

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **War to escalate if talks don't begin by April; Thousands of US troops may stay for decades in Afghanistan; NDS rejects reports of Massoud Andrabi, Rizwan Akhtar meeting; Approval for completion of the Afghan Parliament Building in Kabul.**

President Ashraf Ghani has warned the war in Afghanistan will escalate, with consequences across the region, if peace talks with the Taliban do not begin by April. "Time is not a friend ... We all understand that February and March is crucial," the president said, calling the conflict in his country just one component of a wider war that also encompassed Pakistan. In an interview with the *BBC*, Ghani described problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan as interrelated. He made clear the issues could not be resolved by use of force in one country. Pakistan should take action against the Taliban groups that did not refused coming to the negotiating table, the president implied, believing the neighbours needed to act together to preserve the state system. About the rise of Daesh in his war-torn country, Ghani vowed to bury the militant outfit in Afghanistan. Not an Afghan phenomenon, the Islamic State's activities had angered the people, he said. "Afghans are now motivated by revenge. They [IS] have confronted the wrong people," he remarked, stressing the need for action against the group at regional and international level. In his message to Afghan migrants streaming to Europe, the president said: "What I say to them is that you have no future in Europe. Europe is shutting down its borders."¹

Thousands of American troops may be needed to remain in Afghanistan for decades, US military commanders have warned the Obama administration. A report in January 27 edition of *The Washington Post* quoted a senior Pentagon official as telling journalists about a withdrawal from Afghanistan: "What we've learned is that you can't really leave." He argued Afghan forces -- needing air support, intelligence and help with logistics -- were not going to be ready in three or five years. "You have to be there for a very long time." Many Republican and Democratic foreign policy advisors, looking beyond the Obama presidency which ends this year, are reportedly ready to endorse a long-term American presence in Afghanistan. The influential newspaper said the commanders' assessment made it impossible for the Obama administration to withdraw most of soldiers from Afghanistan by early 2017, as it had planned. Following the departure of most foreign forces two years ago, the report said, the Taliban had significantly increased their influence in by seizing a number of districts and inflicting sizable losses on government forces.²

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) has rejected reports of Pakistani media about a meeting of Massoud Andrabi, acting chief of NDS, and Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar, Director General of Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). A high ranking NDS official told Khaama Press this afternoon that such reports are rumours and the chief is not scheduled for a visit to

¹ "War to Escalate If Talks Don't Begin By April, Warns Ghani", *Khaama Press*, January 25, 2016, at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/01/25/war-escalate-if-talks-don%E2%80%99t-begin-april-warns-ghani>

² "Thousands of US Troops May Stay For Decades in Afghanistan", *Pujhwok*, January 28, 2016, at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/01/28/thousands-us-troops-may-stay-decades-afghanistan>

Islamabad these days. Earlier, Pakistani media reported that NDS chief and Director General of ISI would meet in Islamabad on February 4. The reports further stated that the bilateral intelligence dialogue is being facilitated by the United States and that China would attend the meeting as an observer. Pakistan's *Dawn* news reported that intelligence officials from the United States and China will be visiting Islamabad for the meeting aimed at easing relations between the two countries affected after attack on Bacha Khan University that left at least 21 people killed and around 50 others wounded.³

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 27 gave its ex-post facto approval for completion of the Afghan Parliament Building in Kabul by 31st December, 2015 at a revised project cost of Rs.969 crore. The project provides for completion of a new Parliament Building for Afghanistan, keeping in view the traditions and values of Afghanistan. It is part of India's efforts in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. The project is a visible symbol of India's contribution to strengthening and rebuilding democracy in Afghanistan. The construction of Afghan Parliament Building has been completed in December, 2015 under India-Afghanistan development cooperation and minor touch-up works, including parts of sound system and furniture are now being undertaken.⁴

Pakistan

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **COAS puts speculations to rest, will retire; Armed struggle not right path to get power; Local economy facing multiple challenges.**

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif ended on January 25 growing speculations about an extension in his tenure through a brief, but sudden statement that paved the way for the government to start considering his successor who will take up the job from him in about 10 months from now. "I don't believe in extension and will retire on the due date." Gen Sharif's statement, quoted by a military spokesman in a tweet, shattered the quietness of the slow start to the week. The 43-word statement issued on behalf of the army chief was meant to quash the debate on whether or not the government should give him an extension and if he would accept it. Coincidentally, the statement came as a petition was filed in Supreme Court's Lahore registry seeking an extension for him. Generals Maqsood, Zubair, Wajid and Ishfaq are the four most senior commanders; Nawaz Sharif to pick COAS for fourth time. It was, however, unusual for an army chief to so early confirm that he would be leaving his office on retirement. Gen Sharif, who became the army chief on November 29, 2013, is set to retire on November 30 this year after completing three years in office.⁵

Jamaat-i-Islami chief Senator Sirajul Haq exhorted on January 29 the elements carrying out armed struggles to get power to adopt the democratic path for the purpose. Talking to reporters here at Markaz Tableegh-i-Islam, he asked the government to come forward to accept the success or shortcomings of the National Action Plan, adding that army was just an state institution, which

