

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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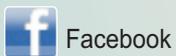
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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Director general-level conference between BGB and BSF held in Dhaka; Chinese Foreign Minister visits Bangladesh.**

A four-day director general-level conference between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) began in Dhaka on December 26. Taking consent of the bordering country before erecting any structure within 150 yards of the international boundary, preserving banks of the bordering rivers and halting trans-border arms and explosives smuggling top the agenda. BSF chief Shri Devendra Kumar Pathak led a 19-member Indian delegation while the 23-member Border Guard delegation was led by its chief Major General Aziz Ahmed in the conference at the BGB Headquarters in Dhaka.¹

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made on a three-day visit to Bangladesh on December 27, at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart AH Mahmood Ali.²

Sri Lanka

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Mahinda Rajapaksa releases his election manifesto; APMC and SLMC decide to support common opposition candidate; TNA decides not to call for boycott the Presidential election; 1.1 million people affected by heavy rains; Sri Lanka receives 1.5 million tourists in 2014; Sri Lanka welcomes US-Cuba deal.**

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, released his election manifesto titled "Mahinda Chinthana – Lowa Dinana Maga" at a function in Colombo on December 23. The election manifesto of President Mahinda Rajapaksa looks to prevent foreign intervention in Sri Lanka. The President also assured that constitutional changes will be made after having broad discussions with political parties, civil society and academics. He said that the new Mahinda Chintana document envisages to prepare and elevate Sri Lanka to the levels of developed nations.³

¹ "Stop Killings On Border: BGB Asks BSF at DG-Level Meeting", *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/stop-killings-on-border-57261>.

² "Chinese FM Arrives Today", *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/chinese-fm-arrives-today-57267>.

³ "MR's Policy against Foreign Push", *Colombo Gazette*, December 23, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/23/mrs-policy-against-foreign-push/>.

Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen and his political party, the All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC), have decided to support common opposition Presidential candidate Maithripala Sirisena. All Ceylon Makkal Congress member Ameer Ali, who had recently accepted the Parliament seat offered to him by the Government, has also decided to back Sirisena.⁴ The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) has also decided to support common opposition Presidential candidate Maithripala Sirisena at the Presidential elections. In making the announcement, SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem said that he will be resigning as Justice Minister of the ruling UPFA Government in order to back the opposition at the polls. The SLMC leader said that while the party had no issues in supporting Rajapaksa for a third term in office, the SLMC wanted the 17th Amendment to the constitution to be fully implemented and it was on this basis that it decided to back Sirisena.⁵

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA), following a meeting with TNA provincial council, local council members and Parliamentarians, decided not to call for a boycott of the January 8 Presidential election.⁶

At least 30 people have been killed and another six are missing in Sri Lanka due to floods and landslides caused by the incessant rains lashing the island for the past few days. According to the Disaster Management Centre, further 20 people are injured as the severe weather continued to submerge most parts of the island's Northern, North Central, North Western and Eastern provinces. The highest number of deaths was reported in the central hill district of Badulla In Uva Province where landslides killed 16 people in Badulla and five more are missing. Over 1.1 million people were affected by the heavy rains that lashed 21 of Sri Lanka's 25 districts displacing over 110,000 people to shelters. According to the latest report released by the DMC, 117,623 people from 33,811 families are in 618 island wide shelters. A total of 1,106,380 people from 306,959 families are affected by the floods and landslides.⁷

For the first time in the history of Sri Lanka tourism industry 1.5 million tourists have arrived in the island in the year 2014. Sri Lanka has set a target of 1.5 million tourists for this year and has earned US\$ 1.6 billion from tourism in the first nine months of this year. Sri Lanka Tourism aims to attract 2.5 million tourists by the year 2016.⁸

Sri Lanka welcomed the announcements made by the leaders of the United States of America and Cuba, of a rapprochement between the two countries, thereby ending decades' long estrangement

⁴ "Rishad Bathiudeen Joins Maithri", *Colombo Gazette*, December 22, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/22/rishad-bathiudeen-joins-maithri/>.

⁵ "SLMC for Maithri, Rauff Resigns", *Colombo Gazette*, December 28, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/28/slmc-for-maithri-rauff-resigns/>.

⁶ "TNA will not Call For Polls Boycott", *Colombo Gazette*, December 22, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/22/tna-will-not-call-for-polls-boycott/>.

⁷ "Floods, Mudslides Kill 30 In Sri Lanka, Millions Affected", *Colombo Page*, December 28, 2014 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec28_1419788033CH.php.

⁸ "Sri Lanka Welcomes 1.5 Millionth Tourist in 2014", *Colombo Page*, December 28, 2014, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14B/Dec28_1419784012CH.php.

and paving the way for the renewal of diplomatic ties. The Sri Lankan External Affairs Ministry said that the release and exchange of prisoners is a concrete step towards a new era of US-Cuba relations which marks a turning point in the history of the two nations.⁹

Maldives

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Maldives Parliament passes extradition treaty; Saudi delegation visits Maldives; Tourists arrival reaches 1.1 million in November 2013.**

The parliament has passed the Extradition Bill, to facilitate the handover of persons accused or convicted crimes to foreign countries in which the crimes were committed. The bill was passed at parliament sitting on December 25, with 58 votes in favour, and two against. The bill states that persons can be extradited for the trial if they have been indicted for a crime; for sentencing if he has been convicted of a crime, but not sentenced; and for the execution of the sentence if he has been convicted and sentenced. The bill states that Maldivians shall not be extradited to other countries, but if a country requests the extradition of a particular person, the person must be indicted for the crime in the Maldives if possible. According to the bill, persons can only be extradited for crimes which carry sentences of minimum one year imprisonment in the country in which the crime was committed.¹⁰

A high level delegation from Saudi Arabia consisting of members from Economic Sector and heads of Economic Institutions arrived in Maldives on December 23. A twitter message posted by the Islamic Minister Dr. Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed said that the delegation from Saudi Arabia consisted of 16 members including Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials from Economic Institutions.¹¹

The Ministry of Tourism has announced that the total tourist arrivals in the Maldives had reached 1,101,113 by the end November 2014. The ministry said that this is an increase of 7.9 percent when compared with tourist arrivals at the end of November 2013, which stood at 1,020,190. The number of tourists who visited Maldives in November 2014 was 89,778. This is an increase of 5.1 percent when compared with November 2013.¹²

⁹ "Sri Lanka Hails US and Cuba Deal", *Colombo Gazette*, December 24, 2014 at <http://colombogazette.com/2014/12/24/sri-lanka-hails-us-and-cuba-deal/>.

¹⁰ "Parliament Passes Extradition Bill", *SunOnline*, December 25, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26762>.

¹¹ "Saudi Economic Sector Delegation Visits Maldives", *SunOnline*, December 24, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26728>.

¹² "Tourist Arrivals Reaches 1.1 Million by End of November 2014", *SunOnline*, December 26, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/26778>.

B. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia

(December 22-28, 2014)

ASEAN

- **Asean 2015 web portal launched by Malaysia, Thailand leading ASEAN race for deals with China, Asean-EU experts cite Philippines econ performance at think tank roundtable.**

Malaysia today launched a web portal this week, the site (asean2015.gov.my) in conjunction with Malaysia assuming the chairmanship of Asean for next year, the Asean secretariat said in a statement. "It will also provide local and foreign media, and other related agencies and bodies to undertake online registration for accreditation and issuance of security passes.¹³" Visual information in video format and a photo gallery will also be made available at the web portal," said the secretariat. The Thai military-run government under General Prayut Chan-o-cha has done more than the other ASEAN members to engage with the Chinese role in Southeast Asia - since his May 22 coup steered Thailand away from the West's political and economic superpowers¹⁴. Prayut visited China only a day after Chinese Premier Li Keqiang left Bangkok at the end of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) summit. The two governments signed six memoranda of understanding and agreements within only four days. The first two pacts for cooperation on railway development and the purchase of Thai farm products signed were in Bangkok while Li was in town. The other four - on currency use, plus stock and water management - were signed in Beijing while Prayut was there. In a recent roundtable organized by EU-Asia Centre in Brussels, experts agreed that the Philippines is "a very attractive economy" and is also "in an enviable position" in terms of political stability and good governance.¹⁵ Philippine embassy deputy chief of Mission and consul general Robespierre Bolivar who was present there, cited the Philippines' performance in achieving targets related to the ASEAN Economic Community. He also highlighted Philippine initiatives championed by President Aquino at the recently concluded 25th ASEAN Summit, including stronger foundations for regional integration, inclusive growth, and the rule of law.

Brunei

- **Brunei king congratulates Abe on re-election; Brunei set for closer ties with Bangladesh; Christmas celebrations restricted in Brunei.**

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sent a congratulatory message to Shinzo Abe this week on the

¹³ "Asean 2015 Web Portal Launched", December 23, 2014 at <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/asean-2015-web-portal-launched#sthash.7hKS5tRp.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 26, 2014

¹⁴ Ganjanakhundee, Supalak, "Fleet-Footed Thailand Leading ASEAN Race for Deals with China", *The Nation/Asia News Network*, December 24, 2014 at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/fleet-footed-thailand-leading-asean-racedeals-china#sthash.MDwspoeo.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 28, 2014

occasion of the re-appointment as the Prime Minister of Japan. His Majesty's message expressed the monarch's appreciation for the premier's personal contribution in strengthening the close friendship and valuable cooperation between Brunei Darussalam and Japan.¹⁶ Bangladesh's armed forces is looking to strengthen defence cooperation with Brunei in the coming year through more training exchange programmes between military officers, local press reported this week. Bangladesh High Commissioner to Brunei Mohammed Abdul Hye said there were plans for their army chief of Bangladesh to visit the country in 2015. The high commissioner said his country would like to strengthen cooperation in training. "Next year, we would like to invite the commandant of the Defence Academy of Brunei to visit Bangladesh. At the same time, we are trying to organize the visit of our army chief to come to Brunei," he was quoted by the *Brunei Times*. He also said "Our officers are coming here to Brunei to attend a course next year, which will be the fourth intake. Every year over the last three years, we send one officer here. Brunei too has been sending their officers to Bangladesh,"¹⁷ On Christmas Eve, religious police in the capital city of the Islamic Sultanate of Brunei ordered company owners to stop Christmas celebrations or face arrest.. Restaurant and café owners in Brunei's capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan told reporters they were ordered to get rid of Christmas decorations from their establishments by authorities who cited Shariah Penal Code Order 2013 prohibiting exhibits of decorations that were against Islamic beliefs.¹⁸ According to the law, Violators could a \$15,000 fine and imprisonment for a term of up to five years.

Cambodia

- **Cambodian Peacekeepers Welcomed Home Lebanon Mission, Cambodian King hails Vietnam's supports during President Sang's visit, Finance minister talks about bright economic prospects.**

Nearly 200 Cambodian peacekeepers returned home from a peacekeeping mission in Lebanon this week. Ahead of a ceremony at the Phnom Penh Military Airbase on December 25 to welcome home nearly 200 peacekeepers who returned from mission in Lebanon, the unit's commanding officer described the posting as "the best one."¹⁹ With Cambodian peacekeepers stationed in countries including Mali, Central African Republic and South Sudan, Colonel Mam Neang, 53,

¹⁵ "Asean-EU Experts Cite Phl Econ Performance", By Pia Lee-Brago (The Philippine Star), December 26, 2014, at <http://www.philstar.com/business/2014/12/26/1406474/asean-eu-experts-cite-phl-econ-performance>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

¹⁶ Kassim, Izzan, "Brunei King Congratulates Abe On Re-Election", *The Brunei Times/Asia News Network*, December 25, 2014 at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/brunei-king-congratulates-abe-re-election#sthash.i96GxC2t.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 24, 2014

¹⁷ "Brunei Set For Closer Ties with Bangladesh", *The Shanghai Daily*, December 24, 2014 at http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=260495. Retrieved on December 25, 2014

¹⁸ "Christmas celebrations restricted in Brunei", .at <http://www.macroinsider.com/politics/washington-plans-favor-for-shariah-run-society-h13010.html>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

¹⁹ Odom, Sek and Mueller, Chris, "Cambodian Peacekeepers Welcomed Home From Yearlong Lebanon Mission", *The Cambodian Daily*, December 26, 2014 At <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/peacekeepers-welcomed-home-from-yearlong-lebanon-mission-74871/>. Retrieved on December 26, 2014

commander of the 184 soldiers in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces' (RCAF) Engineering Company 621, said the Lebanon posting was comparatively easy. Mr. Neang said his unit was primarily based in the southeastern Marjeyoun district. King Norodom Sihamoni met Vietnamese president Truong Tan Sang on December 23. Sang met with the Cambodian King right after his arrival in Phnom Penh on the morning of December 23, which was his first official visit to the neighbouring country since he became the head of Vietnamese State.²⁰ King Sihamoni hailed the visit as an important milestone in the bilateral friendship and well-rounded cooperation between the two countries. Finance Minister Aun Porn Moniroth has hoped for bright economic future of Cambodia. He said in a recent parliamentary session, "With the government's efforts and commitment, Cambodia can maintain stability, security, and good public order as well as ensure a high-level of economic growth, a low inflation rate, and remain attractive to investors"²¹. He also said that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is forecast to grow by 7 percent to 16.9 billion U.S. dollars for 2014 and around 7 percent to 18.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2015.²²

East Timor

- **East Timor border with Indonesia to be boosted with services by Jokowi, Parliamentary committee for Western Sahara in East Timor.**

President Joko Widodo of Indonesia says that the facilities along the nation's border with Timor Leste at the Mota'ain border crossing in the Belu district of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province should be improved, along with the quality of customs, immigration and quarantine services.²³ Joko said that all such services should be brought under one roof next year. The National Parliament of the Republic of East Timor adopted unanimously the creation of a parliamentary committee for Western Sahara, according to a statement of the SADR (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) Embassy in Dili. "This decision is an important step in the right direction for the promotion of bilateral relations for the benefit of the aspirations of the two peoples and the two countries, the SADR and East Timor," said the statement.²⁴

²⁰ Son, Truong, "Cambodian King Hails Vietnam's Supports During President Sang's Visit", *Thanh Nien News*, December 23, 2014 at <http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/cambodian-king-hails-vietnams-supports-during-president-sangs-visit-36675.html>. Retrieved on: 27.12.2014

²¹ Lei, Xue, "Yearender: Cambodia Optimistic over Rosy Economic Prospects as Political Crisis Ends", *The Shanghai Daily*, December 25, 2014 at http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=260709. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

²² Ibid.

