

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Bangladesh

- **Reports: Remittances in Bangladesh sets new benchmark in 2012**

According to reports, remittances in Bangladesh reached \$14.17 billion setting another benchmark in 2012 and offering the Bangladesh government a cushion against eroding foreign exchange reserves and exchange rate volatility. Inward remittances grew 16.43 percent in 2012 from the previous year, when it accelerated 10 percent from 2010. Meanwhile, foreign currency reserves reached \$12.76 billion on January 2, 2013.¹

Sri Lanka

- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers expresses serious concern about the impeachment proceedings against the Chief Justice; Annual average inflation rate rose to 7.6 per cent in December 2012 from 7.2 per cent in November 2012; Sri Lanka establishes diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; Sri Lanka targets 7.5 percent growth in 2013; Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka) Ltd. Signs agreement with JICA; Sri Lanka completes setting up of its team for the high level India-Sri Lanka Joint Task Force (ISJTF) with eight government officials and four leading private sector representatives; FDI reached US\$ 2bn**

According to reports, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, expressed serious concern on December 31, 2012 about the impeachment proceedings against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the recent attacks against lawyers who have been fighting for the independence of the judiciary in Sri Lanka. The Special Rapporteur urged the authorities of Sri Lanka to reconsider the impeachment of the Chief Justice due to the “lack of due process and fair trial guarantees” and to ensure that the judiciary can operate free from external pressures, threats or any interference.²

In another development, reports noted that the inflation as measured by Colombo Consumers’ Price Index (CCPI) decreased to 9.2 percent in December 2012 from 9.5 percent in previous month. However, the annual average inflation rate rose to 7.6 per cent in December 2012 from 7.2 per cent in November 2012.³

¹ Byron, Rejaul Karim, “Remittance sets new benchmark”, *The Daily Star*, January 3, 2013 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=263676>

² “UN expert warns Sri Lanka to stop attacks on the independence of judiciary”, *The ColomboPage*, December 31, 2012 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12B/Dec31_1356973861CH.php.

³ “Sri Lanka inflation declines to 9.2% in December”, *The ColomboPage*, December 31, 2012

Sri Lanka and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania established formal diplomatic relations on 21st December 2012. The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, Dr. Palitha Kohona and the Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations Mr. Ahmed Ould Teguedi signed the Joint Communiqué on behalf the two countries.⁴

Reports noted that Sri Lanka for 2013 targets a 7.5 percent growth in the country's GDP and an overall budget deficit reduced to 5.8 percent of GDP while maintaining inflation at mid-single digit levels. The Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka Ajith Nivard Cabraal announced this during his presentation on the Bank's policy direction and work plan for the upcoming year "Road Map for Monetary and Financial Sector Policies for 2013 and Beyond" for the seventh consecutive year at the Central Bank premises.⁵

According to reports, Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka) Ltd. and Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) have signed the loan agreement for Japanese Yen 29 billion (Sri Lankan Rs. 42.5 billion) to finance the expansion of the Bandaranaike International Airport and future developments.⁶

Reports noted that Sri Lanka has completed setting up of its team for the high level India-Sri Lanka Joint Task Force (ISJTF) with eight government officials and four leading private sector representatives.⁷ Secretary, Ministry of Industry and Commerce Anura Siriwardena will be the Chairman of the ISJTF. The Government representatives of India will be headed by Joint Secretary of Indian Department of Commerce of the Industry and Commerce Ministry.

In other developments, reports noted that Foreign Direct Investments received by Sri Lanka reached US\$ 2 billion in 2012 compared to the previous year, according to the Board of Investment (BOI). According to the BOI, 45% of the FDI contribution was for infrastructure development, 28% for production sector and 19% for hotels and restaurants.⁸

Maldives

- **President Waheed meets former PM of Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohamed; Aviation Security Command established under the Ministry of Defence and National Security; Fifteen of the 191 inhabited islands had faced severe erosion at the end of 2011; Identification system to monitor vessels that enter and depart from the Maldives**

According to reports, President Dr Mohamed Waheed met with Dr Mahathir Mohamed, the former

⁴ "Diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Mauritania established", *Government of Sri Lanka Website*, December 31, 2012 at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201212/20121231diplomatic_relations_between_sl_mauritania_established.htm.

