

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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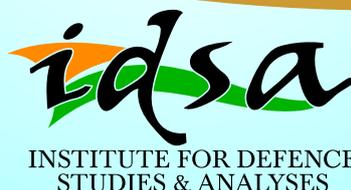
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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh

(December 16-22)

- **Protests in Bangladesh against Pakistan National Assembly Resolution on the execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah; EU declined to send observer for parliamentary elections; Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA apprised senator of the current political situation of Bangladesh**

According to reports, the Pakistan National Assembly adopted a resolution expressing concern over the execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, who, it said, was “hanged for supporting Pakistan in 1971”. Following the resolution adopted by the Pakistan National Assembly, Dhaka summoned the Pakistan High Commissioner in Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi Qureshi and strongly protested Islamabad’s reaction, terming it interference in the domestic affairs of Bangladesh. Condemning the resolution, PM Hasina said “by passing the resolution at national assembly, Pakistan has proved that it never accepted the victory of Bangladesh in the Liberation War of 1971, and they still have allies in Bangladesh.”¹ Several thousand people in Dinajpur, Mymensingh area formed human chain to protest the Pakistan resolution. Protestors urged the government to snap diplomatic relations with Pakistan if it did not apologise for their acts immediately.² Bangalees living in the UK also demonstrated before the Pakistan embassy in London protesting the resolution and handed over a memorandum to the Pakistan embassy, which read, “We the UK Bengali community are disappointed to learn that the Pakistan parliament has passed a resolution to condemn the sentencing of war criminal Abdul Quader Molla for his crimes committed during Bangladesh’s Liberation War in 1971.”³

In another development, according to reports, the European Union has declined to send observers for the January 5 parliamentary elections, saying political forces in Bangladesh had failed to create conditions for credible polls despite many efforts, including that under UN auspices. Issued in Brussels on December 20 by spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, high representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice-president of the commission, the statement was sent to the government, said sources in the EU Dhaka office.⁴ In the meantime, the EU diplomats

¹ PM condemns Pak NA resolution, *The Daily Star*, December 18, 2013 at <http://thedailystar.net/pm-condemns-pak-na-resolution-3005?archie=2013-12-18>

² “Protest against Pak resolution on”, *The Daily Star*, December 20, 2013 at <http://thedailystar.net/country/protest-against-pak-resolution-on-3159?archie=2013-12-20>

³ “Mollah Execution: Bangalees in UK protest Pak resolution”, *The Daily Star*, December 21, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/bangalees-in-uk-protest-pak-resolution/>.

⁴ “EU won’t send polls observers”, *The Daily Star*, December 21, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/eu-wont-send-polls-observers/>.

in Dhaka did not attend the Victory Day programme at Savar citing a reason of their urgent “coordination meeting” on Bangladesh’s current situation.⁵

In other developments, according to reports, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Akramul Qader has apprised Senator John McCain III, an influential member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of the current political situation of the country highlighting the government’s efforts to bring the opposition BNP to the January 5 elections. The talks centered around Senate Resolution 318 regarding “the critical need for political reform in Bangladesh” recently approved at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁶

(December -23-29)

● Violence in Bangladesh

According to reports, violent clashes erupted in Bangladesh as opposition supporters took to the streets to protest against a January 5 general election which they are boycotting. The leader of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Begum Khaleda Zia, called for a march on the capital, Dhaka, in defiance of a police ban to protest against what she calls the “farcical” election. According to opposition party officials, hundreds of their supporters have been detained across the country over recent days and Dhaka is virtually cut off as authorities suspended bus, rail and ferry services into the city. Reportedly, more than 200 people have been killed in political violence this year, half of them since November 25 when the Election Commission announced the date for the vote.⁷

Sri Lanka

(December 16-22)

- **Sri Lankan parliament passed 2014 Appropriation Bill; Sri Lanka is considering to take back the 99 oil tanks in Trincomalee that were leased to Lanka IOC; Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan made a two days official visit to Sri Lanka; Iranian ships and submarines visit port of Colombo; US company will set up a new water treatment plant in Sri Lanka; Japanese loans and grants to Sri Lanka**

According to reports, Sri Lanka parliament passed the government’s 2014 Appropriation Bill on December 20, 2014 with a majority of 95 votes. The main opposition United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) voted against the budget.⁸

⁵ “Not intended to disrespect Bangladesh: EU envoy on skipping V-Day programme”, *The Daily Star*, December 22, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/not-intended-to-disrespect-bangladesh/>.

