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/maoist-commander-gunned-down-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/50234618.cms>

Jharkhand police at Badajamda station in the Maoist hit West Singhbhum- Chaibasa belt as soon as he got off a Janshatabdi Express from Kolkata. Initial investigations revealed that he was working for the Maoists in Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand. Ten wireless sets and banned Maoist literature were found on him. Bhaskar has been charged under the stringent UAPA, said ADG Pradhan.<sup>100</sup>

Combing operations have been intensified in Nilgiris district to prevent possible infiltration of Naxalites in the jungles bordering Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states, police said. They said personnel drawn from Special Task Force and Tamil Nadu police are keeping a strict vigil in the jungles bordering Karnataka and Kerala border. Cameras have been installed at about 30 strategic points in these areas to monitor the movements of the extremists and also strangers, police said. There were unconfirmed reports that one person, reportedly a Naxalite, was taken into custody from a forest area in Kerala, bordering Tamil Nadu.<sup>101</sup>

## Radicalisation & Terrorism

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **Delhi Police claim to have busted AQIS recruitment modules in India.**

With the arrest of two persons from Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal and Odisha's Cuttack, Delhi Police on December 16 has claimed to have busted several modules of Al Qaeda Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). Police learnt about the presence of six modules of AQIS while questioning Mohd Asif and Abdul Rahman, the two alleged Al Qaeda operatives, said sources. These modules were operational in western parts of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Delhi, added sources. The alleged Al Qaeda operatives were given the task of recruiting youth from the Indian subcontinent, said Arvind Deep, special commissioner of police of the Delhi Police's Special Cell. "Mohammed Asif, 41, was held from Seelampur in northeast Delhi... another operative Abdul Rahman, 37, was held from Jagatpur area of Cuttack," said Deep, adding they were booked under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ghosh, Dwaipayan, "Kolkata-Based Engineer Held For Supplying Arms to Maoists", *The Times of India*, December 18, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Kolkata-based-engineer-held-for-supplying-arms-to-Maoists/articleshow/50230249.cms>

<sup>101</sup> "Combing Operations Stepped Up In Nilgiris To Prevent Infiltration of Naxals", *The Economic Times*, December 20, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/combing-operations-stepped-up-in-nilgiris-to-prevent-infiltration-of-naxals/articleshow/50255283.cms>

<sup>102</sup> Singh, Alok, "Qaeda Operatives Out To Recruit: Police", *The Indian Express*, December 17, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/two-suspected-al-qaeda-operatives-arrested-in-delhi-odisha/>

## IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

### India and the UN

(December 14-20, 2015)

- **India improves HDI ranking; Internet governance, digital access and cybercrime raised by India at WSIS review; At WTO Ministerial, India underlines the importance of DDA; India makes humanitarian commitment for 2015-16; UN mandated anti-ISIS action could get India's support.**

The Human Development Report 2015 ranks India at 130 among 188 countries on aggregate human development indices. While this is five places up compared to last year, India ranks the lowest among the BRICS countries. Also, if one discounts for inequality in human development indices, then there is a loss of 28.6 per cent. On the Gender Inequality Index, India ranks 130 among 155 countries.<sup>103</sup>

Participating in the General Assembly debate reviewing the outcome of the World Summit on Information Society held 10 years ago, Secretary in the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, J S Deepak, said developing countries must have say in internet governance since their populations will be the largest users of the service. He also highlighted the need to curb cybercrime. He also reiterated India's commitment to providing e-services to developing countries as in Africa.<sup>104</sup>

Participating in the 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Nairobi, Kenya, which came together with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WTO, Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Commerce and Industry insisted that countries must continue to work within the framework of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). The interests of poor farmers and food security of millions of people must be the focus of further work on the DDA. Other important areas of attention should be the liberalisation of trade in services, export competition and special safeguards mechanism against fluctuations in prices of agricultural products for developing countries.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> "India Moves up 5 Places in Human Development Index Rank to 130", *The Hindu Business Online*, December 14, 2015, at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/india-moves-up-5-places-in-human-development-index-rank-to-130/article7986439.ece>

<sup>104</sup> "Statement by Mr. J.S. Deepak, Secretary, Department of Electronics & Information Technology at the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on WSIS+10 Review", December 15, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2340>.

<sup>105</sup> "Text of Address by Ms Nirmala Sitharaman Minister of State Independent Charge for Commerce and Industry of India at the Plenary Session of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO", *Ministry of Commerce, Gov*, December 16, 2015, at [http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press\\_release.asp?id=3193](http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press_release.asp?id=3193)

India will contribute \$500,000 to the Central Emergency Response Fund of the UN, just as it had done so last year. In addition, India contributed \$10 million to the Ebola Trust Fund in 2015.<sup>106</sup>

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has said that India may consider joining the global fight against ISIS if the action is mandated by the UN.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> "Statement by Mr. Abhishek Singh, First Secretary at the 10th Anniversary High-level Pledging Conference on Central Emergency Response Fund", December 17, 2015, <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2341>. "India to contribute \$500,000 to UN emergency response fund", December 18, 2015, at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-18/news/69145852\\_1\\_indian-mission-cerf-central-emergency-response-fund](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-18/news/69145852_1_indian-mission-cerf-central-emergency-response-fund)

<sup>107</sup> "India Ready for Operation against ISIS if UN Adopts Resolution: Manohar Parrikar", *The Times of India*, December 16, 2015, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-ready-for-operation-against-ISIS-if-UN-adopts-resolution-Manohar-Parrikar/articleshow/50199721.cms>