⁵ "Sri Lanka targets 7.5 percent GDP growth and mid-single digit inflation in 2013", *The ColomboPage*, January 2, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12B/Jan02_1357140384CH.php.

⁶ "Sri Lanka to get Rs. 42.5 billion loan from Japan to expand Bandaranaike International Airport", *The ColomboPage*, January 3, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12B/Jan03_1357236622CH.php.

⁷ "Sri Lank appoints team for Joint Task Force for trade with India", *ColomboPage*, January 6, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12B/Jan06_1357412783CH.php.

⁸ "Sri Lanka receivers US\$ 2 billion FDI in 2012", *ColomboPage*, January 4, 2013 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12B/Jan04_1357321801CH.php.

Prime Minister of Malaysia on January 1, 2013 during his private visit to Malaysia.⁹ President also met Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Anifah Aman at the Maldives High Commission in Malaysia on January 3, 2012.¹⁰

In another development, according to reports, after consultation with the People's Majlis, President Dr Mohamed Waheed established Aviation Security Command, under the Ministry of Defence and National Security to formulate aviation security policies and procedures in accordance with the aviation laws on January 1, 2013.¹¹

According to the "Statistical Year Book" updated and published by the Planning Department of Maldives, fifteen of the 191 inhabited islands had faced severe erosion at the end of 2011. The people of the islands affected worst were shifted to other islands.¹²

In other developments, reports noted that Maldives Customs Service has established an identification system to monitor vessels that enter and depart from the Maldives. The system will assist in controlling the drugs and other illegal products that enter the country via its harbours uncontrollably, as well as in helping vessels in need.¹³

B. East Asia

Japan

- **Japanese Prime Minister expresses his intention to issue a 'forward looking statement' replacing the 1995 Japanese government's apology for wartime atrocities; Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso goes on a four-day long trip to Myanmar; Abe's envoy meets South Korean President-elect Park; Japan plans to buy US Global Hawks to increase SDF's surveillance capabilities**

According to reports, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during a recent interview, expressed his willingness to issue a 'forward looking statement' that could replace the 1995 apology statement offered by the then Japanese Prime Minister Tomichii Murayama for Japanese wartime expansionism. He also pointed out that during his previous tenure as Prime Minister (2006-2007),

⁹ "President meets with former Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohamed", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=8444>.

¹⁰ "President Meets Malaysian Foreign Minister", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, January 3, 2013 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=8450>.

¹¹ "President Establishes Aviation Security Command", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=11&dcid=8447>.

¹² "Fifteen Islands in danger of extinction due to severe erosion", *Sun Online*, January 2, 2013 at <http://sun.mv/english/8464>.

¹³ "System established to monitor vessels that enter Maldivian territory", *The President's Office, Republic of Maldives*, January 6, 2013 at <http://sun.mv/english/8556>.

the LDP administration could not find any evidence to indicate that the ‘comfort women’ had been forced to serve as sex slaves in the Japanese military brothels during the war.¹⁴

Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso paid a four-day long visit to Myanmar from January 2, 2013.¹⁵ It was the first overseas visit by a member of the newly appointed Abe cabinet. This visit is significant considering that Abe is keen on emphasizing on developing closer ties with developing Asian economies to seek new growth opportunities for Japanese businesses.¹⁶

Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s special envoy and ruling LDP lawmaker Fukushima Nukaga met with South Korean President-elect Park Geun Hye recently. During the meeting, Park expressed her willingness to forge a conciliatory and cooperative partnership between South Korea and Japan while dealing with the bilateral historical issues squarely.¹⁷

In other developments, the Japanese government is currently planning to purchase from the US its Global Hawk—a high altitude long-distance unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft to bolster the Japanese SDF’s intelligence gathering capabilities. This move reportedly meant to more effectively deal with the increasing pressure from China on the Senkaku island issue. The Global hawks could also be instrumental in enhancing the SDF’s capability in gathering intelligence on North Korea.¹⁸

South Korea

- **South Korean Foreign Minister decries improving Seoul-Tokyo relations a ‘big challenge’ for Seoul after recent tension over territorial dispute**

South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan has said that he remains cautious while stating that improving Seoul-Tokyo relations after the recent deterioration in relations over the Dokdo/Takshima territorial dispute will be a major challenge for the South Korean government. While insisting on the necessity of developing a future oriented relationship with Japan, he also talked about protecting South Korean territorial integrity and urged Japan to look squarely at its history.¹⁹