³ "NDS Rejects Reports of Massoud Andrabi, Rizwan Akhtar Meeting", *Khaama Press*, January 31, 2016, at <http://www.khaama.com/nds-isi-to-hold-talks-in-islamabad-this-week-4533>

⁴ "Revised Cost Estimate of Rs.969 Crore in Connection with the Afghan Parliament Building in Kabul", *PIB*, February 27, 2016, Release ID :135828, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁵ "Gen Raheel Sharif Puts Speculations To Rest, Says Will Retire On Due Date", *Dawn*, January 26, 2016, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1235421/gen-raheel-sharif-puts-speculations-to-rest-says-will-retire-on-due-date>

was not answerable to people. He said a review of the progress on the 20-point NAP in the Senate revealed that the government's performance was poor as neither reform in tribal areas had been introduced nor had reconciliation been achieved in Balochistan. He claimed that poverty and ignorance had increased and criminal justice system had not been reformed, but police had been massively used to intimidate ulema. In reply to a question, Senator Haq said, "Islamic movements and ulema are unanimous that armed groups which want power for achievement of their goals should adopt the path of democracy and preaching Islam". He said that JI wanted a corruption-free Pakistan and that governments should complete their terms so that they should not claim innocence at the end of the day when their performance were to be assessed by people.⁶

Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Ashraf Wathra on January 30 said that local economy was facing different challenges despite the macro-economic indicators have showed sustainability during the last financial year. The SBP kept the policy rates unchanged in the first monetary policy announced in year 2016, slightly against the expectations of analysts who believed in the room for cut in policy rates by at least 50 basis points. On the occasion of monetary policy announcement, the SBP chief mentioned the challenges facing Pakistan's economy that included decline in exports due to contraction of trade at the regional and the local levels. Responding to a question, he said that decline in exports could not be attributed to interest rates of banks for specific schemes but it was a global issue which had been hurting Pakistan as well. There are challenges to overall economic performance from the declines in the production of cotton and rice. The monetary policy pointed out that the major macroeconomic indicators continued to exhibit improvements in the first half of the current fiscal year, whereas the inflationary environment stayed benign, large scale manufacturers (LSM) gained traction and fiscal consolidation remained on track. In addition, successful completion of ninth review under IMF's EFF and disbursements from multilateral and bilateral sources added to country's external buffers. With the pickup in private sector credit, for fixed investment in particular, along with improving security situation reflected strengthening of investor and consumer confidence. The average CPI inflation declined to 2.1 percent during July-December 2015, with perishable food items and motor fuel leading the way. Meanwhile, trend in YoY CPI inflation reversed as it rose for third consecutive month to 3.2 percent in December 2015.⁷

Bangladesh

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Govt to export raw jute to Nepal: Tofail; Bangladesh 13th most corrupt: Transparency International; BGB-BSF flag meeting held; Major progress in workers' safety; Bangladesh for joint river basin management: High Commissioner Syed Muazzem Ali.**

The government of Bangladesh will export raw jute to Nepal as jute millers of the Himalayan nation have urged Bangladesh to help save their local industry, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said on January 24. There has been a ban on export of raw jute from Bangladesh since November 2, 2015. The government of Bangladesh had to impose the ban as demand for raw jute increased in the country after the implementation of the Mandatory Jute Packaging Act 2010. However, first vice-president of the Chamber of Industries, Morang in Nepal said that the jute industry in Nepal

⁶ "Armed Struggle Not Right Path To Get Power: JI", *Dawn*, January 30, 2016, at, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1236314/armed-struggle-not-right-path-to-get-power-ji>

⁷ "Local Economy Facing Multiple Challenges: SBP", *Daily Times*, January 31, 2016, at, <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-01-31/page-1/detail-1>

is largely dependent on raw jute from Bangladesh and India. Twelve big jute mills that employed 20,000 workers in Nepal are about to suspend their production due to a lack of raw jute supplies from Bangladesh and India. Upadhyaya said Bangladesh will also be benefitted if jute is supplied to Nepal, as many Bangladeshi spinners import jute yarn from Nepal to meet their domestic demand.⁸

Bangladesh slipped one notch to rank the 13th most corrupt country in the world in 2015, according to the global corruption index of Transparency International. The country slid one position from the bottom in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) though its score remained unchanged at 25 out of 100 as in 2014, shows the CPI 2015 released globally by the Berlin-based graft watchdog on January 27.⁹

A battalion commander-level flag meeting between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) was held at Tugergram in India on January 23. Shah Alam Chowdhury, commander of BGB 41 Battalion, led the BGB team, while Biresw Kumar Singh, commander of BSF 131 Battalion, represented the BSF side. The staff officers and company camp commanders of both sides were also present at the meeting. Sources said the meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. The two sides discussed different border issues, including smuggling.¹⁰

