

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

December 21 – December 27, 12 (4), 2015

Editor: Saroj Bishoyi

Contributors

Gulbin Sultana

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives

Titli Basu

Japan and the Korean Peninsula

Niranjan C. Oak

Southeast Asia and Oceania

Saroj Bishoyi

United States of America

Amit Kumar

Defence Reviews

Rajbala Rana

Internal Security Reviews

Arpita Anant

UN Reviews

Follow IDSA



Facebook



Twitter



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi-110010

Telephone: 91-26717983; Fax: 91-11-26154191 Website: www.idsa.in; Email: twir@idsa.in

CONTENTS

| In This Issue | Page |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| I. COUNTRY REVIEWS | 2-18 |
| A. South Asia | 2-7 |
| B. East Asia | 7-8 |
| C. Southeast Asia and Oceania | 9-12 |
| D. United States of America | 12-18 |
| II. DEFENCE REVIEWS | 19-20 |
| III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS | 20-23 |
| IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS | 24 |

I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Probe into 195 Pak POWs' role in good time; Dhaka signs \$12.65b deal with Moscow; Attack in an Ahmadiyya mosque; HR groups call on US to grant asylum to Bangladesh bloggers; India's LIC gets licence to operate in Bangladesh; Foreign Minister visits Bahrain; Pakistan withdraws diplomat accused of aiding militants; US reaffirms commitment to helping Bangladesh on Rohingya issues.**

The investigation agency of the International Crimes Tribunal said on December 27 that it would start probe against the 195 Pakistani prisoners of war (POW) whenever it would find "suitable environment" and "directive from higher authorities". Agency's Coordinator Abdul Hannan Khan, however, said as the matter is involved with another country –Pakistan – they need to get government' directives before starting investigation. After the independence, Bangladesh had collected specific evidence of genocide against the 195 Pakistani soldiers and they were in Indian custody as prisoners of war. After a long-drawn stressful negotiation over the POWs, Bangladesh finally signed a tripartite agreement in Delhi in April, 1974 in which Bangladesh said "having regard to the appeal of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past," and Bangladesh decided not to proceed with the trials as an act of clemency. However, legal experts said there is no legal bar to try the 195 POWs and there has been a long standing demand to try them at the International Crimes Tribunal, which are now dealing the trial of Bangladeshi perpetrators who committed crimes in 1971. The demand of 195 POWs' trial is getting louder after Pakistan recently denied committing any war crimes in 1971.¹

Bangladesh signed a \$12.65 billion contract with a Russian public company to construct Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna that would generate 2,400 megawatts of electricity on December 25. Engr Monirul Islam, chairman of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, and Vladimir Savushkin, senior vice president of Atomstroyexport, a subsidiary of the Russian state-run nuclear power company Rosatom, inked the contract at a city hotel. Of the contract amount, \$11.39 billion would come from a Russian line of credit, and the rest from the Bangladesh Government. Speaking at the programme, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said the government would take all precautionary measures to make sure that there was no hazard to public safety. The plant's nuclear waste will be taken back by Russia for safety, he added. The economic life of the two-unit plant has been estimated at 50 years. However, Rosatom said the plant would last for 60 years, three times higher than the coal- and gas-fired plants. The

¹ "Probe into 195 Pak POWs' Role in Good Time", *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2015 at http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.thedailystar.net/country/probe-195-pak-pows%25E2%2580%2599-role-apt-situation-193012&gws_rd=cr&ei=NNF_VqjoCZCugSysLTQDQ.

provisional takeover of the plant's first unit is expected in October, 2023, and the second one in October, 2024. The final takeover would be in October, 2024, and October, 2025.²

Three people were injured during Jummah prayers in a suicide bomber attack inside an Ahmadiyya mosque in Rajshahi. While the investigators point finger at the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) for the attack, US-based SITE Intelligence Group has reported that the Islamic State militants have claimed responsibility for it.³

A coalition of human rights groups called on the United States on December 21 to grant temporary visas to secular writers from Bangladesh after a series of bloody attacks by Islamist militants. Five bloggers and a publisher were killed by Islamists in Bangladesh this year, including an American citizen of Bangladeshi origin. The rights groups, led by the PEN American Centre, which advocates freedom of expression, said at least four others had been attacked. In a letter to US Secretary of State John Kerry, the eight groups - including Freedom House, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders - said the writers were in "urgent danger."⁴

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) received licence from the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority on December 20, to run its operation in Bangladesh. It is the first time a foreign company has been given licence to carry out life insurance business here. LIC Bangladesh will have a Tk 100 crore paid-up capital, with half joint venture's ownership residing with LIC India. The remaining 40 percent shares worth Tk 40 crore will be raised from Bangladesh's capital market.⁵

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali left Dhaka on December 21, for a three-day official visit to Bahrain at the invitation of his counterpart Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.⁶

The second secretary (political) at Pakistan high commission in Dhaka was withdrawn by Pakistan on December 23 following allegations of aiding militants in Bangladesh. Pakistan withdrew the diplomat after an arrested militant confessed his link with her before a Dhaka court. Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh operative Idris Sheikh was arrested on November 29 in Dhaka and he made the confessional statement on December 6. Islamabad summoned the Bangladesh high commissioner on December 24 twice to lodge protest against the recent "treatment meted out to its envoy" in Dhaka. A press release on the website of Pakistan foreign ministry said, "Miss Farina Arshad, second secretary at Pakistan high commission in Dhaka, was constantly being harassed by the Bangladeshi authorities." "Lately, an incessant and orchestrated media campaign was launched against her on spurious charges linking her

² "Rooppur Nuke Plant: Dhaka Signs \$12.65b Deal with Moscow", *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/dhaka-signs-1265b-deal-moscow-192850>.

³ "It's Suicide Bombing", *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/its-suicide-bombing-192931>.

⁴ "HR Groups Call on US to Grant Asylum to Bangladesh Bloggers", *The Daily Star*, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/hr-groups-call-us-grant-asylum-bangladesh-bloggers-191026>.

⁵ "India's LIC Gets Licence to Operate in Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/indias-lic-gets-licence-operate-bangladesh-190753>.

⁶ "FM Goes on Bahrain Visit", *The Daily Star*, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/fm-goes-bahrain-visit-190909>.

with so called terrorists. Our high commission in Dhaka issued a strong rebuttal against the baseless and fabricated charges against the diplomat. "Following this protest, it was decided to withdraw her. She has since returned back," the press release said.⁷

US ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat reiterated on December 22, her country's commitment to helping Bangladesh, Myanmar and countries across the region find just and durable solutions for Rohingya refugees. She also reiterated the US government's commitment to providing protection and assistance to Rohingya refugees, asylum seekers and their host communities. The US ambassador travelled to Cox's Bazar and met district and local officials, undocumented Rohingya, registered Rohingya refugees, and organisations providing humanitarian assistance in the area during her two-day visit. She also visited two USAID-funded projects and a project that supports the government of Bangladesh's National Plan of Action on Combating Human Trafficking that includes raising public awareness, supporting outbound migrant workers, training police, and providing shelter and support to victims.⁸

Sri Lanka

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Sri Lanka invites Saudi Arabia to set up oil refinery in Hambantota; Indian fishermen at Jaffna prison stage fast; Sri Lanka inflation for November rises to 4.8 per cent; U.S. examines future role of Sri Lanka's security forces; Korea willing to assist Sri Lanka to develop fishing industry; CTC expresses concerns on Tamil political prisoner issue; Sri Lanka naval ships on a training and goodwill visit to India.**