⁶ “US senator briefed about Bangladesh politics”, *The Daily Star*, December 22, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/us-senator-briefed-about-bangladesh-politics/>

⁷ Paul, Ruma, “Protests against Bangladesh election turn violent”, *Reuters*, December 29, 2013 at <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/12/29/bangladesh-election-idINDEE9BS03120131229>.

⁸ “Sri Lanka 2014 budget passed in parliament with a majority of 95 votes”, *The Colombo Page*, December 20, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec20_1387547769CH.php.

In another development, according to reports, During the reply speech at the last budget debate on December 20, 2013 in parliament Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa said the government was considering to take back the 99 oil tanks in Trincomalee that were leased to Lanka IOC, the local subsidiary of Indian Oil Company. The China Bay petroleum storage tank complex was handed over to India's state-run Indian Oil Corporation in 2002 by the UNP government which was in power between 2002 and 2004. The tank farm in 850 acres of land has 99 tanks each with the capacity to hold 12,100 metric tons of oil. In 2003, Lanka IOC bought one-third share in Ceylon Petroleum Storage Terminals Ltd which operates the China Bay tank farm. The Ceylon Petroleum Corp (CPC) entered into a MoU with Lanka IOC to grant a long-term lease to the Indian firm for operating the 99 storage tanks at Trincomalee for 35 years for an annual fee of only \$100,000. The China Bay tank farm that connects to the Trincomalee harbor is of historic and strategic significance and it is the largest tank farm located between the Middle East and Singapore. It was built by the British in 1930s to supply fuel to Royal Navy ships.⁹

Reports noted that Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq arrived in Sri Lanka on December 19, 2013 on a two days official visit, on an invitation extended by his Sri Lankan counterpart Chamal Rajapaksa.¹⁰

Reports noted that the two Iranian ships IRIS Alborz and IRIS Bandar Abbas and the submarine Yunes visited Port of Colombo on December 20, 2013.¹¹

In other developments, according to reports, the Sri Lankan government has awarded a US\$ 74 million contract to the California-based US engineering firm Tetra Tech to set up a new water treatment plant.¹²

According to reports, the Sri Lankan government has received a SL Rs 15.5 billion (Japanese Yen 12.381 billion) loan from the Government of Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to construct major bridges on the nation's roads. The loan will be utilized to construct 37 major bridges on the country's roads under the Major Bridges Construction Project of the National Road Network.¹³ The Japanese government, strengthening the long term economic cooperation with Sri Lanka, has agreed to grant the government Rs. 520 million under Non Project Grant Aid. The Sri Lankan government has decided to utilize the grant to provide advanced medical equipment to health care facilities to improve their services and uplift the health standards of Sri Lankan public.¹⁴

⁹ "Sri Lanka considering to take oil tanks back from Indian company", *The Colombo Page*, December 21, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec21_1387643893CH.php.

¹⁰ "Speaker of Pakistan National Assembly arrives in Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, December 19, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec19_1387469517CH.php.

¹¹ "Iranian warships arrive at Sri Lanka port on goodwill mission", *The Colombo Page*, December 21, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec21_1387614234CH.php.

¹² "US firm awarded US\$ 74 million water project in Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, December 19, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec19_1387423232CH.php.

¹³ "Sri Lanka receives Rs. 15 billion loan from Japan to construct 37 bridges", *The Colombo Page*, December 22, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec22_1387698421CH.php.

¹⁴ "Sri Lanka to purchase advanced medical equipment from Rs. 520 million grant from Japan", *The Colombo Page*, December 20, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec20_1387521171CH.php.