The US, Canada, the European Union and the International Labour Organisation said Bangladesh made a remarkable progress in workplace safety over the last two and a half years, but it needed to improve labour rights. "We [the Sustainability Compact Partners] made a remarkable progress in workplace safety, fire, remediation, electrical and structural safety. That is undisputed," said Michael J Delaney, assistant trade representative of the US for South Asia, at the second Sustainability Compact meeting at Westin Hotel in Dhaka on January 27. "But less progress has been made in workers' rights and trade union registration," Delaney told a joint press conference after the meeting.¹¹

Bangladesh is eager to solve water-sharing problems with India through the joint management of common river basins, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzem Ali said on the side-lines of the 26th Tripura State Industry and Commerce Fair in Agartala on January 30, 2016.¹²

Sri Lanka

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **US State Department official Macon Philips arrives in Sri Lanka; Sri Lankan leaders are falling short of promises to reduce corruption - Transparency International; ADB to provide US\$ 1 billion in assistance to Sri Lanka for next year; Sri Lanka Navy pledges support to counter piracy operations; British war ship arrives in Sri Lanka; India invites Sri Lankan**

⁸ "Govt To Export Raw Jute To Nepal: Tofail", *The Daily Star*, January 25, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/export/govt-export-raw-jute-nepal-tofail-206797>.

⁹ "TI Corruption Index 2015: Bangladesh 13th Most Corrupt", *The Daily Star*, January 28, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/bangladesh-13th-most-corrupt-208522>.

¹⁰ "BGB-BSF Flag Meeting Held", *The Daily Star*, January 28, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/bgb-bsf-flag-meeting-held-208312>.

¹¹ "Major Progress in Workers' Safety", *The Daily Star*, January 29, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/major-progress-workers-safety-209194>.

¹² "Bangladesh for Joint River Basin Management", *The Daily Star*, January 30, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bangladesh-joint-river-basin-management-209599>.

businessmen to 'Make in India'; Royal Thai Naval Ship arrives in Sri Lanka port on a goodwill visit; Sri Lanka Navy arrests 9 Indian fishermen, repatriates 4; Sri Lanka, Viet Nam discuss boosting bilateral trade and investments.

The United States State Department Bureau of International Information Programmes Coordinator Macon Phillips arrived in Sri Lanka on January 25 on a one-day official visit. The visit is intended at strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.¹³

While Sri Lanka slightly improved in ranking on the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index despite a marginally lower score this year, the Transparency International (TI), says in its annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that Sri Lankan leaders are falling short of their bold promises to reduce corruption. Sri Lanka improved two notches in the CPI and ranked at the 83rd place among 168 countries with a score of 37 points. Last year with a score of 38 points the island nation in South Asia ranked at the 85th place among 175 countries.¹⁴

The Asian Development Bank has decided to increase financial assistance to Sri Lanka for development activities. Accordingly, ADB has agreed to provide one billion US dollars to Sri Lanka for the year 2017. The agreement has been arrived at a meeting held between Minister of Finance Ravi Karunanayake and Executive Director of ADB Won-Mok Choi at the Parliamentary complex on January 26, 2016.¹⁵

Commander of Sri Lanka Navy Vice Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne has pledged the Navy's support to the newly appointed Commander of the Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), Commodore Zahid Ilyas of the Pakistan Navy, during his tenure as the commander of the multinational naval task force responsible for counter piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and the Horn of African region. The new Commander of the Combined Task Force 151 received Sri Lanka's Navy's support when he called on the Navy Commander Vice Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne at the Naval Headquarters on January 28, 2016. Commodore Ilyas was in Sri Lanka as part of key leadership engagement to enhance cooperation through direct interaction with senior naval leadership and defence officials of regional countries. He was accompanied by the Defence Advisor of the Pakistan High Commission in Sri Lanka, Colonel Muhammad Rajil Irshad Khan.¹⁶

The British war ship, HMS Defender is paying a routine visit to Colombo to take on stores and fuel before continuing with her duties in the Indian Ocean, the British High Commission in Colombo said. This is the first time in four years that a Royal Navy warship has visited Sri Lanka, a country with which the United Kingdom shares a long military history.¹⁷

High Commission of India in Sri Lanka organized a road-show in Colombo on January 29, 2015 to invite Sri Lankan businesses to participate in the 'Make in India Week', to be held in Mumbai from

¹³ "US State Department Official Macon Philips Arrives in Sri Lanka", *ColomboPage*, January 25, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan25_1453740330CH.php.

¹⁴ "Sri Lankan Leaders Are Falling Short Of Promises To Reduce Corruption - Transparency International", *ColomboPage*, January 27, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan27_1453907753CH.php.

¹⁵ "ADB To Provide US\$ 1 Billion in Assistance To Sri Lanka For Next Year", *ColomboPage*, January 27, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan27_1453914390CH.php.

¹⁶ "Sri Lanka Navy Pledges Support To Counter Piracy Operations", *ColomboPage*, January 29, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan29_1454048957CH.php.