¹⁴ “NYT raps Abe’s wartime revisionism”, *The Japan Times*, January 5, 2013, at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20130105b3.html>

¹⁵ “Aso to visit Myanmar for 4 days from Tues”, *The Yomiuri Daily*, December 31, 2012, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T121230002619.htm>

¹⁶ “Myanmar trip launches Abe drive”, *The Japan Times*, January 5, 2013, at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nb20130105a2.html>

¹⁷ “Abe envoy, Park agree to improve Japan-ROK ties”, *The Yomiuri Daily*, January 5, 2013, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T130104004064.htm>

¹⁸ “Govt eyeing purchase of US spy drones/ Global Hawks would cover China, N. Korea”, *The Yomiuri Daily*, January 1, 2013, at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T121231002857.htm>

¹⁹ “FM says relations with Japan a ‘big challenge’ for S. Korea”, *Korea Herald*, January 4, 2013, at http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20130104000790&dt=2

North Korea

- **North Korea expresses its willingness to improve ties with South Korea**

According to reports, North Korean media is currently insisting on the goal of national reunification with South Korea and inter-Korea reconciliation. This move is significant considering that just a few days back, North Korea leader Kim Jong-un during his New Year speech, called for bringing an end to confrontational relations with the South.²⁰

C. Central Asia & Russia

Central Asia

- **Tajikistan and Uzbekistan discuss gas supplies for the year 2013; Kyrgyzstan discusses with Russia the issue of Manas logistics center; Asian Development bank to support Tajikistan in its endeavour to become a World Trade Organisation member; Kyrgyzstan to buy wheat worth US\$ 4.2 million from Kazakhstan; Uzbekistan bans LNG transport by road; Uzbekistan stops natural gas supply to Tajikistan**

According to reports, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in early stages of negotiations to provide Tajikistan with gas supplies this year. Tajikistan had acquired 145 million cubic meters of natural gas from Uzbekistan in 2012 at the cost of \$300 per 1,000 cubic meters.²¹

In another development, Kyrgyz government delegates have met their Russian counterparts to discuss the creation of a transportation logistics center at the Manas Airport outside Bishkek. This is part of an attempt by Kyrgyzstan to make the airport a regional transportation hub once the American troops stationed there are withdrawn.²²

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pledged its support to reforms in Tajikistan as part of the effort of the country to become a member of the WTO.²³

Kyrgyzstan will buy wheat worth US\$ 4.2 million from Kazakhstan. It has received a 5,000-ton consignment of humanitarian grain from Russia since the country is facing severe drought in the last one year.²⁴

²⁰ "N.K steps up reconciliatory signals", *Korea Herald*, January 6, 2013, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130106000272>

²¹ "Gas negotiations underway between Tajikistan, Uzbekistan", *Central Asia Newswires*, January 2, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13409>

²² Kyrgyzstan consults with Russia over Manas logistics center", *Central Asia Newswires*, January 3, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13420>

²³ "ADB vows support for Tajik WTO reforms", *Central Asia Newswires*, January 3, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13416>

²⁴ "Kyrgyzstan spends \$4.2M on Kazakh wheat", *Central Asia Newswires*, December 31, 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kazakhstan/viewstory.aspx?id=13405>

In other developments, Uzbekistan has imposed a ban on road transportation of liquid natural gas (LNG). This effectively halts road transportation of LNG to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan. But it does not affect the movement of LNG by railway.²⁵

Uzbekistan has stopped natural gas supplies to Tajikistan on the grounds of the expiration of the relevant intergovernmental agreement.²⁶

Russia

- **Russia's oil production has increased by more than 1 per cent in 2012; Syrian President Assad expresses his gratitude to Russia and China for preventing foreign interference; US, Russia and Brahimi talks on Syria scheduled for mid-January; Business visas for foreign businessmen in Russia to be valid for five years; Russia to build three new Voronezh radar stations in 2013; Foreign Policy magazine rates President Putin as the world's most influential political, business, and public figure**

According to reports, Russia's overall oil production in 2012 went up by 1.3 percent on 2011 to reach 518.017 million tons. However, its oil exports went down by one percent during the same period and stood at 239.644 million tons.²⁷

Syrian President Assad has expressed his gratitude to Russia and China for preventing foreign interference.²⁸