Sri Lanka has invited Saudi Arabia to set up a petroleum refinery in the southern part of the island, the Governor of the Central Bank Arjuna Mahendran has said according to a report in Arab News. The Central Bank Governor has said that in addition to meeting Sri Lanka's needs, such a refinery could tap markets in neighbouring countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Mahendran, who led a high-powered delegation, comprising chairmen and CEOs of commercial and state banks in Colombo, to the Kingdom, ended his Saudi visit on December 23. Mahendran held talks with Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) Gov. Fahad bin Abdullah Al-Mubarak on December 22. To help expatriates working in the Kingdom, Mahendran said he was negotiating with the SAMA governor to enable Sri Lankans' remittances from Saudi Arabia to reach their banks at home in 60 seconds. "SAMA has responded positively to consider opening the payment gateway to enable these services in a year or two," he added. He pointed out that around 550,000 Sri Lankans working in Saudi Arabia remit some SR 10 billion annually. According to Saudi officials, Sri Lankan was ranked

⁷ "Pakistan Withdraws Diplomat Accused of Aiding Militants", *New Age Online*, December 23, 2015 at <http://newagebd.net/186887/pakistan-withdraws-diplomat-accused-of-aiding-militants/>. "Pakistan Summons Bangladesh Envoy Twice: Accuses Dhaka of Harassing Its Diplomat", *The Daily Star*, December 25, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/pakistan-summons-bangladesh-envoy-twice-192505>.

⁸ "US Reaffirms Commitment to Helping Bangladesh on Rohingya Issues", *New Age Online*, December 23, 2015 at <http://newagebd.net/186805/us-reaffirms-commitment-to-helping-bangladesh-on-rohingya-issues/>.

as the third country in terms of outward remittances to home countries. Explaining the purpose of his visit, he said the government is interested in protecting its potential and explore new areas of cooperation with the Kingdom. "We are exporting tea for some \$800 million to the Kingdom. This could be improved and there are several other areas where the two countries could benefit from viable projects," he added. Representatives from leading banks such as Bank of Ceylon, People's Bank, Commercial Bank, HNB, NDB, Amana, Seylan Bank, Sampath Bank and Deutsche Bank AG accompanied the governor.⁹

Indian fishermen held at the Jaffna prison staged a fast on December 24 in protest over their detention, the Jaffna media reported. At least 51 Indian fishermen launched the fast demanding that they be released immediately to mark Christmas day.¹⁰

Sri Lanka's inflation in November 2015 determined under the new National Consumer Price Index (NCPI) rose to 4.8 per cent, compared to 3.0 per cent recorded in October 2015, on a year-on-year basis, the Department of Census and Statistics said on December 21. The NCPI for all items for the month of November 2015 increased by 2.65 per cent to 112.0 in November 2015 compared to 109.2 recorded for October 2015. The increase in index was due to the increase of food items by 2.14 per cent and increase of non-food items by 0.51 per cent, the Department of Census and Statistics said. Significant increase in index value was reported for vegetables. Since the Colombo Consumer's Price Index (CCPI), prepared by the Department of Census and Statistics for the calculation of changes in the price level and inflation, only depicts the price changes in Colombo municipal area, the Department in October introduced the National Consumer Price Index. NCPI will have weights based on consumer spending in 2012/13, and will reflect new methods consistent with international best practices.¹¹

The United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence (DASD) for South and Southeast Asia Dr. Amy Searight, who concluded her three-day visit to Sri Lanka from December 17-19, has examined the future role Sri Lankan security forces could play in humanitarian assistance, responding to natural disasters, and increased participation in overseas peacekeeping operations. A high profile US delegation, headed by DASD Searight met with Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi as well as Foreign Secretary Chitranganee Wagiswara to discuss the Sri Lankan government's efforts on security sector reform, as well as training and vetting personnel for United Nations peacekeeping operations. DASD Searight paid office calls upon the Chief of Defence Staff, and the respective Tri-Service Commanders, to stress the need for land returns, reconciliation and a credible transitional justice mechanism, and to discuss future security requirements. During the meeting with Commander of Army, Lieutenant General Crishanthe De Silva She exchanged views pertaining to UN troop deployment, practical readiness for UN troop deployment, preparedness of Sri Lankan troops

⁹ "Sri Lanka Invites Saudi Arabia to Set Up Oil Refinery in Hambantota", *ColomboPage*, December 25, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec25_1451024223CH.php.

¹⁰ "Indian Fishermen at Jaffna Prison Stage Fast", *Colombo Gazette*, December 24, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/24/indian-fishermen-at-jaffna-prison-stage-fast/>.

¹¹ "Sri Lanka Inflation For November Rises To 4.8 Percent", *ColomboPage*, December 21, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec21_1450710446CH.php

for future UN assignments, exchange of expertise in technical fields, present overseas deployments and training for UN assignments, progress of de-mining work and troop training at Kukuleganga Institute of Peace Support Operations Training Sri Lanka (IPSOTSL). She had dinner with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Dr. Harsha De Silva; the State Minister of Defence, Mr. Ruwan Wijewardene; and the Deputy Minister of State Enterprise Development, Mr. Eran Wickramaratne. In discussions with the NGOs involved in de-mining, DAsD Searight discussed ongoing demining work in northern and eastern Sri Lanka and reaffirmed "the United States is committed to addressing the land mine problem in Sri Lanka," which since 1993 has received U.S. assistance worth 6 billion rupees (\$43 million). She concluded her visit by travelling to the Institute for Peace Support Operations Training Sri Lanka, where forces are trained prior to joining UN peace-keeping missions.¹²

The Government of South Korea is willing to extend fully-pledged support to promote the Fisheries Industry in Sri Lanka, the Korean Ambassador to Colombo Won-sam Chang has informed the State Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development Dilip Wedaarachchi, the Fisheries Ministry said. At a meeting with the Sri Lankan minister recently, the Korean envoy has discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of fisheries. The Ambassador has officially handed over an official invitation of the Korean Government to the State Minister Dilip Wedaarachchi to visit Korea to explore the Fisheries Sector in that country.¹³

The Canadian Tamil Congress ("CTC") says it is deeply concerned that the Government has failed to uphold its promise to Tamil political prisoners that it would review their cases and ensure their release by December 15, 2015. CTC says it is dedicated to working towards the fulfilment of the resolution on promoting accountability and reconciliation co-sponsored by the Sri Lankan government at the most recent Human Rights Council session, and appreciates the Sri Lankan government's efforts to do the same. However, in order for any real progress to be made, CTC says the Sri Lankan Government must first take meaningful confidence-building measures to address ongoing human rights violations in order to gain the trust of the Tamil people. One such urgently needed confidence-building measure is to address the situation of Tamil political prisoners.¹⁴

Two of Sri Lanka naval ships were on a training and goodwill visit to India from December 21-24, 2015. Sri Lanka Navy's Offshore Patrol Vessel, SLNS Samudura and Fast Missile Vessel SLNS Nandimitra with 328 navy personnel including 89 Midshipmen took part in the four-day training programme in India. The visit allowed the Sri Lankan Navy personnel to meet and interact with their Indian counterparts, strengthening the bilateral relations and friendship between the two friendly navies, the Navy said. The SLN ships made their port of call at Kochi in India and the crew went ashore to make familiarization visits to a number of

¹² "U.S. Examines Future Role of Sri Lanka's Security Forces", *ColomboPage*, December 21, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec21_1450706813CH.php.

¹³ "Korea Willing to Assist Sri Lanka to Develop Fishing Industry", *ColomboPage*, December 22, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec22_1450766503CH.php.