¹⁷ "British War Ship Arriving in Sri Lanka Reflecting Closer Defence Ties", *ColomboPage*, January 30, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan30_1454095545CH.php.

February 13-18, 2016. Minister of State for Home (Rural), Public Health, Agriculture and Horticulture, Marketing and Tourism of Maharashtra, Ram Shinde and the High Commissioner of India, Mr. Y. K. Sinha, graced the occasion. More than 150 high level representatives from the Sri Lankan business community representing various industries including garments, shipping, auto, manufacturing, health, construction and financial services participated in the road-show. The High Commission's social media portal on 'India-Sri Lanka Business Forum' was also launched on the occasion.¹⁸

Sri Lanka Navy, in accordance with naval traditions, ceremonially welcomed the Royal Thai naval ship HTMS Pattani arrived at the Port of Colombo on January 29 on a goodwill visit. The ship is scheduled to leave Sri Lanka on February 3rd, 2016.¹⁹

Sri Lanka Navy has arrested nine Indian fishermen along with their two boats for poaching in the country's waters just a day after assisting the Sri Lanka Coast Guard to repatriate four fishermen.²⁰

Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Harsha de Silva during his recent high level visit to Viet Nam held discussions with high ranking officials on attracting investments from Vietnamese businesses to the island nation. During the visit, the Deputy Minister Dr. Harsha de Silva called on his counterpart, Le Hoai Trung, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Do Thang Hai, Vice Minister of Industry and Trade. Deputy Director General of Foreign Investment Agency, counterpart of the Sri Lanka Board of Investment, Dang Xuan Quang, called on the Deputy Minister, during his stay there. The Deputy Minister also participated in an event organized by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Hanoi, to launch the Sri Lanka Business Council in Viet Nam where he addressed top investors, business leaders and professionals. The Deputy Minister also attended the opening ceremony of the Linea Aqua Viet Nam and interacted with the Sri Lankan community in Viet Nam.²¹

Maldives

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **China donates MVR 5.7 million worth of medical equipment; Government creates new company Khazaanaa Maldives Limited; Dhunya meets with Nawaz Sharif; Cameron: Sanctions may be imposed on some Maldivians; Indian High Commissioner: Priority will be given to strengthening cultural ties.**

The Chinese government has donated MVR 5.7 million worth of medical equipment used in the "Bright Journey" Eye Campaign in Hulhumalé to the Maldivian health sector. At a special ceremony held at the Hulhumalé Hospital, the equipment used in the eye campaign was handed over to the Maldivian government by the Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives, Wang Fukang. The equipment was accepted by the Minister of Health Iruthisham Adam. Health Minister

¹⁸ "India Invites Sri Lankan Businessmen To 'Make in India'", *ColomboPage*, January 29, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan29_1454089215CH.php.

¹⁹ "Royal Thai Naval Ship Arrives in Sri Lanka Port on a Goodwill Visit", *ColomboPage*, January 29, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan29_1454081064CH.php.

²⁰ "Sri Lanka Navy Arrests 9 Indian Fishermen, Repatriates 4", *ColomboPage*, January 31, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan31_1454217297CH.php.

²¹ "Sri Lanka, Viet Nam Discuss Boosting Bilateral Trade and Investments", *ColomboPage*, January 31, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan31_1454228898CH.php.

Iruthisham Adam expressed gratitude on behalf of the Maldivian people to the Chinese Ambassador Wang Fukang.²²

The Maldivian government has created a new company Khazaanaa (Treasure) Maldives Limited to establish an Islamic Financing Centre and to gain funds for the state via Islamic Financing. The resolution signed by President Abdulla Yamin Abdul Gayoom to create the company says that the reserve of the company is MVR 1 billion. The company was created under the Law of Companies as an independent company.

Maldivian Foreign Minister Dhunya Maumoon made an official visit to Pakistan. During the visit, she met with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, at Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad, and conveyed regards from President Abdulla Yameen, and thanked Pakistani government for the warm welcome she received. The meeting was also attended by Maldivian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ahmed Saleem and Joint Secretary of Foreign Affairs Faruzana Zahir. Dhunya also met with Pakistani Prime Minister's Advisor for Foreign Affairs Sarthaj Aziz and Special Assistant for Foreign Affairs Said Tariq Fathimi.²³

British Prime Minister David Cameron said that his government may impose sanctions on some Maldivian individuals if the Maldivian government fails to free political prisoners. Cameron made the statement in parliament on January 27 in answer to a question posed by a lawmaker John Glen on whether the country would work on building an international consensus on targeting sanctions.²⁴

Indian High Commissioner to Maldives Akilesh Mishra has said that priority would be given to strengthening cultural ties between Maldives and India. Speaking during ceremony held on January 29 to officially hand over aid provided by Indian Cultural Centre to 20 Maldivian artists who will be participating in Surajkund International Arts and Craft Festival in India; Mishra said that Maldives and India shared ties in various fields, and that culture and art was one of them. Mishra said that training programs would be facilitated to both Indians and Maldivians in the field of arts and culture. And that Maldivians who go to India to study arts and culture would in turn be sharing some of Maldivian art and culture with Indians.²⁵

B. East Asia

China

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Xi Jinping presides over the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee; China upset with international criticism of its Human Rights; Xi and Li assert increased food safety; Kerry meet Chinese Foreign Minister.**

²² "China Donates MVR 5.7 Million Worth of Medical Equipment", *SunOnline*, January 27, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/35942>.