²³ Kelen, Yoseph, "Jokowi Promises to Boost Services at Timor Leste Border", December 22, 2014 at <http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/jokowi-promises-boost-services-timor-leste-border/>. Retrieved on December 26, 2014

²⁴ "Constitution of Parliamentary Committee for Western Sahara in East Timor", December 23, 2014 At <http://www.spsrasd.info/en/content/constitution-parliamentary-committee-western-sahara-east-timor>. Retrieved on December 25, 2014

Indonesia

- **Indonesia Army Chief claims hegemonic role in ASEAN; AirAsia flight from Indonesia to Singapore with 162 aboard goes missing; Indonesian IS Fighter Warns TNI Chief.**

Indonesian Military (TNI) commander-general Moeldoko, speaking at a press conference recently claimed that Asean members had acknowledged TNI's leadership, adding that the country deserves the position of a big brother in the regional grouping. "We have a forum of ASEAN military commanders [and defence chiefs]. All of them have recognised our greatness," said the general. He quoted, "We have a cooperation agreement between the TNI, ASEAN and Asia-Pacific countries. We are trying to make TNI the big brother in Asean,"²⁵ in apparent reference to the annual ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Moeldoko also said the meeting also discussed the South China Sea dispute, adding that Indonesia hoped to be a pioneer in maintaining stability in the area by carrying out diplomacy with China and the US.

Indonesia AirAsia Flight QZ8501, an Airbus 320-200, went missing this week in another fateful aviation incident in Southeast Asia. Indonesia AirAsia said, there were 155 passengers and seven crew on board. It said, 156 were Indonesian, with three from South Korea and one each from Singapore, Malaysia and France.²⁶ Singapore, Malaysia and Australia had offered to help in the search alongside the search operations by Indonesian Airforce.

In a *YouTube* video uploaded on December 24, an Indonesian national fighting for ISIS warned the nation's security forces that the Islamic State movement is happy to "slaughter" them "one by one" as part of its attempt to implement Shariah law in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation state.²⁷ In the 4.01-minute long *YouTube* clip, the man said, "And if you don't come to us, we will come to you. We will come back to Indonesia ... to implement the Shariah of God. The implementation of the Shariah of God starts with waging a war on you — with slaughtering you one by one — the [Indonesian] military, the National Police, Densus [88] and Banser."

Laos

- **Laos to start construction of Don Sahong Dam; World Bank to fund Laos with nearly 28.3 mIn USD for poverty reduction; UN experts appeal for help to probe two-year-old disappearance of rights defender.**

Construction on the much-criticized Don Sahong Dam will begin early 2015. The controversial dam is being built by Malaysia's Mega First Corporation Berhad (Mega First) on Southeast Asia's

²⁵ "Indonesian army claims Asean 'big brother' role", *The Jakarta PostAsia News Network*, December 24, 2014 at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/aec/Indonesian-army-claims-Asean-big-brother-role-30250493.html>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

²⁶ "AirAsia Flight From Indonesia To Singapore With 162 Aboard Goes Missing", December 28, 2014 *Reuters*, at <http://m.economictimes.com/news/international/world-news/airasia-flight-from-indonesia-to-singapore-with-162-aboard-goes-missing/articleshow/45664880.cms>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

²⁷ Arnaz, Farouk, "Indonesian IS Fighter Warns TNI Chief: Soldiers of God Are Waiting for You", December 26, 2014 at <http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/indonesian-fighter-warns-tni-chief-soldiers-god-waiting/>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

key artery the Mekong River, just two kilometers (1.2 miles) north of Cambodia. Regional governments are expected to meet in January to put forward their positions on the project.²⁸ Concerns raised by a number of participants during a public consultation meeting consisting of civil society, nongovernmental and governmental organizations, and regional and international organizations earlier this month in Pakse, including calls to scrap the project altogether. The World Bank has agreed to provide some 241 billion Lao kip (nearly 28.3 million U.S. dollars) to Laos that is to be spent on around 650 basic infrastructure development sub-projects in 10 localities across the country for implementing goals of poverty reduction, reported Lao state-run news agency KPL this week.²⁹ The Lao National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication's plan for 2011 to 2015 aims to reduce the number of families in poverty to less than 10 percent by 2015.

United Nations experts urged recently that international support would be needed to investigate the enforced disappearance of leading Laotian human rights defender Sombath Somphone, who was last seen in December 2012. "It is high time for the authorities of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to voluntarily request international assistance with the aim of shedding light on Mr. Somphone's fate and whereabouts, two years after his disappearance," the experts said in a news release.³⁰ Mr. Somphone is a prominent human rights activist working on issues of land confiscation and assisting victims in denouncing such practices. He was last seen at a police checkpoint with his car parked in the police compound.

Malaysia

- **Record numbers evacuated in Malaysia's worst floods in decades; Premier Najib cuts short US trip to oversee flood response in Malaysia; Malaysia and China hold first-ever joint military exercise.**

More than 100,000 people have been evacuated from their homes in 7 states of Malaysia hit by the South-east Asian' nation's worst monsoon floods in decades. Extremely high levels of floodwater and bad weather have made relocating victims and the transport of food supplies by helicopters difficult, Prime Minister Najib Razak said in a statement.³¹ A total of 105,568 people have been displaced in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Perak, Kedah, Perlis and Johor, surpassing the previous record of 100,000 people evacuated during floods in 2008. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak will return home from the United States to continue overseeing the response to the

²⁸ "Laos to start construction of Don Sahong Dam in Early 2015", December 24, 2014 at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/dam-12242014141437.html>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

²⁹ "WB to Fund Nearly 28.3 mIn USD for Poverty Reduction in Laos", December 25, 2014 at <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/141225/wb-fund-nearly-283-mIn-usd-poverty-reduction-laos>. Retrieved on December 27, 2014

³⁰ "Laos: UN Experts Appeal for Help to Probe Two-Year-Old Disappearance of Rights Defender", December 23, 2014 at http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49679#.VJ1tl_cBHA. Retrieved on December 28, 2014

³¹ "Record Numbers Evacuated In Malaysia's Worst Floods in Decades", December 26, 2014 at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/record-numbers-evacuated-malaysias-worst-floods-decades-20141226#sthash.pU7YL3RV.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 28, 2014

floods. The prime minister had come under fire after photos showed him golfing with US President Barack Obama in Hawaii even as Malaysia's worst flooding in decades forced more than 100,000 people to flee, reports said.³² Upon arrival, Datuk Seri Najib will chair a meeting and receive briefings from the National Security Council, the National Disaster Management and Relief Committee, the state government and local emergency responders, the statement added. The Prime Minister will also meet people affected by the flooding and discuss new measures to support those who have been displaced. The Malaysian Armed Forces and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) began their first-ever bilateral military exercise.³³ The five-day tabletop exercise at the Armed Forces' Joint Warfare Centre (Pesama) saw 20 officers from Malaysia combining their expertise with PLA's 21-men delegation to develop a common framework for humanitarian and disaster relief operations. The exercise was opened by Armed Forces chief Jen Tan Sri Zulkifeli Mohd Zin.