(December -23-29)

- **Two Indian Coast Guard Ships visit Colombo Port; Tamil Nadu based Indian Journalists arrested by the Sri Lankan army; Three officers of Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force arrive in Sri Lanka to investigate the heroin smuggling operation; TNA rejects the census conducted by the government on human and material losses due to the war**

According to reports, two Indian Coast Guard ships ICGS Vishwast and ICGS Rajkamal arrived at the Colombo Port on December 22 after taking part in the Trilateral Tabletop Exercise (TTEX) 2013 conducted by the Sri Lanka Coast Guard with India and Maldives. The exercise has displayed the capabilities of the Indian Coast Guard Ships in responding to marine oil spills.¹⁵

In another development, according to reports, Tamil Prabakaran a Tamil Nadu-based journalist arrested in Colombo on December 26, 2013, reached Chennai on December 28 after he was deported by the Sri Lankan government. Prabhakaran was arrested by the Lankan army personnel for allegedly filming military installations in Killinochchi, a former LTTE stronghold, without media credentials.¹⁶

According to reports, three officers of Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force arrived in Sri Lanka on December 23 to investigate the heroin smuggling operation that came to light when Sri Lankan Custom officials discovered a container loaded with heroin brought to the island from Pakistan. Sri Lanka's Customs in August this year made the discovery when a container, declared to be containing lubricants, was inspected at the Custom Clearing Section at Orugodwattta. Following the discovery of 130 kilograms of heroin hidden in cans of lubricants, the police arrested a Pakistani national and three Sri Lankans for questioning. The visiting investigators are expected to interrogate the arrested Pakistani national while further discussions are underway to determine whether to transfer another Pakistani who is reportedly facilitated the shipment of the container to Sri Lanka from Pakistan.¹⁷

In other developments, according to reports, Sri Lanka's major Tamil political party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has decided to reject the census conducted by the government on human and material losses due to the war since the TNA could not agree with the procedures adopted by the Census Department in gathering information. The TNA's decision to reject the census was made at a meeting of the party held in Vavuniya. The Northern Provincial Council reportedly will conduct its own census in the Province since the government's census will attempt to play down the number of casualties.¹⁸ Reacting to TNA's decision to reject the census, the Department

¹⁵ "Indian Coast Guard training mission in Sri Lanka demonstrates pollution response exercises", *The Colombo Page*, December 25, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec25_1387946469CH.php.

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka deports arrested Indian journalist", *The Daily Mirror*, December 29, 2013 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/40898-sri-lanka-deports-arrested-indian-journalist.html>.

¹⁷ "Pakistani investigators arrive in Sri Lanka to probe heroin smuggling", *The Colombo Page*, December 25, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec25_1387957739CH.php.

¹⁸ "Sri Lanka's major Tamil party rejects government census on human and material losses during the war", *The Colombo Page*, December 26, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec26_1388075895JV.php.

of Census and Statistics said the census conducted by the Department was done according to international standards and norms with every aspect of loss being addressed.¹⁹

Maldives

(December 16-22)

- **Maldivian coast guard took part in TTEX; 7th Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians held in Maldives; President will visit India early next month; Japan provides aid for medical supplies to the Maldives; President to visit Japan in March 2014; Parliament approves loan from Sri Lanka**

Reports noted that Indian, Sri Lankan and Maldivian coast guard officers have concluded the maritime exercises for 2013 Trilateral Tabletop Exercise (TTEX), held in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.²⁰

In another development, reports noted that SAARC Speakers of Parliament who are in the Maldives to attend the 7th Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, made a courtesy call on President Yameen Abdul Gayoom on December 21.²¹

Reports noted that the President's Office has announced that President Yameen Abdul Gayoom would visit India early next month.²²

In other developments, according to reports, Japan has awarded 200 million Japanese yen (MVR30 million) grant aid for medical supplies to the Maldives.²³ The Japanese government has also invited President Yameen Abdul Gayoom and First Lady Fathimath Ibrahim for an official visit to Japan. President Yameen has accepted this invitation and decided to visit Japan in March 2014.²⁴

Reports noted that Maldivian parliament has approved the government's request for a loan of \$29 million as budget support from Bank of Ceylon. This motion was submitted to the parliament by the government of former President Mohamed Waheed on September 13, 2013. The loan carries an interest rate of 8 percent and has a grace period of one year. The monthly repayment amount is \$490,000. The parliament said earlier when it passed the budget for 2013, that the government should not take any loan that carries an interest rate of more than 7 percent.²⁵

¹⁹ "Sri Lankan government rejects Tamil party's claim, asserts census of missing in war follows international norms", *The Colombo Page*, December 27, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_13B/Dec27_1388086998CH.php.