²³ "Government Creates New Company Khazaanaa Maldives Limited", *SunOnline*, January 25, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/35921>.

²⁴ "Cameron: Sanctions May Be Imposed on Some Maldivians", *SunOnline*, January 28, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/35974>.

²⁵ "Indian High Commissioner: Priority will be Given To Strengthening Cultural Ties", *SunOnline*, January 30, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/36005>.

Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on January 29. The participants in the meeting discussed a report which was submitted by the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on important issues.²⁶

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying rejected the criticism of China's human rights records by an international group. Hua said that, "We hope relevant sides can look at China's social development in an objective, fair and rational manner. China is a country based on the rule of law, and any violator would be punished according to the law regardless of his status or so-called 'freedom of speech'".²⁷

Both Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang stressed the need to ensure food safety. According to remarks made by Xi Jinping, "The reputation of food safety in China is grave". While Li Keqiang asserted that, "zero tolerance" to food safety violations". These statements were made keeping in view the impact that food safety has on people's lives.²⁸

The United States Secretary of State John Kerry visited China from January 26 to January 27, 2016. He met with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During the meeting Wang said that, "We are ready to exchange views with the US on all the issues of common concern to boost our mutual understanding". Both sides discussed ways to improve and strengthen the bilateral and mutual trust.²⁹

C. Southeast Asia and Oceania

ASEAN

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **EU's permanent mission to Jakarta; ASEAN tourism strategic plan unveiled in Philippines; ASEAN-Russia summit to be held in May.**

The European Union mission to ASEAN was officially inaugurated on January 26, 2016 in Jakarta signalling deep and strengthening cooperation between two sides. Francisco Fontan Pardo is the first dedicated EU Ambassador to ASEAN. ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh mentioned that he is confident about growing partnership between EU and ASEAN. EU is ASEAN's second largest trading partner, its biggest provider of foreign direct investment, and the biggest donor to the ASEAN Secretariat. Connectivity, regional integration, sustainable development are some of the issues on which EU and ASEAN are working together and both sides are now trying to elevate

²⁶ "CPC Leadership Reviews Top State Organs' Work", *China Daily*, January 30, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/30/content_23316950.htm, accessed on February 2, 2016

²⁷ "China Rejects Criticism of Its Human Rights Records", *China Daily*, January 30, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/30/content_23317119.htm, accessed on February 2, 2016

²⁸ "Xi Calls for 'Strictest' Food Safety Measures", *China Daily*, January 29, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/29/content_23298604.htm, accessed on January 29, 2016

²⁹ "Chinese FM and Kerry Hold Talks To Eliminate Strategic Doubts", By Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, January 27, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-01/27/content_23270165.htm, accessed on January 29, 2016

the relationship to the level of strategic partnership. At the bilateral level, EU has free trade pacts with countries like Vietnam and Singapore and others are in the queue.³⁰

ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 (ATSP) was adopted in Philippines. ASEAN members received a total of 98 million international visitors in 2015 which was 7.3 per cent higher than what it received in 2014. In 2015, intra-ASEAN travel accounted for almost 42 per cent of the total international tourists received by the region. ASEAN national tourism organisations along with the four newly restructured subsidiary committees: the ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness Committee; the ASEAN Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Committee; the ASEAN Tourism Resourcing, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee; and the ASEAN Tourism Professional Monitoring Committee will be responsible for implementation of the ATSP.³¹

ASEAN leaders will meet representatives from Russia, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) during ASEAN-Russia Summit, to be held in May 2016, in Sochi, Russia. They will discuss about wider economic partnerships among many other issues, mentioned Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on January 25. Furthermore, Mr. Lavrov said, "These issues will be included in the agenda for the upcoming Russia-ASEAN summit in Sochi in May, which will be dedicated to the 20th anniversary of our relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations."³²

Southeast Asia

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **John Kerry's visit to Southeast Asia; Proposal to rename South China Sea; JETRO-Thailand cooperation in trade and industries; Singapore ratified ACTIP.**

US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Lao PDR and Cambodia in an effort to unify the members of the ASEAN before they meet the US President Mr. Obama in February in Sunny lands, California. Prime Minister Hun Sen and Foreign Minister Hor Namphong met Mr. Kerry in Phnom Penh and expressed their affirmation on resolving the disputes on South China Sea islands bilaterally and not multilaterally. It again shows that China has been successful in dividing the Southeast Asian countries in matters relating to the South China Sea disputes.³³ Laos, the present ASEAN Chair, wants to avoid possibilities of further militarization in the region in an order that escalation of tension is avoided; on the other hand, Cambodia has always taken a softer attitude towards China regarding the territorial disputes in the region.