Myanmar

- **Yangon holds first poll since 1949; Myanmar protesters demand answers from China over mine death; Myanmar to establish its first ever stock exchange.**

Residents of Myanmar's largest city, Yangon went to the polls this week for first municipal elections in 65 years. For many the ballot for the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) is the first chance to vote under the country's quasi-civilian government, which replaced outright military rule in 2011.³⁴ "It's very difficult to have big expectations as this is the first election for 60 years," said Khin Maung Tun, 50, a resident in Thaketa township. "But we came here to vote and show our spirit".

Politicians, monks and students attended a protest near the Chinese consulate in Mandalay on December 27. The protesters demanded answers over the death of Khin Khin Win in Letpaduangtaung and condemned the Myanmar Wanbao Mining Copper Co Ltd.³⁵ Police prevented the protest from reaching the front of the consulate. Thein Aung Myint, a protest leader, said: "Shooting Khin Khin Win is like shooting the hearts of the people. I'd like to ask China which is more important: friendship with Myanmar or the Letpaduangtaung project. We are not opposing China. We just demand China investigates the mistreatment of farmers by Wanbao".

³² "Premier Najib cuts short US trip to oversee flood response in Malaysia", December 26, 2014 | at <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/premier-najib-cuts-short-us-trip-oversee-flood-response-malaysia-201#sthash.Nzd1iWuy.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³³ "Malaysia and China Hold First-Ever Joint Military Exercise", December 23, 2014 at <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/12/23/Malaysia-and-China-hold-first-ever-joint-military-exercise/>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³⁴ "Yangon Holds First Poll Since 1949", December 27, 2014, *AFP*, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/452471/yangon-vote-first-in-65-years>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³⁵ "Myanmar Protesters Demand Answers from China over Mine Death", *Eleven Myanmar/Asia News Network*, December 28, 2014 at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/myanmar-protesters-demand-answers-china-over-mine-death#sthash.5zoHpIDO.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

Myanmar is all set to establish its first ever stock exchange. Japan's Daiwa Securities Group Inc., its research arm and Japan Exchange Group Inc. said that they signed a joint-venture agreement with Myanma Economic Bank to establish Myanmar's first-ever stock exchange in Yangon.³⁶

Philippines

- **Military eyes 2 more naval bases; Peace talks to begin again in the Philippines; Pope to meet Muslim, Buddhist leaders in Philippines.**

Defence officials in Philippines construction of two more naval bases that could accommodate various types of vessels to help secure the West Philippine Sea, aside from the Ulungan Bay naval base in Palawan. The planned naval base is expected to be the home of new warships that would arrive starting next year from defence contractors abroad.³⁷ "To avoid port congestion in the future, we are building more naval bases in Palawan," an informed source bared, adding the military leadership was now looking to Japan to supply the Navy with patrol vessels after the country relaxed its export ban on military equipment. Both the Philippine government and the communist rebel movement said the stalled peace process could resume soon. It happened following a series of talks that culminated in the visit of special government envoy Hernani Braganza to the Mindanao rebel camp of the New People's Army (NPA) in Surigao del Sur. Braganza, a member of President Benigno Aquino's Liberal Party, visited rebel spokesman Jorge Madlos in Surigao del Sur "to follow up" peace talks with the rebel group.³⁸ Braganza's visit also coincided with the 46th Founding Anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Pope Francis will be visiting Philippines next month and he plans to visit the meet with leaders of various religions, including leaders of Islamic and Buddhist faith for pushing a message of tolerance in order to combat global religious conflicts, a church official said on December 22. The pontiff will hold a 10 to 15-minute dialogue with the dean of the Philippines' largest Islamic studies centre and a Taiwan-based Buddhist leader on January 18, according to Father Carlos Reyes, a member of the committee organising the Pope's visit.³⁹

Singapore

- **AirAsia flight QZ8501: Singapore offers to deploy more vessels to help in search and locate; Singapore Navy deploys frigate and missile corvette to search and locate AirAsia flight; Singapore to release advance GDP data.**

Republic of Singapore has offered Indonesia a few ships that can assist in the operations - a

³⁶ Martin, Alexander and Mahtani, Shibani, "Japan Companies to Help Set Up Myanmar's First Stock Exchange", December 23, 2014 at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-companies-agree-to-help-establish-myanmars-first-stock-exchange-1419331355>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³⁷ "Military Eyes 2 More Naval Bases in Palawan", Jaime Laude (The Philippine Star), December 26, 2014 at <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/12/26/1406636/military-eyes-2-more-naval-bases-palawan>) Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³⁸ Espejo, Edwin, "Peace Talks to Begin Again in the Philippines", December 27, 2014 at <http://asiancorrespondent.com/129382/philippines-they-are-again-talking-peace/>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

³⁹ "Pope To Meet Muslim, Buddhist Leaders In Philippines Visit", December 22, 2014 at <http://www.nst.com.my/node/65077>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

frigate, a landing ship tank (LST), a corvette, and the MV Swift Rescue, said Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen in a *Facebook* post on December 28. "I've spoken again to Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu and have offered the Indonesians a few ships that can assist in the search-and-locate mission - A frigate, an LST, a corvette, and the MV Swift Rescue. These vessels are already on standby," he wrote.⁴⁰

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) will be deploying two ships to join the search and locate (SAL) operation for Air Asia flight QZ8501. In a statement released to the media this week, Singapore's Ministry Of Defence said that Second Minister for Defence Mr Chan Chun Sing sent off the Formidable-class frigate (RSS Supreme) and Missile corvette (RSS Valour for search operations.⁴¹

The Singapore Armed Forces has already deployed a Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) C-130 aircraft to join in the search, while another RSAF C-130 remains on standby.⁴²

In addition to these assets, a RSN Landing ship tank and Submarine support and rescue vessel are ready to assist with the SAL operation. Singapore will provide advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for the fourth quarter on 2nd January 2015.⁴³ A quarterly survey by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) earlier this month showed that economists expect GDP to expand by 2.3 per cent on a year-on-year basis in the fourth quarter.