¹⁴ "Concerns Raised on Tamil Political Prisoner Issue", *Colombo Gazette*, December 22, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/12/22/concerns-raised-on-tamil-political-prisoner-issue/>.

training schools belonging to the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy during their stay. The ships' Commanding Officers paid courtesy calls with the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, the Chief of Staff and the Flag Officer Sea Training of the Southern Naval Command.¹⁵

Maldives

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Maldives begins Free Trade Agreement discussions with China; New military helicopter being brought to the Maldives.**

Discussions related to the establishment of a Free Trade Agreement between China and Maldives began on December 21 at Bandos Island Resort in the Maldives. The two-day deliberations were attended by Minister of Economic Development Mohamed Saeed, and senior officials of the Maldivian government and the Embassy of China in the Maldives. The documents related to the discussions on this agreement were signed in September 2015. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Saeed said this was the first time in the history of the Maldives that the government was engaged in Free Trade Agreement discussions with another country.¹⁶

The government of Maldives has decided to bring another military helicopter to the Maldives. Defence Minister Adam Shareef told Media that the second helicopter is being brought with the help of the Indian government. He said that the first military helicopter was also donated by India. The Defence Minister said that the military of the two countries have held discussions on the matter. And if things proceed as decided now, the helicopter would be brought to the country within the next three months. Minister Shareef said that MNDF wants to monitor the Maldivian ocean and the economic border on helicopters and regular flights. He said that the helicopters would be used in providing aid to the people in medical emergencies as well.¹⁷

B. East Asia

Japan

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Japan-South Korea agreed on a deal on comfort women; Cabinet approved a budget of \$799 billion for fiscal 2016; Armed Chinese coast guard vessel equipped with four gun turrets sailed near the disputed Senkaku islands; Okinawa takes Tokyo government to court over relocation of base.**

¹⁵ "Sri Lanka Naval Ships on a Training and Goodwill Visit to India", *ColomboPage*, December 24, 2015 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Dec23_1450879638CH.php.

¹⁶ "Maldives Begins Free Trade Agreement Discussions with China", *SunOnline*, December 21, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35357>.

¹⁷ "New Military Helicopter Being Brought to the Maldives", *SunOnline*, December 22, 2015 at <http://english.sun.mv/35392>.

Japan and South Korea reached a landmark agreement to address the stalemate over the comfort women issue. Japanese Prime Minister offered sincere apology and remorse to President Park Geun-hye following Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se meeting. Japan decided to finance a ¥1 billion aid fund for the aging comfort woman survivors that are to be set up by South Korea. Meanwhile, Japan requested South Korea to get rid of a statue that symbolizes the comfort women in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.¹⁸

Japanese Cabinet approved a budget amounting to 96.72 trillion yen (\$799 billion) for fiscal 2016. The primary emphasis is on welfare measures for the aging society, restoration of fiscal health, increased defence expenditure, and ODA. Additionally, Japan intends to double the expenditure of the tourism agency. Tax revenue is likely to increase to 57.60 trillion yen, according to forecast pointing to a GDP increase of a real 1.7 percent and 3.1 percent on a nominal basis.¹⁹

Reports in Japanese media suggested that an armed Chinese coast guard vessel equipped with four gun turrets sailed 29 km (18 miles) off the disputed Senkaku islands. As Japan put forward a formal protest, the Chinese authorities responded by confirming that the vessel was in Chinese waters and was carrying standard equipment and that it is no different from international practice.²⁰

Okinawa Prefectural Government took legal action against the central government accusing it of imposing relocation plan and ignoring the governor following the third-party panel declined to reconsider Okinawa's grievance. Earlier Okinawa cancelled permission for the central government to do landfill necessary to move U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from the densely populated residential district in Ginowan to the less crowded Henoko of Nago.²¹

¹⁸ "Japan, South Korea Reach 'Final' Deal to Settle 'Comfort Women' Issue", *Kyodo*, December 28, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/28/national/politics-diplomacy/south-korea-japan-reach-deal-to-settle-comfort-women-issue/#.VqRMMIL9pHR>

¹⁹ "Japan's Cabinet Approves Record 96.7tn Yen Budget for FY2016", *Kyodo*, December 24, 2015 at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-s-cabinet-approves-record-96.7tn-yen-budget-for-FY2016>

²⁰ "Japan Says Armed Chinese Coast Guard Ship Seen Near Disputed Senkaku Islands", *Reuters*, December 23, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/23/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-says-armed-chinese-coast-guard-ship-seen-near-disputed-senkaku-islands/#.VqRnjL9pHR>

²¹ "Okinawa Sues Tokyo over Futenma Relocation Dispute, Taking Legal Battle To Next Level", *Kyodo*, December 26, 2015 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/26/national/politics-diplomacy/okinawa-sues-tokyo-over-futenma-relocation-dispute-taking-legal-battle-to-next-level/#.VqRuoFL9pHR>

C. Southeast Asia and Oceania

Southeast Asia

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Malaysia mulling options to purchase Pakistan's JF-17 Thunder jet; China rejects U.N. arbitration on disputed South China Sea; Vietnam to Get Fifth *Kilo* Submarine from Russia in Early 2016; Malaysia Passes Controversial National Security Law; China inks nuclear power partnership deal with Thailand.**

Malaysia mulled options to purchase Pakistan's multi-role JF-17 Thunder fighter jet. "This jet fighter is considered an excellent production of Pakistan in the defence sector and decision about the number (of purchases) would be taken very soon," said Malaysian High Commissioner Dr Hasrul Sani bin Mujtabar. Initially China provided the technology for the aircraft which is now completely built by Pakistan. Pakistan had been trying to find buyers for the aircraft and several countries had expressed interest but so far no final deal had been signed with anyone. Malaysia and Pakistan enjoy excellent ties in the defence sector as a result of Joint Committee on Defence of both the sides which play role as an active forum. Commenting on the multi-billion dollar economic corridor project, he said that Pakistan was a blessed country with an important strategic position and it should take maximum advantage from this position for its development.²²

China on December 21 rejected a UN tribunal's arbitration on the disputed South China Sea saying it had no jurisdiction over the case even as Beijing asserted it would not accept any third-party settlement of territorial disputes. "China's territorial sovereignty should be decided by all the Chinese people, and no other people or organisation has the right to handle it," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei. Mr. Hong said that China's position on the South China Sea stood on a solid international legal base and would remain unchanged. The Arbitral Tribunal under the UN Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS) established at the request of the Philippines had no jurisdiction over the case. He further added that China would not accept any third-party settlements of territorial disputes, urging the Philippines to change course and return to the track of negotiations. China claims almost the whole of the resource-rich South China Sea (SCS). Its claim, however, is strongly contested by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.²³

The fifth of the six Kilo-class submarines that Vietnam bought from Russia left a Danish port on December 20. The HQ-186, delivered by Dutch-registered cargo ship *Rolldock Star*, left from Russia's St. Petersburg and arrived at the Port of Skagen in northern Denmark on December 19. It was scheduled to arrive in Singapore on January 29, 2016 before arriving in

²² "Malaysia Mulling Options To Purchase Pakistan's Jf-17 Thunder Jet", *Business Standard*, December 21, 2015, at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/malaysia-mulling-options-to-purchase-pak-s-jf-17-thunder-jet-115122100537_1.html

²³ "China Rejects U.N. Arbitration on Disputed South China Sea", *The Hindu*, December 21, 2015, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-rejects-un-arbitration-on-disputed-south-china-sea/article8014528.ece>