During US Secretary of State, John Kerry's East Asia visit, one idea floated in the region and that was to rename South China Sea as Southeast Asia Sea, as proposed by few Singaporean and

³⁰ Parameswaran, Prashanth, "EU Eyes Strategic Partnership with ASEAN as New Mission Officially Opens", January 28, 2016, at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/eu-eyes-strategic-partnership-with-asean-as-new-mission-officially-opens/>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³¹ Rozario, Kevin, "ASEAN Ministers Step Up United Tourism Strategy", *TR Business*, January 25, 2016, at <http://www.trbusiness.com/regional-news/asia-pacific/asean-ministers-step-up-united-tourism-strategy/100515>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³² "Russia-ASEAN Summit To Include Consultations with SCO, EAEU- Lavrov", *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, January 26, 2016, at http://rbth.com/international/2016/01/26/russia-asean-summit-to-include-consultations-with-sco-eaeu-lavrov_562351, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³³ Brunnstrom, David and Thul, Prak Chan, "Kerry Fails To Sway Cambodian Leaders on South China Sea", *Reuters*, January 26, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-usa-kerry-idUSKCN0V4104>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

Vietnamese institutions. The United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN) requires a shared understanding from all relevant stakeholders before any geographic entity is renamed. It is clearly mentioned by the UNCSSGN that its objective is not to settle political disputes between states on the use or non-use of particular geographical names. However, as the renaming of South China Sea is motivated by geo-political interests of the small littoral countries located in the region, it is likely that UNCSSGN may not accept it. Even ASEAN countries, except Vietnam and Philippines, may object to rename South China Sea as Southeast Asia Sea, as it will signal a strong opposition to China's nine-dash line and hence, it may enrage the latter. Given the economic opportunities China is offering to ASEAN countries, the renaming of the South China Sea seems little difficult from the perspectives of Southeast Asian countries. Instead of Southeast Asia Sea, some are therefore arguing for South Sea.³⁴

Thailand, along with Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) and other ASEAN members, is trying to initiate "Made in ASEAN" campaign for produces of ASEAN countries. Thailand's Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn said, "Under this initiative, manufacturers in Asean could make products for different brands, but those produced at joint manufacturing bases would be labelled Made in Asean for re-export in the world market".³⁵ JETRO is assisting Thailand in many ways to develop its enterprises and industries under one agreement that was signed in November 2015 during the visit of Thai deputy prime minister to Japan.

Singapore has become the first country to ratify the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) on January 26. The Convention was signed in November 2015 at the ASEAN leaders meet. Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons mentioned that it would help Singapore curbing the menace of illegal trafficking across the region.³⁶

India-Southeast Asia

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Vice President on SE Asia tour; India aims at enhancing maritime surveillance in the Bay of Bengal; Indian Ambassador identified the gaps in Indo-Myanmar bilateral relations.**

India's Vice President Hamid Ansari will visit Brunei and Thailand on a five-day tour to the region in the first week of February. The Vice President's visit to Brunei will mark the first high level visit of this kind from India in a span of 32 years since India and Brunei established diplomatic relations in 1984. The Vice President will interact with the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah on issues ranging from civil aviation, space, trade and investment, hydrocarbons to information and communication. Both sides will sign several MoUs on health and defence sector cooperation. They will also discuss cooperation within ASEAN and

³⁴ Ellen Frost, "Re-Naming the Waters: 'Southeast Asia Sea' Or 'South Sea'? – Analysis", *Eurasia Review*, January 29, 2016, at <http://www.eurasiareview.com/29012016-re-naming-the-waters-southeast-asia-sea-or-south-sea-analysis/>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³⁵ Arunmas, Phusadee, "Made in Asean Initiative on the Cards", *Bangkok Post*, January 29, 2016, at <http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/843856/made-in-asean-initiative-on-the-cards>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³⁶ "Singapore Ratifies ASEAN Convention Against Human Trafficking", *Channel News Asia*, January 26, 2016, at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-ratifies-asean/2458606.html>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

East Asian Summit. In Thailand, he is expected to meet Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-O-Cha and Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. He will also meet the Indian community in Thailand and will deliver a speech at Chulalongkorn University.³⁷

India will deploy two new Boeing P-8 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and it will not only reinforce India's own maritime surveillance but will also augment India's maritime cooperation with US and Australia. India is refining Indian navy's air station in Great Nicobar Islands to accommodate bigger Boeings like P-8 and is working on developing its Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. This act may be seen as India's effort to counter China's growing influence in the region and its increasing presence in terms of deployment of conventional submarines as well as Port Calls by China's navy ship in Sri Lanka in 2014. Growing Indian surveillance activities will also compliment Australian surveillance which is very strong at each point of the Malacca Straits, initiated as a counter-response to the then Soviet Union's activities. Even US wants India to develop its maritime surveillance in the region and both countries are likely to ink a pact on this issue following Indian Defence Minister's upcoming visit to the US.³⁸