²⁰ "India, Sri Lanka, Maldives conclude joint maritime exercise", *The Sun Online*, December 21, 2013 <http://www.sun.mv/english/18685>.

²¹ "SAARC Speakers of Parliament call on President Yameen", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, December 21, 2013 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=13733>.

²² "President to visit India early next month", *The Sun Online*, December 20, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18668>.

²³ "Japan grant MVR30million in grant aid, invite President Yameen for state visit", *The Minivan News*, December 18, 2013 at <http://minivannews.com/category/news-in-brief/page/2>.

²⁴ "Japan donates MVR 36 million to Maldives' health sector", *The Sun Online*, December 18, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18620>.

²⁵ "Parliament approves \$29 million loan as budget support", *The Sun Online*, December 16, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18564>.

(December -23-29)

- **Former president Dr. Mohamed Waheed joins the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM); Parliament approves the MVR 17.9 billion State Budget for 2014; US Ambassador to the Maldives met President Yameen; SBI delegation meets President**

According to reports, former president Dr. Mohamed Waheed Hassan Manik has joined the ruling party Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) after the council of Dr Waheed's former party Gaumee Itthihad Party (GIP) announced its decision to dissolve GIP. GIP said that its decision to dissolve the party follows sentiments that the current political atmosphere does not allow room for small parties to maneuver in the Maldives.²⁶

In another development, reports noted that the Maldivian Parliament has approved the MVR 17.9 billion State Budget for 2014 proposed by the government.²⁷

Reports noted that United States Ambassador to the Maldives Michele J. Sison has paid a courtesy call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom at the President's Office on December 23, 2013. The discussion was focused on bilateral relations between the Maldives and the United States and on ways to further enhance cooperation between the two countries.²⁸

In other developments, according to reports, President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom met with a visiting delegation from the State Bank of India's headquarter in Mumbai. The delegation includes Managing Director & Group Executive of International Banking Mr. Hemant G. Contractor, and the Chief General Manager of International Banking Mr. R. Karthikeyan. At the meeting held on December 29, 2013 at the President's Office, President Yameen briefed the delegation on the investment opportunities available in the Maldives. They also discussed ways to improve the investment climate of the Maldives. Highlighting that the State Bank of India was the longest serving bank in the Maldives, President Yameen expressed his appreciation for their support towards the development of the country.²⁹

B. East Asia

China

(December 16-22)

- **Senator Max Baucus nominated as the new US ambassador to China; China promises support to the Arab countries; Chinese military criticizes with the Japanese national security strategy;**

²⁶ "Former president Waheed joins PPM", *The Sun Online*, December 25, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18794>.

²⁷ "Parliament approves MVR 17.9 billion budget", *The Sun Online*, December 29, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18882>.

²⁸ "US Ambassador calls on the President", *The Sun Online*, December 24, 2013 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/18764>.

²⁹ "President Meets with the visiting Delegation of State Bank of India", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, December 29, 2013 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=13764>.

United States promises to lift ban on technology transfer to China; China and Israel agree to promote bilateral cooperation; China promises to strengthen infrastructure in Bolivia; Chinese Foreign Minister meets with the Palestinian President; China welcomes the United Nation's anti-internet terrorism resolution; China warns the United States with respect to the South China Sea issue

Reports noted that Senator Max Baucus has been nominated as the new ambassador to China by the United States President Barack Obama on December 20. While appointing the new ambassador President Obama said, "For more than two decades Max Baucus has worked to deepen the relationship between the United States and China".³⁰

In another development, according to reports, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his Algerian counterpart Ramtane Lamamra on December 21. During the meeting Wang Yi pledged support for the Arab countries. Wang also said that China regards its relationship with the Arab countries from a strategic as well as a long term perspective. He said, "We understand the Arab people's appeal for reform, and wish the Arab countries find a political system and development path suitable for their national conditions. Any outside forces should have no right to make decisions for the Arab countries and people".³¹