Thailand

- **Thailand government top brass members visits Cambodia; Thai Deputy PM sees good ties between Thailand; Cambodia, Migrant permit fee to be slashed by Thailand.**

Thai military commanders left for Phnom Penh this week under leadership of Deputy Premier and Defence Minister Gen Pravit Wongsuwan on a two-day official visit to the Cambodian capital to meet with Hun Sen and their Cambodian counterpart Gen Tea Banh. They were scheduled to talk about plans to promote daily trading of goods between the Thais and Cambodians along the common border and to participate in a General Border Committee meeting, which would touch on subjects surrounding earlier border disputes and mutual border demarcation efforts, among other bilateral issues.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ AirAsia flight QZ8501: Singapore Offers to Deploy More Vessels to Help in Search and Locate", December 28, 2014 <http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/asia-report/story/airasia-flight-qz8501-singapore-military-vessels-and-planes-standby-#sthash.eOmrnQOc.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 30, 2014

⁴¹ "Singapore Navy deploys frigate and missile corvette to search and locate AirAsia flight QZ8501 AsiaOne", December 29, 2014 at <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/singapore-navy-deploys-frigate-and-missile-corvette-search-and-locate-airasia-flight#sthash.dRAQMI8.dpuf>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Singapore to release advance GDP data on Jan 2", December 26, 2014 at <http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/singapore-to-release-advance-gdp-data-on-jan-2>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

⁴⁴ "Thailand government top brass members visits Phnom Penh", December 24, 2014 at http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=260517. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

Accompanying the Thai deputy premier to Phnom Penh were army chief Gen Udomdet Sitabut, navy chief Adm Kraisorn Chansuvanit, air force chief ACM Tritod Sonjaeng, police chief Pol Gen Somyod Pumpanmoung, supreme commander Gen Vorapong Sa-nganet and undersecretary of defence Gen Sirichai Dithakul. The Thai government has planned to turn Thai-Cambodian border markets into “special economic areas” to accommodate next year’s opening of an ASEAN Economic Community. Gen Prawit led the chiefs of the armed forces and the police to attend a meeting of the General Border Committee (GBC) who led the delegation to Cambodia expressed his optimism at a press conference after returning from visit. Gen Prawit said the GBC discussed cooperation along the border, on public safety, narcotics, alien labor, human trafficking and economic zones in Trat and Sa Kaeo provinces.⁴⁵

Thailand Cabinet recently approved an Interior Ministry proposal for a reduced migrant fee. It is noteworthy that this would first be submitted for the Council of State to consider before it is implemented. The fee was related to the Interior Ministry’s previous announcement that migrant workers from the three countries - including fishery workers - should obtain temporary permits to stay in Thailand and undergo nationality identification.⁴⁶

Vietnam

- **Vietnam President visits Cambodia; Vietnamese President Pays visit to bolster trade ties, Vietnam President’s Cambodia visit a boost to bilateral ties: official.**

President Truong Tan Sang left Vietnam December 23 for Cambodia for a two-day visit. The first ever visit by the new president was made at the invitation of Cambodian King Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath Norodom Sihamoni.⁴⁷ Vietnam and Cambodia issued a joint statement on the outcomes of a two-day visit by Vietnamese State President Truong Tan Sang to the latter, focusing on trade, investment, and border cooperation. During the visit, President Sang had talks with the Cambodian King, National Assembly Chairman Heng Samrin, Prime Minister Hun Sen, First Vice President of the Senate Say Chhum, and Great Supreme Patriarchs Tep Vong and Bour Kry.⁴⁸ President Sang requested that the two governments bolster bilateral trade to \$5 billion by 2015 and this visit holds importance for boosting bilateral trade between neighbours.⁴⁹

Deputy Foreign Minister of Cambodia noted the significance of the visit as an important one. The official noted that during the visit, the two countries’ leaders exchanged in-depth opinions on the

⁴⁵ “Thai Deputy PM sees good ties between Thailand, Cambodia”, December 26, 2014 at <http://www.pattayamail.com/news/thai-deputy-pm-sees-good-ties-between-thailand-cambodia-43948#sthash.Ax5UT2Mc.dpuf>.

⁴⁶ “Migrant permit fee to be slashed by Myanmar”, at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Migrant-permit-fee-to-be-slashed-30250545.html>. Retrieved on December 26, 2014

⁴⁷ “Vietnam President Visits Cambodia”, December 23, 2014 at <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/24882/vietnam-president-visits-cambodia-to-foster-friendship-cooperation>. Retrieved on December 28, 2014

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Reaksmey, Hul and Sothear, Kang, “Vietnamese President Pays Visit to Bolster Trade Ties”, December 24, 2014 at <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/vietnamese-president-pays-visit-to-bolster-trade-ties-74776/>. Retrieved on December 28, 2014

friendship and comprehensive cooperation between Vietnam and Cambodia as well as regional and international issues of mutual concern.⁵⁰ Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni and leaders thanked Vietnam for great assistance in all circumstances. According to the official statement, the two nations will continue to build their relations on the motto of “good neighbourliness, traditional friendship, and comprehensive and sustainable cooperation”.⁵¹

C. East Asia

China

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Xi Jinping calls for development of Hong Kong; China calls for improving ties with Vietnam; China upset over US calls for the release of Liu Xiaobo; Li Keqiang meets with the President of Egypt; China upset with US arms sale to Taiwan.**

After the end of month long protests in Hong Kong, the Chinese President Xi Jinping called for development of Hong Kong. He stated that, “the development of Hong Kong’s political system should start from local reality and be conducted in an orderly manner based on the law”.⁵²

The top political advisor of China Yu Zhengsheng met with the Politburo member of Vietnam Hong Anh on December 25. Yu asserted that, “My current visit to Vietnam, commissioned by the CPC Central Committee and General Secretary Xi Jinping, aims to enhance mutual trust, build consensus and boost progress of China-Vietnam relations in a correct path”.⁵³

On December 25, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying in response to US demands to release Liu Xiaobo said that, “We advise the US to reflect on and correct its own violations of human rights, instead of interfering in other countries’ domestic affairs and judicial sovereignty and independence in the name of human rights”.⁵⁴

On December 24 the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the President of Egypt Abdel Fattah-al-Sisi in Beijing. During the meeting Li said that, “China is willing to work with Egypt on a new

⁵⁰ “Vietnam President’s Cambodia Visit A Boost To Bilateral Ties: Official”, December 24, 2014 at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/119638/vietnam-president-s-cambodia-visit-a-boost-to-bilateral-ties—official.html>. Retrieved on December 29, 2014

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Shengnan, Zhao, “Xi Gives Full Backing to HK System”, *China Daily*, December 27, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/27/content_19179475.htm. Accessed on January 2, 2014

⁵³ “China Vows To Boost Ties With Vietnam Along Correct Path”, *China Daily*, December 26, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-12/26/content_19173125.htm, accessed on December 26, 2014

⁵⁴ “China Warns US Against Judicial Interference”, *China Daily*, December 25, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/25/content_19169548.htm, accessed on December 26, 2014

push to forward the development of two nations' mutual relations". In addition to this Sisi said that, "Egypt is willing to deepen its cooperation with China especially in production, investment and financing".⁵⁵

On December 19, China asserted its opposition to the signing of a bill by President Barack Obama which will authorize the sale of Perry-class guided missile frigates to Taiwan. Qin Gang, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that, "The bill seriously violates the three China-US joint communiqués, particularly the US commitment specified in the August 17 communiqué".⁵⁶