India's Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Gautam Mukhopadhyay identified gap in information, lack of banking facilities, absence of regular air connectivity and India's legacy of disengagement with Myanmar during the Junta era that hold India back from becoming a prosperous investor country for the latter. He mentioned about these issues in an interview to Mr. Soe Myint. Additionally, he said, India is not China's competitor in Myanmar and both countries share cordial relations with each other. The Indian Ambassador also praised Myanmar for holding a fair and dignified election in the last few days of 2015.³⁹

D. Russia

Russia: National

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Russia likely to cut oil production amid low oil prices; Russian Foreign Minister highlights the necessity of direct delivery of Russian gas to Europe; Russia's unemployment figure reaches one million.**

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich has not ruled out a cut in Russia's oil production if the current low prices continue. He stated 'according to our estimates, production [may] decline amid current environment, in current system and given the proposals on tax system adjustment in the fuel and energy system, first of all introduction of tax on financial result, we may keep production at the current level. But if prices remain at a low level for a long time a certain decline is possible,

³⁷ "Hamid Ansari on 5-Day Visit To Brunei, Thailand From Tomorrow", *Deccan Chronicle*, January 31, 2016, at <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/310116/hamid-ansari-on-5-day-visit-to-brunei-thailand-from-tomorrow.html>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³⁸ "India Boosts Strait of Malacca Maritime Surveillance", *The Maritime Executive*, January 27, 2016, at <http://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/india-boosts-maritime-surveillance-near-strait-of-malacca>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

³⁹ "Indian Ambassador Talks Trade, Connectivity, and the 'Dignity' of the Myanmar Election", *Mizzima*, January 26, 2016, at <http://mizzima.com/news-opinion/indian-ambassador-talks-trade-connectivity-and-%E2%80%99dignity-%E2%80%99-myanmar-election>, accessed on February 22, 2016.

and our partners, other countries, are aware of that'. Dvorkovich added the Russian government cannot directly regulate crude oil production since only oil producers, who make investment decisions within the existing regulatory and tax systems in the fuel and energy sector, are entitled to do so.⁴⁰

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has, on January 26, stressed that Ukrainian transit of Russian gas to Europe is unreliable and the European Union has realized the importance of direct supply of Russian hydrocarbons. In December 2014, Russia had announced the withdrawal of South Stream project due to the 'unconstructive' position of the EU. Mr. Lavrov stated 'we found a variant of the Nord Stream-2, although it could have been the South Stream if the European Commission had thought not about the geopolitical games but of how to do their job honestly and ensure the energy security of the European Union'.⁴¹

The number of officially registered unemployed people in Russia has grown by 3.4 per cent in January 2016 and now exceeds 1 million citizens. The regions with the steepest rise in unemployment include Crimea, Altai, Tuva and Bashkortostan.⁴²

Russia: International

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Russia denies claims that its SU-34 fighter jet violated Turkish airspace; Russian and American Foreign Ministers discuss developments in Syria; Russian and Iranian diplomats discuss the preparations for inter-Syrian talks; Russia supplied arms to Iraqi Kurds through Baghdad; Russia against Ahrar al-Sham and Jaish al-Islam participating in Syria peace talks; State Duma ratifies protocol on agreement with China on Yamal LNG; Russian Foreign Minister says Russia-Georgia ties getting out of 'deep freeze stage'; Russia and Finland agree to cooperate to resolve the refugee problem; Russia's upper house ratifies deal to write off 97 per cent of Mongolia's debt; Russia's Central Bank and BRICS countries discuss creation of global bonds; Turkmenistan calls for developing transportation corridor with Russia; Construction of north-south gas pipeline in Pakistan to start in July; Russia supplies weapons to Fiji.**

Russia's Defence Ministry has denied claims by Turkey that a Russian Su-34 fighter jet had violated Turkish airspace on January 29. Turkey's Foreign Ministry had stated 'the Russian Aerospace Forces Su-34 violated Turkish airspace. Before the violation, Turkish radar stations repeatedly warned the Russian aircraft in Russian and in English'. Turkey has also lodged a protest with the Russian ambassador to Ankara.⁴³

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry have, on January 30, discussed the issue of organizing talks in Geneva between representatives of the Syrian

⁴⁰ "Russia To Cut Oil Production Amid Low Oil Prices — Deputy PM", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852303>

⁴¹ "Lavrov States Necessity of Providing Direct Deliveries of Russian Gas To EU", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852261>

⁴² "Russia's Official Unemployment Figure Hits 1 Million", *The Moscow Times*, January 31, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-official-unemployment-figure-hits-1-million/557945.html>