Vietnam, with the journey taking one and a half months. The HQ-186 had undergone a trial run in the Baltic Sea on June 8 and was expected to arrive in early 2016. The fourth submarine, codenamed HQ-185 Da Nang, had arrived at Cam Ranh Port back in July. The submarines were part of a deal Vietnam reached with Russia's Admiralty Shipyards for six Project 636 Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines for \$2 billion back in 2009. Under the agreement, signed during Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's visit to Moscow that year, Russia agreed to provide the submarines, train Vietnamese crews, and supply necessary spare parts.²⁴

On December 22, the Malaysian Senate passed a controversial national security bill that the government said would strengthen its ability to counter rising threats. The critics slammed it as a blow to democracy and human rights. The National Security Council (NSC) bill, which passed Malaysia's Lower House in early December, strengthened the existing NSC to make it more efficient and effective coordinating body to streamline policies and the country's security strategies. But it also afforded the government the ability to declare so-called "security zones," within which authorities would have wide powers of arrest, search and seizure without a warrant. Having now passed the Senate, it only needed the assent of Malaysia's King before becoming law. In a speech in October, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak had argued that the NSC bill was a necessary step. Given the rise of threats from non-state actors, Najib said that there was a need to bring it on par with similar agencies in the United States, Japan, Britain and other countries. But since its introduction, critics had been assailing the bill for various reasons. Much of the criticism had been centred on the wide-ranging powers within designated "security zones," which Najib did not explicitly mention in his October speech first outlining the NSC bill. Some claimed that this handed sweeping powers to Najib, since it bore similarities to a declaration of emergency which only the King has the ability to institute constitutionally. Others added that even if it were constitutional, this issue was still a concern given past attempts by the government to use such regulations to silence political opponents. Several other worries were also raised, including whether those implementing the law would be immune from prosecution.²⁵

China and Thailand reached an agreement on December 23 to cooperate on a nuclear power project in South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. According to the agreement, CGN, Guangxi Investment Group Co. Ltd., and Thailand's Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding Public Company Limited (RATCH), a subsidiary of the state owned Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, will team up to establish a joint venture to develop, construct and operate the second phase of the nuclear power plant in Fangchenggang City. The project is a pilot site for Hualong One nuclear power technology, the country's third-generation nuclear reactor design, which was jointly designed by CGN and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC). Rum Herabat, chief executive officer of RATCH, said the project had the support of the Thai government. He said that he hoped cooperation with

²⁴ Parameswaran, Prashanth, "Vietnam to Get Fifth Kilo Submarine from Russia in Early 2016", *The Diplomat*, December 22, 2015, at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/vietnam-to-get-fifth-kilo-submarine-from-russia-in-early-2016/>

²⁵ Parameswaran, Prashanth, "Malaysia Passes Controversial National Security Law", *The Diplomat*, December 24, 2015, at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/malaysia-passes-controversial-national-security-law/>

China would help Thailand train talent and gain experience in nuclear power development. The project will also serve as a bridgehead for China's nuclear power technology to expand in the ASEAN market.²⁶

Oceania

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Australia, Indonesia boost anti-terror cooperation.**

Australia and Indonesia on December 21 agreed to boost intelligence-sharing in the fight against terrorism, days after police arrested several men allegedly linked to a planned suicide bombing in Jakarta. During raids in several cities across Java Island on December 18 and December 19, police detained five members of an alleged extremist network and seized chemicals, laboratory equipment and a flag inspired by the Islamic State group. The operation was reportedly sparked by a tip-off from the Australian Federal Police and the FBI. Following annual bilateral talks with counterpart Retno Marsudi in Sydney, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said that she could not go into detail about the alleged plot, but said intelligence-sharing was critical. "Suffice to say that Australia is always prepared to play its part and in this instance it would appear that the Indonesian police have been very successful in thwarting an attempted terrorist activity," she said. "Overall, Australia and Indonesia are co-operating extremely closely on the whole issue of countering terrorism ... we will continue to co-operate in sharing information, sharing intelligence, for the safety and security of our respective people and the region." The Java raids came a month after Indonesia increased security at its airports following a threat directed at one of the airports serving Jakarta. Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, suffered several major bomb attacks by Islamic radicals between 2000 and 2009, including the 2002 Bali bombings which killed 202 people.²⁷

India-Southeast Asia

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Objective of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship.**

India's Act East Policy focusses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The policy which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. The Objective of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh

²⁶ "China Inks Nuclear Power Partnership Deal with Thailand", *en.people.cn*, December 24, 2015, at <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/1224/c90000-8995125.html>

²⁷ "Australia, Indonesia Boost Anti-Terror Cooperation", *Channel News Asia*, December 21, 2015, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/australia-indonesia-boost/2366260.html>

with other countries in our neighbourhood. The ASEAN-India Plan of Action for the period 2016-20 has been adopted in August 2015 which identifies concrete initiatives and areas of cooperation along the three pillars of political-security, economic and socio-cultural.²⁸

D. The United State of America

National

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Journalist Jason Rezaian was allowed a Christmas Day visit with his wife and mother; United States deported fewer immigrants in 2015; DHS could begin deporting families in the country illegally by early January 2016; U.S. presidential candidates are reacting to published reports on deportation; American Muslims have been targeted in dozens of incidents; Trump intensified his criticism of Clinton; Trump is heading into 2016 with a commanding lead over the rest.**

Jason Rezaian, the *Washington Post* journalist who has been jailed in Iran for more than 500 days, was allowed a Christmas Day visit with his wife and mother. Iran announced last month that Rezaian had been sentenced to an undisclosed prison term following his conviction on espionage and other charges in October. But no details of the verdict or sentence have been released. Earlier this month, when Rezaian's detention reached the 500-day mark, *Washington Post* editor Martin Baron called it the "grimmiest" of milestones, noting that it was 56 days longer than Tehran held U.S. Embassy workers following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.²⁹

The United States deported fewer immigrants in 2015 than in the past 15 years, an Obama administration report revealed on December 22. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released its end of Fiscal Year 2015 statistics, which reflect the U.S. immigration enforcement efforts that prioritize convicted criminals and threats to public safety, border security, and national security. DHS says the drop in deportations is largely due to the 30 percent decline in arrests at the U.S. border, which it says reflects a lower level of attempted illegal migration.³⁰

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security could begin deporting families in the country illegally by early January, according to a published report. *The Washington Post* reported on December 23 that the U.S. is preparing a series of raids that would target families who have come to the United States illegally since the start of last year. The paper, citing unnamed sources, says the nationwide campaign by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement could start as early as January 2016.³¹

²⁸ "Act East Policy", *PIB*, December 23, 2015, Release ID :133837, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

²⁹ "US Journalist Jailed in Iran Gets Christmas Dinner With Family Members", *VOA News*, December 25, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/journalist-jailed-iran-christmas-dinner-family/3119472.html>

³⁰ "US Deported Immigrants Dropped in 2015", *VOA News*, December 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-deported-immigrants-dropped-in-2015/3115716.html>

³¹ "US Mulls Plan to Begin Deporting Illegal Immigrants", *VOA News*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-mulls-plan-to-begin-deporting-illegal-immigrants/3116755.html>

Meanwhile, the U.S. presidential candidates are reacting to published reports that the United States could begin deporting families who are in the country illegally by early January. Democratic front-runner and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton said she has "real concerns" about the reports that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security could begin its first large-scale effort to eject illegal immigrants. Clinton's campaign said December 24 that she "believes it is critical that everyone has a full and fair hearing, and that our country provides refuge to those that need it." The Republican front-runner, Donald Trump, took credit for the news in a Tweeted reaction, saying the deportation plan is being considered because he pressured the government to do it. "It's about time!" he said.³²