D. Russia

Russia

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Russia has unveiled an updated military doctrine; Putin, Poroshenko, Hollande and Merkel discuss the situation in Ukraine; Russia criticises Ukraine parliament's law on abandoning the country's non-bloc status; Russia and China vote against tackling human rights situation in North Korea; Russian Foreign Minister says CSTO can react to different challenges and threats; CSTO discusses plans to set up a collective air force.**

Russia has unveiled an updated military doctrine on December 26. Some key additions include a) listing the presence of foreign private military companies and NATO's increasing military potential in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders as a threat to its national security b) strong emphasis on "non-nuclear deterrence," which implies a higher degree of combat alertness of the armed forces c) the doctrine does not rule out creation of joint missile defence systems with other countries on condition of Russia's equal participation d) it mentions that 'today's conflicts exposes a complex combat employment of military power and other instruments, and specifies the instruments that embrace the use of political, economic, informational and other non-military measures implemented along with a broad utilization of the willingness to protest inherent in the population and special operations' e) the doctrine stresses on the 'amassed combat employment of high-precision weaponry, drones and robots, wielding of impact on the entire enemy territory, and harassing of enemy activity in the informational sphere and in outer space.' The Security Council of Russia has also emphasised on the defence-oriented character of the military doctrine and Russia's recourse to use of military force only after exhaustion of all non-violent measures.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Mengwei, Chen, "Premier Li Keqiang Meets With Egyptian President", *China Daily*, December 24, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/24/content_19161525.htm, accessed on December 26, 2014

⁵⁶ "China Opposes US Arms Sale To Taiwan", *China Daily*, December 19, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/19/content_19128366.htm, accessed on December 26, 2014

⁵⁷ "Russia's Revised Military Doctrine Lists Foreign Private Military Firms Among Threats", *Itar-Tass*, December 26, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/769491>

Russian President Vladimir Putin had a telephone conversation on December 22 with Presidents of Ukraine and France, Petro Poroshenko and Francois Hollande, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They exchanged views on the settlement of conflict in south-eastern Ukraine and called on the need to organise a meeting of the Contact Group in Minsk as soon as possible. The Minsk Protocol of September 5 has nine points that outlines cessation of hostilities.⁵⁸

Russia has criticised Ukraine's parliament's vote, held on December 23, to renounce the country's non-aligned status in a move that paves the way for Kiev's NATO membership bid. The law, proposed by President Petro Poroshenko, was backed by 303 lawmakers which was 77 more than the minimum required.⁵⁹

Russia and China voted, on December 22, against discussing the human rights situation in North Korea at the United Nations Security Council. Eleven out of the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council, including Australia, UK, Jordan, Lithuania, the United States, France and South Korea, had called for putting this issue on the Security Council's agenda.⁶⁰

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on December 22 in Moscow during a session of the council of CSTO foreign and defence ministers, that CSTO is a multifunctional structure that is capable of adequately reacting to different challenges and threats. The main issues discussed include improvement of collective security system, peacekeeping activities, prospects for strengthening military cooperation and coordinating foreign political tasks.⁶¹

During a meeting of the CSTO foreign, defence ministers and secretaries of security councils held in Moscow on December 22, the member states discussed plans to establish a collective air force. A plan for joint events in operational and combat training for 2015 was also approved.⁶²

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Russia to consider plausible response to US and Canadian economic sanctions; Russian companies' US\$ 120 billion foreign debt payments to exert pressure on rouble in 2015; Major Russian pharmaceutical companies stop production of life-saving drugs; Gazprom prepares**

⁵⁸ "Putin, Poroshenko, Hollande, Merkel discuss situation in Ukraine – Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, December 23, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/768584>

⁵⁹ "Ukraine's Parliament Passes Law On Abandoning Country's Non-Bloc Status", *Itar-Tass*, December 23, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/768689>

⁶⁰ "Russia, China Vote Against Tackling Human Rights Situation in North Korea", *Itar-Tass*, December 23, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/768589>

⁶¹ "Russian FM Says Post-Soviet Military Bloc CSTO Can React To Different Challenges, Threats", *Itar-Tass*, December 22, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/768550>

⁶² "CSTO States Plan To Set Up Collective Air Force", *Itar-Tass*, December 22, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/768382>

to launch Yamal's largest gas field; Russia's future railway-based system Barguzin to carry 6 ballistic missiles.

Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov has said that Moscow will consider retaliatory measures against the sanctions imposed by the US and Canada. The US President had on December 19 signed an executive order to impose a ban on trade ties with Crimea, which joined Russia after a referendum in mid-March. According to a White House statement, the executive order "prohibits the export of goods, technology, or services to Crimea and prohibits the import of goods, technology, or services from Crimea, as well as new investments in Crimea."⁶³

Former Finance Minister and head of VTB24 retail bank Mikhail Zadornov has said that Russia's US\$ 120 billion sovereign and corporate foreign debt repayments will exert main pressure on the rouble in 2015. Western sanctions and closure of world capital markets for some Russian companies and banks have exerted considerable influence on Russia's financial sector. He stated that under current circumstances, the Russian companies and banks will be able to refinance around 20-25 per cent of their total debts.⁶⁴

Chairman of the State Duma health committee Sergey Kalashnikov has said that around 16 major Russian pharmaceutical companies have stopped the production of "the cheapest and the most essential drugs," including antibiotics and fluids due to a sharp increase in the dollar price for the substances that are bought abroad. He added that the prime cost of medicines is now some three or four times higher than the actual price amid weakened rouble.⁶⁵

Gazprom has started gas production at gas field '11 at Bovanenkovo. The field is one of the largest on the Yamal Peninsula and has estimated reserves of 5 trillion cubic meters of gas. The annual projected gas production from the field is estimated at 115 billion cubic meters.⁶⁶

One train of Russia's future railway-based combat missile system Barguzin will carry up to six Years intercontinental ballistic missiles and will be equivalent to a regiment. The system is expected to enter into service in 2018-2019. Russia had earlier withdrawn the railway-based intercontinental ballistic missiles from operation in 2005.⁶⁷

⁶³ "Russia To Consider Possible Response To US, Canada Sanctions — Kremlin Aide", *Itar-Tass*, December 22, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/768485>

⁶⁴ "Russian Companies' \$120 Billion Foreign Debt Payments To Exert Pressure On Ruble in 2015", *Itar-Tass*, December 23, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/768651>

⁶⁵ "Major Russian Pharmaceutical Companies Stop Production Of Life-Saving Drugs — Lawmaker", *Itar-Tass*, December 22, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/768378>

⁶⁶ "Russia's Gazprom Prepares To Launch Yamal's Largest Gas Field", *Itar-Tass*, December 22, 2014, at <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/768549>

⁶⁷ "Russia's Future Railway-Based System Barguzin To Carry 6 Ballistic Missiles — Source", *Itar-Tass*, December 26, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/769357>