The US department of State has said that the US, Russia and Brahimi talks on Syria have been scheduled for mid-January. The first such meeting was held in December 2012 in Geneva.²⁹

President Putin has signed the law that will allow foreign businessmen to obtain Russian business visa valid for five years. Earlier visas used to be valid for a year.³⁰

Russia will build three new Voronezh radar stations in 2013 as part of development of a missile warning system.³¹

²⁵ "Tashkent bans LNG transport by road", Central Asia Newswires, January 2, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/tajikistan/viewstory.aspx?id=13410>

²⁶ "Uzbekistan stops natural gas supplies to neighboring Tajikistan", Itar-Tass, December 31, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/613941.html>

²⁷ "Russia's oil production up by over one percent in 2012", Itar-Tass, January 6, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/615795.html>

²⁸ "Syria grateful to Russia for preventing foreign interference - Assad", Itar-Tass, January 6, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/615698.html>

²⁹ "US, Russia, Brahimi talks on Syria scheduled for mid-January - US State Department", Itar-Tass, January 3, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/614510.html>

³⁰ "Foreign businessmen to obtain Russian business visa valid for five years", Itar-Tass, January 2, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/614378.html>

³¹ "Three new Voronezh radar stations to be built in Russia in 2013", Itar-Tass, January 6, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/615604.html>

In other developments, Foreign Policy magazine has rated President Putin as the world's most influential political, business, and public figure.³²

D. West Asia

Syria

- **President Assad offers “roadmap to end conflict”**

Reports noted that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad appeared in a rare televised speech on January 6 and outlined a plan to end the 21-month old conflict. Calling the opposition groups “slaves” of the West, he said the first step of his proposed plan was for foreign powers to end their support for Syrian rebel groups. He said Syrian government military operations would then cease, following which dialogue would be held with groups not backed by foreign powers, parliamentary elections and formation of a new government. Assad stressed that the conflict was not between the government and the opposition but Syria and its enemies, and that any resolution would have to be “purely Syrian”.

However, according to reports, the National Coalition, the main Syrian opposition group, has rejected the Assad's plan. The group has insisted that Assad step down before it enters into any dialogue. The British government has called the speech “beyond hypocritical”, while the European Union has renewed calls for Assad to step aside.³³

Lebanon

- **Arab League to meet on Syrian refugees in Lebanon**

Reports noted that following requests from Lebanon for foreign donations to assist Syrian refugees inside the country, Arab League foreign ministers are expected to meet next week to discuss the issue and finalise potential assistance to Lebanon by members. While Syrian refugees in Jordan and Turkey, the two main host countries, have been housed in camps, those in Lebanon have largely found shelter with local communities.³⁴

Israel/Palestine

- **Fatah holds first major rally in Gaza in 5 years**

According to reports, in an indication of movement towards Palestinian reconciliation, Fatah was allowed to celebrate its 48th founding anniversary in Gaza for the first time in five years. Thousands

³² “Foreign Policy magazine names Putin as most influential politician”, Itar-Tass, January 6, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/614847.html>

³³ “Syria's Assad offers ‘roadmap to end conflict’”, The Jordan Times, January 6, 2013 at <http://jordantimes.com/syrias-assad-offers-roadmap-to-end-conflict>

³⁴ “Report: Arab League to meet over Syria refugees in Lebanon”, Ma'an News Agency, January 6, 2013 at <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553994>

of Fatah supporters attended the event in Gaza's al-Saraya square. Fatah supporters have been prevented from celebrating their faction's events since 2007 when Hamas took control of Gaza; Hamas supporters have similarly been banned from gathering in the West Bank in support of the group.³⁵ Officials from the two factions also met last week in Gaza to discuss stalled talks and "take advantage of the good will between them".³⁶

II. DEFENCE REVIEW

National

- **IAF to strengthen presence along the Pakistan border; Indian navy gets a major fillip as INS Tarkash joins Western Fleet**

According to reports, Air Chief Marshal NAK Browne will inaugurate the medium-lift helicopter complex for the new squadron of its latest Mi-17 V5 helicopters at Phalodi airbase near the Indo-Pak border on 7th January. Located between Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, Phalodi Air base was set-up in 2010 for air defence purposes in the western sector. Defense spokesman Col SD Goswami said that the helicopter "has on-board weather radar, state-of-the art autopilot and is equipped with the latest generation night vision devices. With these, the helicopter can undertake all- weather, day-night operations in any kind of terrain."³⁷