American Muslims have been targeted in dozens of incidents with threats, physical attacks and vandalism following the December 2 shootings in San Bernardino, California, by Islamist extremists. Leaders in the Muslim community say the hate crimes are disturbing, but not surprising. In New York, a man assaulted South Asian restaurant workers during an anti-Muslim rant. A woman is under investigation for a hate crime in Sacramento, California, after she struck and threw her coffee at two Muslim men at prayer in a park.³³

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump intensified his criticism of Hillary Clinton after she said he had a "penchant for sexism," warning his Democratic rival against using the woman "card" and drawing his full attention. In a familiar pattern for Trump, he responded to fire – this time over a vulgarity he used in describing Clinton's 2008 primary loss - with fire. "Be careful Hillary as you play the war on women or women being degraded card," Trump said in a *Twitter* post on December 23.³⁴

Trump is heading into 2016 with a commanding lead over the rest of the Republican presidential hopefuls. The latest *CNN/ORC* national poll out on December 23 showed Trump with a 21-percentage-point lead over his nearest rival. Trump polled at 39 percent, which represented a 3-point jump for the real estate magnate since the last poll was taken at the end of November. He was followed by U.S. Senator Ted Cruz of Texas with 18 percent, which was up 2 percentage points from his previous position. U.S. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson both slipped slightly, sitting at 10 percent each, while New

³² "US Presidential Candidates React to Reported Deportation Plan", *VOA News*, December 25, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-presidential-candidates-react-to-reported-reportation-plan/3118265.html>

³³ O'Sullivan, Mike, "US Muslims Say Recent Hate Crimes Are Distressing, Not Surprising", *VOA News*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/muslims-recent-hate-crimes-distressing-unsurprising/3118205.html>

³⁴ "Republican Trump Warns Rival Democrat Clinton 'Be Careful'", *Reuters*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/republican-donald-trump-warns-rival-democrat-clinton-be-careful/3117386.html>

Jersey Governor Chris Christie came in fifth at 5 percent. None of the other eight Republican candidates was above 4 percent.³⁵

International: Asia

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **American Embassy in Islamabad says possible terrorist attacks in the Pakistani capital; Department of Defence announces the deaths of six airmen; Carter says US efforts will continue despite airmen death; Obama expressed confidence those opposing the Islamic State group will 'prevail'; Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists; Project for the rehabilitation and preservation of the Ishtar Gate; Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Texas (SSN 775) arrives at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan; Submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) will change its homeport to Naval Base Guam; U.S.-ROK alliance continue progress through transformation and force relocation.**

The American Embassy in Islamabad says it has received information on possible terrorist attacks in the Pakistani capital in late December, especially during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The embassy's warning for American citizens said that "possible targets include places of worship and shopping centres." The U.S. warning says American citizens should "minimize the number and duration of trips" to crowded places such as markets, restaurants, hotels and places of worship. American government personnel are under additional movement restrictions.³⁶

On December 22, the Department of Defence announced the deaths of six airmen who were supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel. They died on December 21 of wounds suffered when their patrol was attacked by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle near Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. The six airmen who killed were: Maj. Adrianna M. Vorderbruggen, 36, of Plymouth, Minnesota; Staff Sgt. Michael A. Cinco, 28, of Mercedes, Texas; Staff Sgt. Peter W. Taub, 30, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Staff Sgt. Chester J. McBride, 30, of Statesboro, Georgia; Technical Sgt. Joseph G. Lemm, 45, of Bronx, New York; and, Staff Sgt. Louis M. Bonacasa, 31, of Coram, New York.³⁷

On the six U.S. service members death in Afghanistan, Defence Secretary Ash Carter in a statement said that "We are still learning all of the details, but two other service members and a U.S. contractor were also injured. They died after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on their patrol outside Bagram Air Base." Carter said, "It serves as a painful

³⁵ "Poll: Trump Maintains Commanding Lead Over Republican Rivals", *VOA News*, December 23, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/poll-trump-maintains-commanding-lead-over-republican-rivals/3116661.html>

³⁶ "American Embassy in Pakistan Warns of Possible Terror Attacks", *Associated Press*, December 19, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/american-embassy-pakistan-warns-possible-terror-attacks/3110681.html>

³⁷ "DoD Identifies Air Force Casualties", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-480-15, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/637802/dod-identifies-air-force-casualties>

reminder of the dangers our troops face every day in Afghanistan." He added that "Their dedicated efforts will continue despite this tragic event."³⁸

U.S. President Barack Obama expressed confidence those opposing the Islamic State group will "prevail," and said he thinks there will be "significant progress" in that effort by the time he leaves office. In an interview with *NPR News* released on December 21, Obama called Islamic State a "virulent, nasty organization," but stressed that the worst damage the militants could do to the United States is if people change their way of life and values. More than a year ago the president authorized the beginning of a U.S.-led air campaign in Iraq and Syria to go after the militants. Since then, coalition planes have conducted about 9,000 airstrikes, and Obama said Islamic State has lost 40 percent of the populated territory it once controlled. But the militants still hold large areas, including major cities in both Syria and Iraq, bringing criticism of the U.S. response and calls for Obama to send in American ground troops.³⁹

On December 26, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted five strikes using attack and remotely piloted aircraft. In Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 28 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter, attack, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.⁴⁰

On December 22 at the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad, the U.S. Embassy Chargé d' Affaires, a.i., Jonathan Cohen and Dr. Ahmed Kamil Murad, Acting General Director of the Office of Museums at the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) announced the funding of a project for the rehabilitation and preservation of the Ishtar Gate at the remains of the ancient city of Babylon in Iraq. The U.S. Embassy grant of \$530,000 to the World Monuments Fund (WMF) will support conservation work by a team of Iraqi preservationists from the SBAH under the guidance of international heritage experts from WMF. The grant is part of the ongoing cultural partnership between the United States and Iraq in support of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement.⁴¹

The US PACOM reported that Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Texas (SSN 775) arrived at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, on December 22 for a visit as part of its Indo-Asia-Pacific deployment. It stated that the visit strengthens the already positive alliance between the U.S. and Japan through the crews' interaction with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence

³⁸ "Statement by Secretary of Defence Ash Carter on Attack Against U.S. Service Members in Afghanistan", *DoD News*, Release No: NR-478-15, December 21, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/637634/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-ash-carter-on-attack-against-us-service-membe>

³⁹ Hannas, Chris, "Obama: 'Significant Progress' Against Islamic State by End of Term", *VOA News*, December 21, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-significant-progress-against-islamic-state-by-end-of-term/3111605.html>

⁴⁰ "Military airstrikes continue against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq", *US CENTCOM*, December 27, 2015, Release # 20151227-01 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/dec.-27-military-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-and-i>

⁴¹ "Department of State Supports the Conservation of the Iconic Ishtar Gate at Iraq's Ancient City of Babylon", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/12/250834.htm>

Force. It also demonstrates the U.S. Navy's commitment to regional stability and maritime security in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. Texas is the second Virginia-class fast-attack submarine commissioned by the United States. It is capable of executing a multitude of missions including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike, surveillance and reconnaissance, irregular warfare, mine warfare, and shallow water operations. To maintain the stealth advantage inherent in submarines, the U.S. Navy does not normally release information about what specifically a submarine did while on patrol.⁴²