Reports noted that the Japanese government approved its first national security strategy on December 17. The Chinese military accused Japan of using the idea of national security and regional peace and stability for facilitating military expansion.³²

According to reports, the United States announced on December 20 that it will "actively" carry out plans to lift bans on high tech exports to China. This has been a long term issue between the two countries. The United States has agreed to promote high technology trade with China in civil aviation, information technology and oil and gas explorations for civilian use.³³

According to reports, the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi met his Israeli counterpart Avigador Lieberman on December 19. Both sides agreed to further strengthen their all-round cooperation, including facilitating people-to-people exchange, labor exports and technology transfer between the two countries.³⁴

In other developments, according to reports, the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi met the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on December 18 in Ramallah. He said that China unconditionally supports the Palestinian effort to build an independent state. He also said that

³⁰ "Obama nominates Baucus as new ambassador to China" *China Daily*, December 20, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/20/content_17188219.htm

³¹ "Chinese FM pledges support to Arab countries" *China Daily*, December 22, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/22/content_17189677.htm

³² "Chinese military lashes out at Japanese defense documents" *China Daily*, December 21, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/21/content_17188236.htm

³³ "Tech bans to be relaxed: US" By Zhao Yinan and Dujuan, *China Daily*, December 21, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/21/content_17188231.htm

³⁴ "China, Israel agree to further all-round cooperation" *China Daily*, December 20, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/20/content_17187182.htm

the peace talks between Palestine and Israel has reached a key stage. On the other hand, Abbas said that the China and Palestinian relations has stood the test of time.³⁵

Reports noted that China, on December 18, welcomed the United Nations Security Council resolution on fighting internet terrorism. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said, "We hope the international community can beef up cooperation against internet terrorism and jointly counter online terrorist activities by forces such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)".³⁶

China on December 18 rebuffed US Secretary of State John Kerry's remarks on the South China Sea issue and urged the country to be cautious in its words and deeds. "We have noticed his remarks," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a regular press briefing in response to Kerry, who said on December 17 that the United States would speak out when China took unilateral actions that raised the potential for conflict.³⁷

C. Russia

Russia

(December 16-22)

- **Russia and Ukraine sign gas, loan and trade agreements; European Commission has said that there are no prospects of talks with Yanukovich; Duma ratifies Russia-Kazakhstan agreement on creation of a joint air defence system; Russia and Poland look to strengthen their bilateral economic and political cooperation; US will not expand the Magnitsky blacklist for the time being; Russian diplomat and Syrian opposition leader discuss Geneva II preparations; Russia to provide ships to escort vessels with Syrian chemical weapons; Russia and Iran discuss Iran's nuclear program; Rosneft plans to raise oil production by 1 million tonnes in 2014; President Putin ratifies free trade deals with South Ossetia and Abkhazia; Russia warns against 'whipping of tensions' over Iskander missile deployment; Duma has passed a law that will result in imprisonment for 5 years for calls to split Russia; Russia to allocate US\$ 25 billion for basic scientific research programme until 2020; Rianovosti to be merged with the Voice of Russia; Mikhail Khodorkovsky has been released from jail; Russia to set up a new agency aimed at attracting investments to the regions.**

According to reports, Russia has agreed to lower the price of natural gas it supplies to Ukraine, apart from giving it a multi billion loan package. In a meeting between President Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart in Moscow on December 17, it was announced that Russia will sell gas to Ukraine for US\$ 268.5 per 1,000 cubic meters which is below the current level of more than US\$ 400. Russia will buy US\$ 15 billion in Ukrainian Eurobonds which will provide liquidity to Ukraine

³⁵ "Chinese FM meets Palestinian president" China Daily, December 19, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-12/19/content_17184510.htm

³⁶ "China hails UN's anti-Internet terrorism resolution" China Daily, December 18, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/18/content_17183179.htm

³⁷ "China cautions US on South China Sea issue" China Daily, December 18, 2013 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/18/content_17183148.htm

and help overcome its looming balance of payments crisis. Ukraine's Roshen Confectionery will also be allowed to resume its exports to Russia.³⁸

According to reports, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has said that the Commission does not foresee any grounds for continuing talks on signing an association agreement with the incumbent Ukrainian leadership in the current situation.³⁹