In another development, reports noted that the Indian Navy got a major fillip to its firepower with the arrival of its latest acquisition INS Tarkash at Mumbai on 27 December, 2012. The ship was built by the Yantar Shipyard, Kaliningrad, Russia. INS Tarkash is second of three project 1135.6 (follow-on Talwar class) ships ordered by Indian Navy, the first being INS Teg, which joined the Fleet in June this year. Trikhand, the third stealth frigate, is likely to be delivered by mid 2013. INS Tarkash is armed with Russian and Indian cutting edge technologies; the highlight being the 'BRAHMOS'.³⁸

International

- **Japan considering U.S. Spy Drones for marine surveillance; U.S concerned about Chinese nuke tunnels**

Japan is exploring the possibility of U.S. spy drones to boost surveillance of its territorial waters

³⁵ "Fatah followers stage rare mass rally in Gaza", Al Jazeera English, January 5, 2013 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/01/20131511111674534.html>

³⁶ "Fatah, Hamas meet in Gaza", Ma'an News Agency, January 6, 2013 at <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553821>

³⁷ "Indian Air Force to deploy helicopter squadron near Indo-Pak border," TOI, January 6, 2013, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Indian-Air-Force-to-deploy-helicopter-squadron-near-Indo-Pak-border/articleshow/17911087.cms>

³⁸ "INS Tarkash joins Western Fleet at Mumbai," Indian Navy, December 31, 2012, at <http://indiannavy.nic.in/press-release/ins-tarkash-joins-western-fleet-mumbai>

which come under threat from China's aggressive posture of late. Japan hopes to introduce the unmanned Global Hawk aircraft by 2015. China has been sending maritime patrol vessels into waters around the Japanese-controlled islands, which China claims as Diaoyu. According to reports, China has transferred two destroyers and nine other former navy vessels to its maritime surveillance fleet.³⁹

According to a Pentagon authorization signed into law, the U.S must consider both conventional and nuclear capabilities to neutralize China's underground nuclear weapons storage facilities. The new National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), signed by U.S. President Barack Obama on January 2, orders the Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) to submit a report by August 15 on the "underground tunnel network used by the People's Republic of China with respect to the capability of the United States to use conventional and nuclear forces to neutralize such tunnels and what is stored within such tunnels." This comes after a 2011 report of Georgetown University team led by Phillip Karber. The team conducted a three-year study "Strategic Implications of China's Underground Great Wall" to map out China's complex tunnel system, which stretches 3,000 miles and concluded that the number of nuclear weapons estimated by U.S. intelligence was incorrect. Karber's team estimated as many as 3,000 nuclear weapons in China's arsenal, contrary to the U.S. intelligence estimates of 300 weapons at the most.⁴⁰

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Pulwama still under curfew; Defence Minister seeks report on the Pulwama killing; J&K witnessed quite a of number border firings in 2012; India and Pakistan exchanged heavy artillery fire in Uri; Traders shutdown in protest to throwing of acid to the girl; Normal life affected in the valley due to shutdown**

According to reports, curfew continued till December 31, 2012 for the fourth consecutive day in the South Kashmir district of Pulwama where forces allegedly resorted to firing on civilians at two separate places on December 28 in which nine persons were injured. Police and paramilitary CRPF personnel, armed with sophisticated weapons and riot gears, were deployed in Pulwama town and the adjoining areas to enforce a strict curfew. The forces guarded the deserted streets, lanes and by-lanes to foil any attempt of the people to come out of their houses and stage protest demonstrations.⁴¹

³⁹ "Report: Japan Mulls U.S. Spy Drones for Marine Surveillance," Defense News, January 4, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130104/DEFREG03/301040004/Report-Japan-Mulls-U-S-Spy-Drones-Marine-Surveillance?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

⁴⁰ "New U.S. Law Seeks Answers On Chinese Nuke Tunnels," Defense News, January 5, 2013, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130105/DEFREG02/301050003/New-U-S-Law-Seeks-Answers-Chinese-Nuke-Tunnels?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

⁴¹ "Curfew continues", *Greater Kashmir*, December 31, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/1/day-4-curfew-continues-37.asp>