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Poll results throw hung assembly in Jammu & Kashmir; Pak terror groups desperate to carry out “Spectacular strike” in the valley: Intelligence agencies.**

The People’s Democratic Party (PDP), with 28 seats, has emerged as the single largest party in Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly Elections, but the hung Assembly formed by a four-cornered division of seats has made government-formation an uphill task. The incumbent National Conference (NC) was beaten by anti-incumbency, but has survived to fight another battle by winning 15 seats — 13 less than its 2008 tally. On the other hand, the Congress escaped complete decimation and managed to win 12 seats. Sajjad Lone’s People’s Conference, the only party which touted itself as an ally of the BJP in J&K, won two seats. Five Independent candidates also won. Chief Minister and National Conference President, Omar Abdullah lost from Sonawar constituency but managed to win from Beerwah by a slim margin of 905 votes. Interestingly, the BJP emerged as the biggest winner in this election. From one solitary seat in 2002 and 11 in 2008, it has taken its tally to 25 this time. Although, in the Kashmir valley, the BJP lost all the 33 constituencies it contested from. Still, at 23 per cent, it has secured the highest vote share in the State.⁶⁸ The PDP came next with 22.7 per cent, the NC got 20.8 per cent while Congress recorded 18 per cent of votes.⁶⁹

Close on the heels of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Saeed threatening India after Peshawar attack, the Indian intelligence agencies have warned New Delhi of desperate attempts being made by Pakistan terror groups to carry out a “spectacular strike” in the Valley. Specific inputs available with filed formations of border guarding forces, shared with all Central agencies revealed that four separate modules of Pakistan-backed terror outfits are positioned at multiple sensitive locations in J&K. According to the intelligence inputs, LeT operatives are positioned at two different locations in Rajouri. The other two terror modules consist of LeT and Hizbul Mujahideen operatives and are positioned along Samba and Hiranagar areas in the Jammu region. The strikes, which are being planned at the behest of Pakistan’s ISI and the Pakistani Army, are expected to coincide with US President Barack Obama’s India visit to draw “international attention” to the Kashmir issue. Another terror alert circulated among all Central agencies reveal LeT’s game plan to target the Samjhauta Express train and the Delhi-Lahore bus service. This input has been generated by the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), functioning under the Intelligence Bureau. All security agencies have been asked to beef up security along the border and all vital installations and sensitive locations and remain on high alert for the next two months.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Rafiq, Zahid, “Hung Assembly in J&K”, *The Hindu*, December 23, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jammu-and-kashmir-poll-results/article6718385.ece>

⁶⁹ “PDP Largest Party In Fractured J&K Verdict; BJP To Form Govt in J’khand”, *rediff.com*, December 23, 2014 at <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/jk-heads-for-hung-assembly-pdp-bjp-jharkhand-results/20141223.htm>

⁷⁰ Ahuja, Namrata Biji, “Pakistan Terrorists Planning Hit?”, *The Asian Age*, December 23, 2014 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/pakistan-terrorists-planning-hit-029>

Left-wing Extremism

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Maoists attack forest offices, KFC and McDonald's outlets in Kerala; Prakash Mishra takes over as new CRPF DG; ISI and China smuggled arms finding their way to Naxal and jihadi in South India.**

Signalling intensification of their activities in the state, Maoists carried out three simultaneous attacks in Palakkad and Wayanad districts of Kerala on December 22. The first attack was reported at around 1.30am, when a 15-member armed group barged into the forest range office at Mukkali near Silent Valley in Palakkad and burned the files and damaged computers and furniture. Maoists also torched a vehicle of the forest department parked in front of the office. The group also pasted posters on the walls around the office urging the people to take up arms against the government. The leaflets thrown at the premises blamed the government for the pathetic condition of the tribals. No one has been injured in the attack as the office was vacant at the time of attack. Another group of seven persons ransacked the outlets of the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and McDonalds at Chandragiri in Palakkad city at around 7am. Members of the group who covered their faces smashed the glass doors of the outlets and distributed leaflets urging the people to fight agents of US imperialism. The forest aid post at Kunjom under Vellamunda police station also came under attack the same morning. The attack came to the notice of the police much later as no one was present at the aid post at that time. The Maoists left the copies of Kaattuthee (Wild Fire), the official bulletin of the Kabani dalam of the CPI (Maoist).⁷¹

Senior IPS officer Prakash Mishra took over as the new chief of the country's largest paramilitary and lead anti-Naxal operations force CRPF on December 22. Mr. Mishra, an ex-Odisha police DGP and 1977-batch IPS officer, was till now serving as the Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Soon after taking the charge of over three lakh personnel strong force, Mr. Mishra vowed to intensify operations against Naxals, saying that they would be "result oriented." "I would surely like to enhance the performance of the force and address challenges that are being faced. The impetus would be to undertake result oriented operations in the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) theatre and other areas too," said Mishra.⁷² He also said that his top priority would be to ensure 'zero casualty' in the largest Para-military force in India. "We will prepare appropriate strategies to minimise casualties in the force through changes in the deployment pattern, better intelligence gathering and more effective coordination with states' police forces," said Mishra.⁷³

⁷¹ Prashanth, M P, "Maoists Attack Forest Offices, KFC and McDonald's Outlets in Kerala", *The Times of India*, December 22, 2014 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Maoists-attack-forest-offices-KFC-and-McDonalds-outlets-in-Kerala/articleshow/45599624.cms>

⁷² "Operations against Naxals to be Result Oriented: New CRPF DG", *The Economic Times*, December 22, 2014 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-22/news/57316800_1_prakash-mishra-crpf-dg-naxals

⁷³ "DG Prakash Mishra Sets 'Zero Casualty' Target for CRPF", *The Economic Times*, December 22, 2014 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-22/news/57316472_1_zero-casualty-odisha-central-force

China's spy networks and Pakistan's premier spy agency the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) are reportedly smuggling in illegal arms and contraband drugs in South India through the fishing port in Koddikarrai in Tamil Nadu, which are meant to arm the Islamic extremists and Naxalites in the region. "Sophisticated firearms, which are smuggled in through Kodikarrai port are then moved into forests in the Western Ghats and are picked up by Islamic terrorists and Naxals," said a top level officer.⁷⁴

Northeast India

(December 22-28, 2014)

- **Government rethinks its' policy on NE ultras; 3 migrants killed in an IED blast in Imphal; NDFB (S) militants gun down 70 adivasi in Assam; NDFB (S) commander Bidai mastermind of the Assam carnage; Security forces launch an all-out offensive against NDFB (S) rebels; NIA to probe NDFB (S) mass killings in Assam.**