Reports noted that Russia's lower house of parliament, Duma, has ratified an agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan to create a joint air defence system. The agreement was signed in Astana on January 30, 2013.⁴⁰

According to reports, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, after a meeting with his Polish counterpart in Warsaw on December 19, has said that Russia and Poland will look to strengthen their bilateral economic cooperation, including examining synergies of cooperation in joint ventures in advanced technology and SMEs. They have also agreed to continue developing and improvement of cooperation in the framework of the UN, OSCE, at the European Council in the framework of relations between Russia and the European Union, as well as to raise effectiveness and trust in the framework of the Russia-NATO Council.⁴¹

Reports noted that the United States has decided to avoid expanding its 'Magnitsky' blacklist of Russian officials declared *personae non gratae* on the suspicion of human rights abuse and corruption. The Magnitsky list is a list of 18 Russian officials, none of them high-ranking, who have been declared *personae non gratae* in the US according to a so-called Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, which was adopted by the Congress in December 2012. The people mentioned in the Magnitsky list are denied entry to the US. Besides, their assets in the US, if they have any, have to be frozen.⁴²

According to reports, Russian presidential special envoy for the Middle East, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov has met with Syrian opposition leader Qadri Jamil to discuss preparations for the Geneva II Peace Conference.⁴³

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia will provide warships to escort vessels carrying Syrian chemical weapons.⁴⁴

³⁸ "Russia Gives Ukraine Cheap Gas, Multibillion Dollar Loan", Rianovosti, December 17, 2013, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20131217/185656762.html>

³⁹ "European Commission says no prospects for talks with Yanukovich", Itar-Tass, December 20, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/712402>

⁴⁰ "State Duma ratifies Russian-Kazakhstani agreement on creating joint air defense system.", Itar-Tass, December 20, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712407>

⁴¹ "Lavrov: Russia-Poland economic partnership development is in both countries' interests", Itar-Tass, December 19, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712224>

⁴² "White House: US to avoid expanding 'Magnitsky' blacklist for time being", Itar-Tass, December 21, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/712476>

⁴³ "Russian diplomat, Syrian opposition leader discuss Geneva II preparation", Itar-Tass, December 20, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/712385>

⁴⁴ "Russia to provide ships to escort vessels with Syrian chemical weapons", Itar-Tass, December 16, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/711725>

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has met with the Iranian Ambassador in Moscow Mehdi Sanaei on December 16 in Moscow to discuss Tehran's nuclear program, in the backdrop of Geneva talks between Iran and P5 and the visit to Tehran by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on December 11.⁴⁵

Rosneft Head Igor Sechin has said that the company plans to raise oil production by one million tonnes in 2014. The production for 2013 is projected to be 207 million tonnes.⁴⁶

According to reports, President Vladimir Putin has ratified free trade agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The deals were signed in 2012.⁴⁷

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned against attempts to whip up tensions over the deployment of Iskander missiles in Russia's Kaliningrad region. He stated that the deployment does not run counter to international agreements.⁴⁸

The State Duma has passed amendments to the Criminal Code, which calls for imprisonment for up to five years for calls to split Russia. They will come into force on May 9, 2014.⁴⁹

President Vladimir Putin has said that his government will allocate 834 billion rubles (US\$ 25.29 billion) for basic scientific research programme until 2020. This is part of Russia's long-term basic scientific research program. He also stated that talks are underway to reform the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁵⁰

The Kremlin has announced that news agency RIA Novosti and the state-owned Voice of Russia radio will be merged into a new media conglomerate called Rossiya Segodnya. The order will be implemented within the next 3 months.⁵¹

In other developments, according to reports, former CEO of the oil corporation YUKOS, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was released from jail in Russia on December 20 after serving a term of more than ten years, has said that he will not engage in politics or claim a return of the assets he once had in YUKOS. He also confirmed that the authorities did not put forward 'recognition of guilt'

⁴⁵ "Russia, Iran discuss Iran's nuclear program with due regard to Geneva agreements", Itar-Tass, December 16, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/711705>

⁴⁶ "Rosneft plans to raise oil production by one mln tonnes in 2014", Itar-Tass, December 16, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/economy/711585>