In another development, according to reports, Defence Minister A K Antony has sought a report from the army over the firing incident in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on December 28, which resulted in injuries to seven civilians and subsequent protests in the valley. Defence Minister A.K. Antony's directive came amid reports that a case of attempt to murder has been filed against a unit of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) in Pulwama.⁴²

Reports noted that Jammu and Kashmir witnessed over 70 incidents of cross-border firing along Indo-Pak border in which seven persons including four security personnel were killed and 15 others injured in 2012. According to a report by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), as many as 71 incidents of border firing took place along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in 2012. Seven persons including four security personnel, two civilians and one intruder were killed in the incidents of border firing.⁴³

Reports noted that India and Pakistan exchanged heavy artillery fire in Uri sector of Baramulla district on January 5 night forcing the Army to beef up vigil in the area. The firing has stopped but a residential house got partially damaged in heavy exchange of fire in Churunda village. General Officer Commanding (GOC) Baramulla based 19 Infantry Division Major General Vinod G Khandary told the media that Pakistani soldiers started firing at Indian posts at around 3.00 am of January 5.⁴⁴

According to reports, traders in Srinagar's Regal Chowk and its adjoining areas on January 4 closed their businesses and held demonstrations demanding stringent punishment to those who threw acid on a girl on January 2. Terming the attack as barbaric and inhumane, the Regal Chowk Traders Association and traders from Fairdeal Shopping Complex strongly condemned the act and stressed on the government to ensure safety of girls in and around coaching centers in different localities.⁴⁵

In other developments, according to reports, life across the Kashmir Valley was affected on December 31 due to the shutdown called by separatists to protest the firing on civilians by forces in Pulwama district of south Kashmir on December 28.⁴⁶

Northeast India

- **Election Commission to visit Tripura; ULFA linkman nabbed by BSF; Hunters killed by militants in Manipur; Meghalaya CM claims settlement with Garo rebels on anvil; India-**

⁴² "Antony seeks report", *Greater Kashmir*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/2/antony-seeks-report-86.asp>

⁴³ "JK witnessed 71 border firing incidents in 2012", *Greater Kashmir*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/2/-jk-witnessed-71-border-firing-incidents-in-2012-41.asp>

⁴⁴ "India, Pakistan exchange heavy fire in Uri sector", *Greater Kashmir*, January 6, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/7/india-pakistan-exchange-heavy-fire-in-uri-sector-64.asp>

⁴⁵ "Srinagar traders down shutters in protest", *Greater Kashmir*, January 4, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/5/srinagar-traders-down-shutters-in-protest-80.asp>

⁴⁶ "Valley observes shutdown", *Greater Kashmir*, December 31, 2012 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Jan/1/valley-observes-shutdown-36.asp>

Myanmar for better border ties; Nagaland to witness polls by March; Dedicated airlines for North-East to take off soon

According to reports, the full-bench of Election Commission headed by Chief Election Commissioner V S Sampath would arrive in Agartala on January 5 to oversee the preparedness for holding assembly election slated for early next year, Tripura Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ashutosh Jindal said. The visit of the full-bench of the Election Commission assumes significance keeping in view the next Assembly election. As per the convention, the EC visit the poll-bound State before announcing the election schedule.⁴⁷

According to reports, the Border Security Force (BSF) nabbed a Bangladeshi spy and an ULFA linkman during an infiltration effort in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. The BSF, on receiving specific inputs, nabbed Gorango Hajong, who works as an agent for Bangladesh's Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and is also an ULFA linkman.⁴⁸

In another development, reports noted that two hunters, K Kuma and K Ramshang of Kongkan village, were killed reportedly by armed cadres of United National Liberation Front on mistaken identity at a remote village near the Indo-Myanmar border on December 28 sparked anger in Ukhrul town.⁴⁹

According to reports, Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma said on January 3 that a historic settlement is on the anvil to resolve the issues raised by rebel A'chik National Volunteers Council (ANVC) group. Negotiations with ANVC for arriving at a permanent settlement have reached the final stage. A tripartite meeting is being convened on January 5 in Shillong as informed by Union Ministry of Home Affairs. ANVC, a powerful rebel group fighting for the creation of a Garoland Autonomous Council, entered into a tripartite ceasefire with central and state governments on July 23, 2004.⁵⁰