The Government of India is "seriously examining" the policy for dealing with militants in Northeast and there is possibility of shift in the existing policy soon. According to reports, there is thinking in the Centre that the existing policy of dealing with militancy in the North East is not yielding the desired results and there is need for amending it. As per the existing policy, the Government is agreeing to talk with any militant group, which comes forward for talks. But of late, the Government has found that the policy is not yielding the desired results as new outfits are cropping up regularly. Moreover, the splinter groups of militant outfits, which have come for talks, are still active in the State. MHA sources said that there were two splits in the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) after the outfit signed ceasefire agreement with the Government for talks and even after two groups of the outfit started talks, the third group is still active. The Government of India has already started the process of working out the new policy but the final shape to it would be given only after the Union Home Minister's meeting with the Chief Ministers. Further, the policy of payment of remuneration to members of militant groups under ceasefire agreement is also being reviewed. The members of militant groups now get Rs 3,000 each per month as stipend during the process of talks. But there have been allegations that the outfits very often give inflated figures of their members. It is also alleged that the lower level cadres sometimes do not get their dues and the allegations are now being examined and if found to be true, this policy may also be changed.⁷⁵

Suspected rebels on December 21 triggered a powerful IED explosion at a bus terminal in Khoyathong of Imphal city, killing three migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and injuring four others. The bomb, believed to have been planted by rebels, went off around 6 am near Motbung bus terminal at Khoyathong, police said. While Kusum Pandit (60) died on the spot, Lalan (35) and Shiv Yadav (35) succumbed to their injuries at the Centre-run Regional Institute of Medical

⁷⁴ Chauhan, Bala, "Naxal, Jihadi Arms Being Smuggled by ISI and China?", *The Asian Age*, December 24, 2014 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/naxal-jihadi-arms-being-smuggled-isi-and-china-627>

⁷⁵ "New Govt Policy On NE Ultras Likely", *The Assam Tribune*, December 22, 2014 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2214/at050>

Sciences (RIMS), Imphal where the four injured, including a bus conductor from Nagaland, are undergoing treatment. Except for the Naga victim identified as C Lotha, the remaining three injured are also from Uttar Pradesh and all the victims had gathered at a nearby tea stall when the bomb went off. This incident came barely five days after two migrant workers from Bihar were killed and four injured in a blast at the crowded Thangal Bazaar close to Khoyathong. No group had claimed responsibility for the blasts at the time of filing this report. Incidentally, the controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) has been lifted from Imphal municipal area covering seven assembly segments.⁷⁶

The violence in Assam took on an ethnic hue on December 24, a day after armed Bodo rebels gunned down more than 70 Adivasis and injured 15 in orchestrated attacks in different parts of the state. Police officials said the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit) — the anti-talk faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland — carried out the attacks in Kokrajhar and Sonitpur districts lasting about three hours on the evening of December 23. The militants killed 37 people in Sonitpur, and 27 in Kokrajhar, including 18 children and 21 women. Three persons were killed in police firing next day (on December 24) when angry Adivasis, armed with bows and arrows, attacked police stations in Sonitpur. Three more were killed when an Adivasi mob attacked Bodo villages in Chirang district. At least 250 people were also reported to be missing in one of the bloodiest incidents of ethnic violence in the northeastern state, bringing back memories of 2012 when similar conflicts between Bodo tribal groups and Bengali-Muslims in Kokrajhar and neighbouring districts left about 100 people dead and over five lakh homeless. Assam police chief Khagen Sarma said that the December 23 attacks by Bodo militants were in retaliation to security forces' crackdown on several NDFB(S) members in recent times, adding the militants were operating from the jungles straddling Assam's border with Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. However, analysts said the killings could also be attributed to the Bodos' longstanding demand of a separate homeland since the 1980s. This time, most of the people killed were Christians.⁷⁷

The self-styled commander of anti-talk faction of National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) Bidai was the mastermind of the carnage in which 71 plantation workers were massacred in Sonitpur and Kokrajhar districts of Assam on December 23. Authoritative security sources disclosed that Bidai, who is suspected to have been operating from bordering areas of Bodoland Territorial Council, had himself given instruction to NDFB rebels to target adivasi (plantation workers). Referring intercepts captured by the Intelligence Bureau, security sources, however, said that the Assam police did have the intercepts but failed to pinpoint the areas where NDFB rebels were going to target. Security was intensified in most of vulnerable villages of plantation workers situated in accessible localities of Sonitpur district, but NDFB selected most isolated areas to hit. The involvement of NDFB commander Bidai has also raised question over the role of

⁷⁶ "3 Migrants Killed In Imphal Blast", *The Times of India*, December 22, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/3-migrants-killed-in-Imphal-blast/articleshow/45597246.cms>

⁷⁷ Karmakar, Rahul, "Assam Killings Take On Ethnic Hue: Over 70 Killed In Bodo Attacks, 250 Missing", *Hindustan Times*, December 24, 2014 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/assam-violence-death-toll-in-bodo-militant-attack-in-state-rises-to-64/article1-1299916.aspx>

the Assam police, which was alleged to have been in touch with NDFB commander Bidai during the communal clashes of 2012 in BTC.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, an all-out offensive against the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit) was launched by Security forces on December 26. The Centre has rushed around 5,000 paramilitary men to augment security in Assam. Indian Army chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag said that 66 army columns (70 personnel in each column) have been deployed in Assam for counter-insurgency operations. The GoC of the 4 Corps, located in the worst-hit Sonitpur district, heads the Unified Command which conducts the counter-insurgency operations in Assam.⁷⁹ Security forces scouring for National Democratic Front of Boroland (Songbijit) rebels fear they may have escaped to Bhutan and Myanmar. According to police, around 80 rebels carried out gruesome killings in Kokrajhar and Sonitpur districts on December 23. A senior Assam Police official said that a part of Manas National Park, which is one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites and located in Baksa district, spills over into Bhutan, and its unfenced border is a major security concern. "The park, which is still being used by militants, provides a safe route to Bhutan. On the Bhutanese side, the presence of security forces is quite thin," the police officer said. He also added that NDFB-S's main base is in Myanmar and it was easy for anyone to sneak into Arunachal Pradesh from Sonitpur district and then move to Myanmar through different routes.⁸⁰

The Ministry of Home Affairs on December 27 directed the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to probe the recent violence in Sonitpur and Kokrajhar districts of Assam. In a letter to the Centre on December 26, the Assam government had recommended that the investigation pertaining to the violence that left 75 people dead, be handed over to the NIA. "Considering the gravity of the offences and relevant factors, the Central government is of the opinion that these attacks are scheduled offences under the NIA Act, 2008, and should be probed by it," said a communiqué issued on December 27.⁸¹

⁷⁸ "'NDFB Commander Mastermind Of Carnage'", *The Asian Age*, December 26, 2014, at <http://www.asianage.com/india/ndfb-commander-mastermind-carnage-006>

⁷⁹ Digambar Patowary, "Assam: Forces Launch Ops Against Bodo Militants", *Hindustan Times*, December 26, 2014 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/assam-violence-security-forces-launch-massive-ops-against-bodo-militants/article1-1300491.aspx?hts0021>

⁸⁰ "NDFB-S Rebels May Have Escaped to Bhutan, Myanmar", *The Times of India*, December 26, 2014 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/NDFB-S-rebels-feared-to-have-escaped-to-Bhutan/articleshow/45643628.cms>

⁸¹ "NIA To Probe Assam Violence", *The Hindu*, December 28, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nia-to-probe-assam-violence/article6731598.ece>