On December 24, the U.S. Navy announced that the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) will change its homeport to Naval Base Guam. As part of the U.S. Navy's long range plan to put the most advanced and capable units forward, Emory S. Land will move to Guam from Diego Garcia to support four fast-attack submarines homeported in Guam and rotationally deployed submarines throughout the U.S. Pacific Fleet area of responsibility. The decision to homeport Emory S. Land in Guam supports recent moves by the Navy in relocating submarines and provides essential forward support for those units to complete their missions. As a forward deployed naval asset, Emory S. Land is tasked to provide expeditionary intermediate level maintenance and repairs, as well as provide hotel service and logistics support to deployed guided-missile and fast-attack submarines deployed in the U.S. Fifth and Seventh Fleet areas of operations.⁴³

In joint press conference, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and U.S. leaders provided updates to local and international members of the press on advancements in Alliance transformation and the relocation of U.S. Forces to military installation near the city of Pyeongtaek and other locations within the ROK. Construction at USAG-Humphreys continues as 2015 is on track to be the peak year for construction with some projects continuing into 2016. Other units within USFK have already made major moves within the ROK including Commander Naval Forces Korea, which relocated its headquarters from Seoul to the port city of Busan. Other units, including the 94th Military Police Battalion, made the move to USAG-Humphreys in 2013.⁴⁴

India-US Relations

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Indian tech Industry has paid \$ 22.5 billion in taxes during FY 2011-15 and supported 411,000 jobs; High level visits and active engagements have brought a new high in Indo-US ties; India has sought from the US 100 latest unmanned aerial vehicles; Three major military pacts are being pursued afresh under the Modi government; US, China and**

⁴² "USS Texas Visits Yokosuka During Indo-Asia-Pacific Deployment", By LTJG Eric Wooten, *US PACOM*, December 22, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/637812/uss-texas-visits-yokosuka-during-indo-asia-pacific-deployment.aspx>

⁴³ "Second Submarine Tender to be Homeported in Guam", *US PACOM*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/638009/second-submarine-tender-to-be-homeported-in-guam.aspx>

⁴⁴ "Republic of Korea - U.S. Alliance Continue Progress through Transformation and Force Relocation", *US PACOM*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/638003/republic-of-korea-us-alliance-continue-progress-through-transformation-and-forc.aspx>

India each played a very important role on Paris deal; India will soon raise its concerns over recent move to hike visa fees.

Indian Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Nirmala Sitharaman in a written reply in Lok Sabha on December 21 said that as per the estimates given in the Report "Contributions of India's Tech Industry to the U.S. Economy" published by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) in the year 2015, the Indian tech Industry invested more than USD 2 billion in USA during FY 2011-13; has paid USD 22.5 billion in taxes during FY 2011-15 and supported 411,000 jobs in FY 2015 directly or indirectly.⁴⁵

High level visits, active engagements in 2015 have brought a new high in Indo-US ties. Relationship between US president Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached a new high in the year gone by. The year started with the historic visit of President Obama to attend the Republic Day event in India. He became not only first US president to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day but also the first US president to visit India twice while in office. Officials in US have also felt that President Obama and PM Modi share a strong and productive relationship. "President Obama and Prime Minister Modi have a very, strong and productive relationship, not just on climate change but broadly," Todd Stern, the US Special Envoy on Climate Change said on December 22. Within a span of year, three state visits happened between India and US. Apart from face to face meeting, both the leaders also maintained a close communicate with each other through hotline and other means of communication. This has certainly helped improve the bilateral relationship and poised for further development.⁴⁶

India has sought from the US 100 latest unmanned aerial vehicles, both armed and surveillance versions, worth USD 2 billion to bolster its arsenal amid recurring incursions by Chinese troops. Industry sources familiar with New Delhi's interest and ongoing talks between the two governments, said India had requested for the latest Avenger drones, which is basically an unmanned combat air vehicle, and is mainly being sought with an eye on China. It has also sought Predator XP category which is a surveillance version for internal security issues and terrorist threats. According to industry sources, India is looking for about 100 drones worth USD 2 billion. However, while talks in this regard have accelerated in the past few months, the US has not made any formal commitment or given a public indication pending India's application to joining Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Both Indian and US officials are confident that they would be able to get through the last hurdle in the next few months, thus making them possible to take the defence trade – which would include armed drones – to the next level.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Investment by Indian Companies in United States", *PIB*, December 21, 2015, Release ID :133682 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁴⁶ Kumari, Jagriti, "Flashback 2015: India-US Relations Reached a New High", December 23, 2015, at <http://www.oneindia.com/international/flashback-2015-india-us-relations-reached-new-high-1964218.html>

⁴⁷ "With Eye on China, India Seeks 100 Armed Drones Worth \$2 Billion from US", *The Indian Express*, December 22, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/with-eye-on-china-india-seeks-100-armed-drones-worth-2-billion-from-us/>

Three major military pacts which could elevate Indo-U.S. relations to a new strategic level are being pursued afresh under the Narendra Modi government after being shelved under the UPA government due to political compulsions. Of these, both sides are one step short of reaching an understanding on the Logistic Support Agreement (LSA), which gives U.S. forces access to Indian bases for logistics support and vice versa. In addition to the LSA, these include Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA). U.S. officials had underscored on several occasions that these agreements are an administrative arrangement for sharing certain encrypted communications and taking forward high technology development in future, the objective of the DTTI.⁴⁸

France, which hosted the 21st round of the UN-sponsored climate change negotiations, has cause to be satisfied with the outcome in Paris. And, while the role of the hosts in ensuring this outcome has been lauded, France says that India, along with the US and China, played an important part in making the Paris Agreement possible. "It is well known by now that the US, China and India each played a very important role," said France's special ambassador for climate change negotiations, Laurence Tubiana. The fortnight-long negotiations in early December, which saw the participation of 195 countries and 150 heads of state and government, culminated in a new global accord, the Paris Agreement, legally binding all countries to make efforts to tackle climate change.⁴⁹

According to media reports, India will soon schedule discussions with the U.S. to raise its concerns over the Obama administration's recent move to hike visa fees. Industry bodies FICCI and Nasscom had termed America's decision - to double the fees for certain categories of H1B and L1 visas to \$4,000 and \$4,500 respectively - as "discriminatory" on finding that it will mainly impact Indian IT firms. Nasscom said the decision's financial implication on the Indian technology sector would be around \$400 million annually. U.S. President Barack Obama had recently signed into law a \$1.8 trillion tax and spending Bill. It, among other things, authorised the visa fee hike that will be applicable to companies employing 50 or more, and with over 50 per cent of their employees in the US on H1B and L1 visas. The fee thus collected, likely to be over \$1 billion every year, would be utilised to finance a biometric tracking system and healthcare requirements of 9/11 terror attack victims.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ "India and U.S. Inch Closer to Deal on Logistics Support", *The Hindu*, December 26, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-and-us-inch-closer-to-deal-on-logistics-support/article8029736.ece>

⁴⁹ "Goswami, Urmi, US, China & India Played a Key Role in Positive Outcome of Paris Deal: France's Negotiator", *The Economic Times*, December 26, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-26/news/69317105_1_global-climate-agreement-laurence-tubiana-climate-change

⁵⁰ "India to soon hold talks with US on visa fee hike issue", *The Hindu*, December 27, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-to-soon-hold-talks-with-us-on-visa-fee-hike-issue/article8034207.ece>

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Indian Navy conducts large scale Fleet exercises on the Eastern Seaboard; Infrastructure development at the Indian National Defence University finally commences.**