⁴⁷ "Putin Ratifies Free Trade Deals with Abkhazia, S.Ossetia", Rianovosti, December 22, 2013, <http://en.ria.ru/business/20131222/185831332/Putin-Ratifies-Free-Trade-Deals-with-Abkhazia-SOssetia.html>

⁴⁸ "Russia's FM warns against whipping up tensions over Iskander missiles", Itar-Tass, December 19, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712233>

⁴⁹ "State Duma imposes prison terms of up to 5 years for calls to split Russia", Itar-Tass, December 21, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712466>

⁵⁰ "Russia's basic research funding until 2020 to reach 834 billion rubles", Itar-Tass, December 20, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712359>

⁵¹ "RIA Novosti to Be Liquidated in State-Owned Media Overhaul", Rianovosti, December 19, 2013, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20131209/185390572.html>

as a precondition for his release from jail.⁵²

Reports noted that Russia's new agency for attracting investments to the regions (RAPIR) will be established before yearend. RAPIR will be registered as an autonomous non-commercial organization and is a single-window service for foreign investors. In the opinion of the Agency founders, RAPIR will be of use to medium-sized businesses that come up with projects valued from \$5 million.⁵³

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

(December 16-22)

- **Supreme Court order on Rank Pay case is being implemented; Defence Minister calls upon the DRDO to concentrate and foresee the emerging defence technologies**

According to reports, Defence Minister Shri AK Antony has informed the Rajya Sabha on December 18 that in compliance of the Supreme Court order dated 04.09.2012 which dealt with the rank pay matter; the Government has issued an order on 27.12.2012 for implementing the order of the Supreme Court. 2840 serving officers and 33814 retired officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force have been paid a total amount of Rs.347 crores as their admissible dues. Additionally, Pension Payment Orders (PPOs) in respect of 12129 Army officers, 2187 Navy officers and 5557 Air Force officers have been revised. However, the minister added that certain issues raised by the Armed Forces regarding the interpretation of the order of the Supreme Court are under examination.⁵⁴

In another development, according to reports, Defence Shri Minister AK Antony has called upon the DRDO to concentrate and also foresee the emerging defence technologies to meet the emerging challenges/threats from various quarters. DRDO is now spending nearly 80% of its budget on Mission Mode Projects, with deliverables for the Armed Forces. Significantly, the minister envisaged the role of private sector and the industries in carrying out low-end research so that DRDO's energies are focused on such projects. The Minister also informed that DRDO has already implemented major recommendations of Dr. Rama Rao Committee. He said based, on these recommendations seven Technology Clusters have been created in the new organizational set-up of DRDO at different locations, each headed by an empowered Director General.⁵⁵

⁵² "Khodorkovsky says not going to engage in politics, claim back YUKOS assets", Itar-Tass, December 22, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/712539>

⁵³ "Russia's new agency for attracting investments to regions to be established before yearend", Itar-Tass, December 16, 2013, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/711638>

⁵⁴ "Implementation of Supreme Court Judgement on Rank Pay Case," PIB, December 18, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=101987>

⁵⁵ "Antony Calls Upon DRDO to Foresee Emerging Defence Technologies to Meet Emerging Threats," PIB, December 19, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=102030>

(December -23-29)

- **Strategic Forces Command successfully fires the long range Agni 3 missile; TEJAS attains another significant milestone by flying the 500th sortie in 2013**

Reports noted that the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) fired the long range Agni 3 missile with a range capability of over 3000 kms from Wheelers Island, off the Odisha coast on December 23. The trajectory of the trial was tracked from its launch till the missile hit the target area with pin point accuracy. Agni 3 missile is equipped with advanced high accuracy navigation system and guided by an innovative guidance scheme. An SFC spokesman said, "Such successful training launches clearly indicate our operational readiness to meet any eventuality as also establishes the reliability of this deterrent component of India's Strategic arsenal"⁵⁶

In another development, according to reports, TEJAS attained another significant milestone on 27th Dec 2013, by flying the 500th sortie this year. This is the highest number of sorties achieved in a calendar year thus far. The achievement is significant given that the highest number of sorties attained earlier in a calendar year was less than 300 sorties. Appreciating the efforts of various agencies involved in the TEJAS success, Avinash Chander, SA to RM and Secretary Deptt of Defence R&D said, "the single most important factor behind the achievements is the synergy of teamed efforts of ADA, DRDO, CEMILAC, HAL and IAF." The year 2013 has been exceptionally successful for Tejas in achieving several key milestones.⁵⁷