Reports noted that amidst reports of an all-out offensive against the rebels in the neighbouring country, India and Myanmar have decided to open a fourth Border Liaison Office (BLO) in Nagaland sector between Ukhrul, Manipur and Somra in the neighbouring country. The 18th national level meeting between Myanmar and India held on December 28-29 in New Delhi, while expressing satisfaction over opening of a third Border Liaison Office (BLO) between Changlang, India and Pangsau, Myanmar, decided to open the fourth BLO as well. Both the sides emphasised nurturing BLOs to promote cooperation between law-enforcement agencies of both the countries for peace and tranquility along the border.⁵¹

⁴⁷ "CEC to visit Tripura on Jan 5", *The Assam Tribune*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0213/oth05>

⁴⁸ "Bangla spy and ulfa linkman nabbed by BSF", *The Assam Tribune*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0213/oth06>

⁴⁹ "2 hunters killed by militants in Manipur", *The Assam Tribune*, January 1, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0213/oth07>

⁵⁰ "Settlement with Garo rebels on anvil: Meghalaya CM", *The Assam Tribune*, January 3, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0313/at044>

⁵¹ "India, Myanmar for better border ties", *The Assam Tribune*, January 3, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0413/at05>

According to reports, the Election Commission of India (ECI) said on January 4 that Assembly elections in Nagaland will be held before the tenure of the present House expires. The current Nagaland Assembly term expires on March 18. A complete team of ECI arrived in Dimapur on January 3 and met top bureaucrats and leaders of political parties. There are 11.9 lakh voters in Nagaland of which six lakh are males and 5.9 lakh females.⁵²

In other developments, According to reports, North Eastern Council (NEC) Secretary UK Sangma said that a new airline operator dedicated to the North East is set to take off by April 1. The bidding process for the services which has already begun is expected to have an operator with improved services and cheaper rates to fly in the North Eastern airspace.⁵³

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) News

- **Special Task Force set up for safety of women; National level meeting held between India and Myanmar; Chief Secretaries and DGP's conference held**

According to reports, Government has constituted a Special Task Force headed by Union Home Secretary to look into the safety issues of women in Delhi and review the functioning of Delhi Police on an ongoing basis. The Task Force may co-opt any such member that the Task Force may deem fit. The Task Force will also take into consideration the suggestions made by the Members of the Parliament during the debate on the issue. The Task Force shall continuously review action taken by the Delhi Police and Delhi Government.⁵⁴

In another development, reports noted that the 18th National Level Meeting between Myanmar and India was held on 28th -29th December, 2012 in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. A.K Mangotra, Secretary, Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The Myanmar delegation was led by Brig. Gen. Kyaw Zan Myint, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Government of Myanmar. Both sides discussed and agreed to cooperate closely on issues like insurgent groups along the border, arms Smuggling & drug trafficking, border management issues, Myanmar Fishermen in A&N jails, illegal smuggling of wild life parts, inspection and verification of pillars etc. Both sides expressed satisfaction over opening of a third Border Liaison Office (BLO) between Changlang, India and Pangsau, Myanmar. Both the leaders emphasized on nurturing BLOs to promote cooperation between law enforcement agencies of both the countries for peace and tranquility along the border. It was decided to open a fourth BLO in Nagaland sector between Ukhrul, Manipur, India and Somra, Myanmar.⁵⁵

⁵² "Nagaland polls by March 18", *The Assam Tribune*, January 4, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0513/oth07>

⁵³ "New dedicated airline for NE to take off by April 1", *The Assam Tribune*, January 4, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0513/oth05>

⁵⁴ "Special Task Force to Look into Safety Issues of Women in Delhi on a Fortnightly Basis", *Press Information Bureau, Govt. Of India*, January 1, 2013 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=91288>

⁵⁵ "18th National Level Meeting between Myanmar and India", *Press Information Bureau, Govt. Of India*, January 3, 2013 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=91320>

In another development, according to reports, the conference of the Chief Secretaries and Director Generals Police held in New Delhi on January 04, 2013 has suggested increase in punishment for gang rape, setting up of Fast Track Courts, National data base for sexual offenders and amendments to Cr PC, IPC and Juvenile Justice Act. The conference also came out with the suggestions for gender sensitization of police force, more recruitment of women in police, deployment of women police in every Police Station, single help line for women across the country, strengthening of forensic capabilities and community Policing.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ "Recommendations of the Conference of Chief Secretaries and DGPs", *Press Information Bureau, Govt. Of India*, January 6, 2013 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=91367>