The Indian Navy recently concluded large scale Fleet exercises on the Eastern Seaboard. These exercises were in pursuance of Indian Navy's constant endeavour to maintain high levels of combat readiness and counter emerging threats. The exercises were conducted across a vast geographical area, extending from the Northern Bay of Bengal to the Andaman Sea. 24 ships, 02 submarines and over 10 aircraft participated in the exercise, which included the nuclear submarine Chakra as well as units from the Andaman and Nicobar Command. A ship from the Western Naval Command, with the Kamov 31 Air Early Warning helicopter, was also deployed for the exercise. Various aspects of maritime warfare were dove-tailed into the exercise spanning over a period of two weeks. A wide range of weapons, including Surface to Surface missiles (SSMs), Surface to Air missiles (SAMs) and Land Attack Missiles (LAMs) were fired from various platforms. The Hawk Fighter aircraft and P8I Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft were also integrated into the exercise.⁵¹

Ministry of Defence had acquired around 205 acre of land in September 2012 in Gurgaon for setting up of world class Indian National Defence University (INDU), the first of its kind in India. The foundation stone of the University was laid in May 2013. However, there were bottlenecks in the construction of the University. The Ministry of Defence recently resolved the land issue with villagers and transferred some land to Government of Haryana in August this year to be used by the villagers as village track. With all revenue related issues resolved, infrastructure development at the University finally commenced recently.⁵²

International

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Turkey has become only a handful of countries to have indigenously designed armed UAV; France orders seven more Tiger attack helicopters from Airbus.**

Reports say that Turkey has dropped ordnance from an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the first time. With this Turkey has become only a handful of countries to have indigenously designed an armed UAV. A Bayraktar TB2 UAV dropped a Roketsan Smart Micro Munition (SMM) (MAM - Mini Akilli Mühimmat) on December 17. According to manufacturer Baykar

⁵¹ "Large Scale Fleet Exercises Conducted by Indian Navy in Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea," *PIB*, December 23, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133898>

⁵² "Construction Commences for Defence University," *PIB*, December 23, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133852>

Makina the weapon release was conducted from 16,000 ft, with the munition hitting a target 8 km away. Footage of the weapons drop released by Baykar Makina showed an orange test missile being dropped from the port wing of a Bayraktar TB2 and hitting the central 1 m x 1 m area of a roughly 3 m x 3 m target board. During the test the UAV also carried an SMM marquette on its starboard wing, which was not dropped. The Turkish Land Forces have ordered a total of 18 Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, divided between three unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).⁵³

Meanwhile, according to reports, France has ordered seven more Tiger attack helicopters from Airbus. The latest order will bring France's total inventory of Tiger helicopters (known in France as the Tigre) to 67 aircraft. The new aircraft will be delivered between 2017 and 2018. The objective of ordering the extra Tigers is to strengthen the capacity of the French forces to conduct air-land operations in the Sahel-Saharan regions of Africa in particular. In French service, the Tiger is operated by the Army Light Aviation (ALAT), which to date has received 55 Tigers.⁵⁴

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Parliamentary panel recommends Rs 30L package for West Pak refugees; Cop, guard injured in militant firing in Kashmir; Woman, son shot dead by VDC member in Rajouri, J&K.**

A Parliamentary panel has strongly recommended for early finalisation of one-time financial package of Rs 30 lakh to each family of West Pakistan refugees settled in Jammu and Kashmir. The J & K department related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs is of the considered view that even if West Pakistan refugees cannot be equated with the Kashmiri Pandits migrants, but they deserve immediate relief and rehabilitation for sustenance without delay. Around 5,764 families consisting of 47,215 persons migrated from West Pakistan and got settled in different areas of Jammu, Kathua and Rajouri districts. However, they are not permanent residents of the state in terms of J&K constitution.⁵⁵

A senior police officer and his security guard were injured when suspected militants opened fire on a police party in south Kashmir's Bijbhera town on December 24. Bijbhera Sub Divisional Police Officer Irshad Ahmad and his personnel security officer Tanveer Ahmad were injured in the shootout in Gorivan, Sader Bazar, in Bijbhera town, the police said. Special

⁵³ "Turkey Tests Armed UAV for First Time," *IHS Jane's*, December 21 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56783/turkey-tests-armed-uav-for-first-time>

⁵⁴ "France Orders Seven More Tiger Attack Helicopters," *IHS Jane's*, December 22, 2015, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56811/france-orders-seven-more-tiger-attack-helicopters>

⁵⁵ "Par Panel Recommends Rs 30 Lakh Package for West Pak Refugees", *Business Standard*, December 22, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/par-panel-recommends-rs-30-lakh-package-for-west-pak-refugees-115122200903_1.html

Operation Group of J&K police and the army's Rashtriya Rifles have cordoned the area to track down the militants. Hizbul Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attack. A Hizbul spokesperson said the militants who shot at the police party were from a special squad and have reached their hideouts safely. He also warned of similar attacks on the police in future.⁵⁶

About a week after a National Conference youth leader was gunned down by a Village Defence Committee (VDC) member in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, another VDC member had allegedly shot dead a woman and her three-year-old son in the district on December 25. Mushtaq Ahmed, a VDC member, fired upon Shamima Akhter and her three-year-old son Tohid from his rifle resulting in death of the duo in Samote village of Budhal tehsil in Rajouri, Senior Superintendent of Police Rajeshwar Singh said. The reason behind the attack is being investigated and a case has been registered, Singh said, adding that the VDC member has been arrested and is being questioned. The opposition parties, including NC, and some separatists have called for disbanding of VDCs. However, Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh has ruled out disbanding of VDCs in the state.⁵⁷

Northeast India

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Security forces arrest Kuki militants in Manipur; Anup Chetia released from jail, says will take part in peace talks; Centre contemplates to amend Sixth Schedule; Naga militant killed in Manipur encounter; NIA arrests suspected Naga militant in Bengaluru.**

A combined team of Senapati police and Assam Rifles arrested three cadres of outlawed militant outfit Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) while conducting search operation at Kuki Taphou village in Manipur's Senapati district. They were arrested on December 18 by the security forces, a press release issued by Manipur Police said.⁵⁸

ULFA general secretary Anup Chetia was released on December 24 from the Guwahati Central Jail after obtaining bail in four cases registered against him. Emerging from the jail, the ULFA leader told journalists that he will participate in the peace talks. Mr. Chetia said that he was in favour of the ongoing peace talks between the central government and ULFA for restoring peace in Assam.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K: Cop, Guard Injured After Militants Open Fire At Police Party", *The Indian Express*, December 25, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-suspected-militants-open-fire-on-police-party-2-injured/>

⁵⁷ "Woman, Son Shot Dead by VDC Member in Rajouri", *The Times of India*, December 25, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jammu/Woman-son-shot-dead-by-VDC-member-in-Rajouri/articleshow/50321266.cms>

⁵⁸ "Kuki Militants Arrested", *The Assam Tribune*, December 23, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2315/oth056>

⁵⁹ "Anup Chetia Released From Jail, Says Will Take Part In Tripartite Talks", *The Hindu*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/ulfa-leader-anup-chetia-released-from-jail-says-will-take-part-in-tripartite-talks/article8025928.ece?ref=sliderNews>

Setting at rest all speculations, the Centre on December 23 confirmed that it is considering a proposal to amend the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. There is a proposal to amend the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution for implementation of Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed with various groups in Assam and Meghalaya and other measures including setting up of elected village councils to ensure democracy at the grassroots level in the areas covered by Autonomous Councils, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju said. The said proposal also includes amendment in Article 280 of the Constitution of India for augmenting the consolidated fund of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to supplement the resources of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils. Consultations with the State governments concerned are continuing, the MoS added.⁶⁰