International**(December 16-22)**

- **Peruvian Ministry of Defense has awarded an order for 24 Mi-171Sh helicopters to Russia; US aircrafts flown into South Sudan to help with evacuation efforts come under fire from the rebels**

According to reports, the Peruvian Ministry of Defense has awarded an order for 24 Mi-171Sh helicopters to Russian defense export company Rosoboronexport. The contract is estimated to be worth US \$500 million. The aircrafts are scheduled to be delivered from 2014 to 2015, with the first batch of the helos expected to be supplied by Dec. 9, 2014. According to the reports, the new copters are to be used by the Peruvian armed forces in operations to counter drug trafficking and terrorism. Under the contract, a helicopter maintenance and repair center is also to be opened in Peru in early 2016. In 2010 also the Peruvian defense ministry had ordered six Mi-171Sh copters and two Mi-35P helos from Russia, which were delivered by the end of 2011.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ "Agni-3 Launch, a Flawless Mission," PIB, December 23, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=102101>

⁵⁷ "TEJAS Team Sets New Record of 500 Flights in One Calender Year," PIB, December 28, 2013, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=102188>

⁵⁸ "Peru Awards Contract For 24 Helos To Russia," Defense News, December 20, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131220/DEFREG03/312200019/Peru-Awards-Contract-24-Helos-Russia>

In another development, according to reports, US aircrafts flown into South Sudan to help with evacuation efforts came under fire on December 21, wounding four US servicemen. Three US military aircraft that were trying to land at Bor, a rebel-held city in Jonglei state, were fired on and forced to return to neighboring Uganda with one of the aircraft hit and leaking fuel. The US operation was part of a major regional effort to evacuate foreign nationals from across the country. As fighting in the country escalated, the impoverished nation is on the brink of all-out civil war.⁵⁹

(December -23-29)

- **Turkish military has said that it would not get involved in the latest political turmoil of the country; Japanese officials in Okinawa approve the long-stalled relocation of a controversial US military base**

According to reports, the Turkish military has said that it would not get involved in the latest political turmoil of the country. The climate of political uncertainty was sparked by a high-level corruption probe targeting the very core of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government. According to the reports, the Turkish military issues a statement posted on its website which noted, "The Turkish Armed Forces do not want to get involved in political debates." The clarification from the military comes in the backdrop of a newspaper column from a close aide of Prime Minister Erdogan, Yalcin Akdogan, that the corruption scandal could be a setup to trigger a military coup. The military, which sees itself as the guarantor of Turkey's secular principles, has carried out three coups – in 1960, 1971 and 1980, – and pressured an Islamist government to step down in 1997. But since coming to power in 2002, Erdogan's Islamic-leaning Justice and Development Party (AKP) has reined in the once-powerful military with a series of court cases.⁶⁰

In another development, according to reports, Meanwhile, Japanese officials in Okinawa on December 27 approved the long-stalled relocation of a controversial US military base. More than seventeen years after the two allies agreed to move the US Marines' Futenma Air Station from a densely populated urban area, the local government has finally consented to a landfill that will enable new facilities to be built on the coast. The issue has been deadlocked for years, with huge opposition to any new base among Okinawans. Okinawans have opposed playing host to an outsized share of the US military presence in Japan and want it moved off the island altogether.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "US Aircraft Attacked, Fighting Escalates In South Sudan," Defense News, December 21, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131221/DEFREG04/312210008/US-Aircraft-Attacked-Fighting-Escalates-South-Sudan>

⁶⁰ "Turkey's Military Says it Will Not Get Involved in Political Crisis," Defense News, December 27, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131227/DEFREG01/312270006/Turkey-s-Military-Says-Will-Not-Get-Involved-Political-Crisis>

⁶¹ "Okinawa Approves Relocation of US Base In Japan," Defense News, December 27, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131227/DEFREG03/312270005/Okinawa-Approves-Relocation-US-Base-Japan>