An underground Naga rebel was killed in a reported encounter between personnel of 8 Gorkha Rifles and a team of underground Naga outfit in Khoupum area of Tamenglong district of Manipur on December 23. Sources said the gun battle occurred at Luwangkhulen Part-I under Khoupum police station at about 10.30 am following reports that a meeting of the outfit was being arranged in the said area.⁶¹

With assistance of Bengaluru police, sleuths of National Investigation Agency (NIA) on December 25 arrested the prime accused in the attack on Assam Rifles personnel in Kohima in Nagaland earlier this year. The NIA said that Atoshe Chohey (27) was arrested from a lodge near M.G. Road where he was working allegedly on a false identity. It claimed that Chohey was an active member of the banned NSCN (K) and was part of the four-member team that had attacked unarmed personnel of Assam Rifles with rifles and pistols on March 26, 2015. The attack, the NIA release claimed, abrogated the long-standing ceasefire between NSCN (K) and the Union government.⁶²

Left-wing Extremism

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **Chhattisgarh to set up secretary-level panel to protect scribes in Maoist conflict zones; Security forces recover IEDs from Jharkhand's Latehar jungles; 70 people with Maoist links surrender in Sukma: Police; Vajpayee's road scheme soon in Naxal-hit areas.**

Amid accusations of police victimizing journalists in the Maoist conflict zones, Chhattisgarh government has decided to set up a high level committee, comprising secretaries and senior editors, that will examine all complaints pertaining to media personnel and decide within 72 hours whether any legal action is warranted in specific cases. The joint committee of top government secretaries and senior editors, apparently a first of its kind initiative in the country, is being set up at a time when it is being felt that the Journalists working in the

⁶⁰ "Plan to Amend Sixth Schedule", *The Assam Tribune*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2415/oth059>

⁶¹ "Naga Militant Killed in Encounter", *The Assam Tribune*, December 24, 2015 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec2415/oth053>

⁶² "NIA Arrests Suspected Naga Militant Near M.G. Road", *The Hindu*, December 26, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/nia-arrests-suspected-naga-militant-near-mg-road/article8031269.ece>

conflict zone, particularly in tribal Bastar region, are being caught in crossfire between the security forces and the Maoists. "You're either with us, or against us"—is the dictum adopted by both the police and the Maoists with regard to Journalists reporting from the conflict zones. The Raman Singh government's announcement about setting up the high level committee came when a group of journalists under the banner of Patrakar Suraksha Kanoon Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti, an umbrella organisation created to safeguard the rights of journalists in the conflict areas, organised an agitation at Jagdalpur, divisional headquarters of Bastar. The issue had cropped up after Santosh Yadav, a correspondent in Bastar, was arrested under the draconian Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005 (CSPSA), which allows the police to detain a person without producing a charge sheet for as long as 90 days. Police claimed that Yadav was an ally of the Maoists and they have sufficient material to establish the charges.⁶³

In a joint operation of Jharkhand police and paramilitary forces, 59 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were recovered from Maoist-hit Latehar district of Jharkhand on December 25, the police said. The search operation was launched in Kumandih jungle situated under Manika police station. The seized IEDs included 14 pressure cooker bombs and seven cylinder bombs.⁶⁴

As many as 70 people involved in Maoist activities have surrendered in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh Police said on December 24. Officers also said that in two separate incidents, 11 suspected Maoists have been arrested. A statement released by the Sukma police said that those who surrendered were "tired of the hollow ideology of violence of the Maoists" and were influenced by the "police awareness" campaigns in the district. "Those who surrendered brought two country-made weapons, one pipe bomb, IEDs and other material. They were part of several Maoist organisations and are from Chintalnar, Morpalli, Lakhapal, Mukram, Tadmela and other nearby villages. People have participated with great enthusiasm in the surrender programme," said the statement.⁶⁵

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) may lose the responsibility of building roads and bridges in the Maoist-affected States as the NDA government wants to replicate the success of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in these areas. The PMGSY, the brainchild of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, which was launched in 2004, was implemented by the Rural Development Ministry. The Centre is working on an ambitious plan for seamless connectivity between the 10 Naxal-affected States and is all set to launch the Road Requirement Plan-II. "The RRP-II will no longer be handled by the Road Ministry as it didn't do full justice to the projects under RRP-I, which was launched in 2009 and still 30 per cent of the road network taken up by the Ministry is yet to be completed. Since Maoist districts are all in rural areas, the government has decided to put the onus on the Rural Development Ministry and we will implement PMGSY here," said a senior official.⁶⁶

⁶³ John, Joseph, "Chhattisgarh to Set Up Secretary-Level Panel to Protect Scribes In Maoist Conflict Zones", *The Times of India*, December 21, 2015 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/Chhattisgarh-to-set-up-secretary-level-panel-to-protectscribes-in-Maoist-conflict-zones/articleshow/50268317.cms>

⁶⁴ "59 IEDs Recovered from Maoist-Hit District in Jharkhand", *Business Standard*, December 25, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/59-ieds-recovered-from-maoist-hit-district-in-jharkhand-115122500468_1.html

⁶⁵ "70 people with Maoist Links Surrender in Sukma: Police", *The Indian Express*, December 25, 2015 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/70-people-with-maoist-links-surrender-in-sukma-police/>

⁶⁶ Singh, Vijaita, "Vajpayee's Road Scheme Soon in Naxal-Hit Areas", *The Hindu*, December 26, 2015 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/vajpayees-road-scheme-soon-in-naxalhit-areas/article8029451.ece>

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(December 21-27, 2015)

- **India raises concern over ISIL in Afghanistan; India's INDCs get parliamentary nod; India contributes to the funding of the United Nations.**

Participating in a Security Council debate on the situation in Afghanistan, Deputy PR Bhagwant S Bishnoi said that talking with the Taliban must be within the framework of the Afghan Constitution. He expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in the country, particularly, the presence of ISIL in the Nangarhar province. He also raised the issue of financing of terrorism and flow of weapons to terrorists in Afghanistan.⁶⁷

Union Parliament approved the INDCs submitted by India to the UNFCCC.⁶⁸

Addressing the plenary of the General Assembly for the last time as the PR of India, Asoke Mukherji appreciated the passing of the UN Budget for 2015-16 in accordance with the Scale of Assessments. He urged that Ebola-like crises must get timely and adequate funding.⁶⁹

India contributes to the funding of the United Nations and its agencies. Each member state is obligated to contribute to the UN. The contribution is calculated on the basis of scale of assessments, which takes into account the country's share of the global Gross National Income with discounts given for low per-capita income and the country's external debt. The contribution in respect of UN peacekeeping operations is also based on this scale of assessments with adjustments made for average per capita Gross National Income vis-a-vis global average Gross National Income. The scale of assessments is normally reviewed after every three years. Based on this scale, India's contribution to the UN regular budget was fixed at 0.534 per cent from 2009-12 and 0.666 per cent from 2013-2015. India's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations was fixed at 0.1068 per cent for the period 2009-12 and at 0.1332 per cent for the period 2013-15.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ "Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at the Security Council Debate on United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA)", December 21, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2343>.

⁶⁸ "Union Cabinet Approves India's INDC Document at COP21", *The Economic Times*, December 22, 2015, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-12-22/news/69237604_1_carbon-pollution-union-cabinet-united-nations-framework-convention

⁶⁹ "Remarks by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative at the 82nd plenary meeting of UNGA after the adoption of Fifth Committee Reports/UN Budget for the biennium 2016-17", December 23, 2015, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2344>

⁷⁰ "Funding to United Nations", *PIB*, December 23, 2015, Release ID :133840, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>