⁴³ "Russian Defence Ministry Denies Claims That Su-34 Violated Turkish Border", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/853394>

government and its opponents. A Foreign Ministry statement read 'in line with requirements of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, the necessity was stressed to substantively consider during inclusive intra-Syrian dialogue the issues of fight against terrorism, humanitarian situation relief, including delivery of aid to civilians in besieged areas, as well as preparation of political reforms on the basis of mutual consent of the Syrian sides'.⁴⁴

Russian presidential envoy for the Middle East and Africa, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian have discussed, on January 27 in Moscow, the preparations for inter-Syrian negotiations to be held on January 29 in Geneva. They also discussed ongoing developments in Lebanon, Yemen and the Gulf region.⁴⁵

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on January 26, that the supply of Russian arms to the Iraqi Kurds was made through official channels in Baghdad. He stated 'we took into account the Kurds' needs in the supplies of our arms to Iraq, but these supplies were made through the central government, through Baghdad.....we fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq'. Mr. Lavrov also dwelled on the role of Syrian Kurds in the settlement of the Syrian conflict. He noted that the decision on the Kurds participation in the inter-Syrian talks should be taken by United Nations Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura and Russia will not veto it.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Russia's Ambassador to the UN office in Geneva Alexei Borodavkin has stated that Syrian Kurds are citizens of Syria and they have the right to participate in the inter-Syrian negotiations.⁴⁷

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova has said, on January 29, that terrorists from the Ahrar al-Sham and Jaish al-Islam groups should not participate in the Syria peace talks. She stated 'our position of principle is that it is impossible to include terrorist organizations [in the talks]. We are sticking to it. Terrorist organizations should not participate in the negotiations. If we talk about the fight against terrorism, it should be built on common principles without double standards and without dividing terrorists into good and bad'.⁴⁸

Russian State Duma's has ratified the protocol to the Agreement between the governments of the Russia and China on cooperation in the implementation of the Yamal LNG project. Under the protocol of obligations, Russia will seek to raise additional financing from international banks for the project, which is currently at investment stage with big loan proceeds. Yamal LNG is a large scale project on creating a liquefied natural gas production facility with 16.5 million tonnes per year capacity. The project's proven and probable gas reserves amount to 927 billion cubic meters. It involves creation of transport infrastructure, including a seaport and an airport near the Sabetta village. The launch of LNG production is scheduled for 2017. In mid-December 2015, China's Silk Road Fund signed an agreement for purchase of a 9.9 per cent stake in Yamal LNG from Novatek.

⁴⁴ "Lavrov, Kerry Discuss Organization of Talks Between Syrian Govt, Opponents", *Itar-Tass*, January 30, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/853385>

⁴⁵ "Russian, Iranian Diplomats Discuss Preparations For Inter-Syrian Talks", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/852602>

⁴⁶ "Russia Supplied Arms To Iraqi Kurds Through Official Baghdad — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/852179>

⁴⁷ "Kurds Have Right To Participate in Syrian Talks - Russian Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, January 30, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/853369>

⁴⁸ "Moscow is Against Ahrar Al-Sham And Jaish Al-Islam Participating in Syria Peace Talks", *Itar-Tass*, January 29, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/853156>

Prior to the transaction Novatek's share in the project equalled 60 per cent, with French Total and China National Petroleum Corporation holding 20 per cent each.⁴⁹

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on January 26, that Russia's relations with Georgia are going out of the deep freeze stage and Moscow is ready to lift visa requirements for Georgians. He stated 'the people of Georgia should not pay for the split of ties due to "the criminal mistakes" of former President Mikheil Saakashvili. "This is unfair, we did not sever diplomatic relations'.⁵⁰

Finnish Interior Minister Petteri Orpo has met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Kolokoltsev in Helsinki on January 27. It was declared that the two countries have agreed to find new ways of cooperation in re-solving the refugee problem. According to a Finnish Interior Ministry official, the mechanism for returning migrants to Russia from Finland is being discussed. At present, around 20 to 50 asylum seekers arrive in Finland daily with the majority transiting through Russia.⁵¹

The Federation Council has ratified an inter-governmental agreement on settling Mongolia's financial obligations to Russia. As of December 2010, Mongolia's unsettled financial obligations to Russia totalled US\$ 174.2 million. The entire sum of these liabilities was overdue debt.⁵²

Russia's Central Bank has discussed the creation of global bonds with BRICS countries. The Bank's First deputy Chairman Sergey Shvetsov stated 'we are looking for the point where we have mutual interests, the Development Bank has been established, we have created mechanisms to support foreign exchange reserves of each other. Now we are talking about the creation of so-called global bonds which would have same rules for all five countries. If we issues bonds under these rules and list them on one of the exchanges, the remaining counties automatically get access to trade in these bonds'.⁵³

Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, during his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held in Ashgabat on January 28, has stated that the creation of a transportation corridor with Russia has 'big potential'. Mr. Lavrov also stated that Russia is ready to assist Turkmenistan in protecting its southern borders. He stated 'we also discussed practical aspects of our cooperation, including on such issues as the situation in Central Asia, including those risks and threats that come from the territory of Afghanistan - both terrorist threat and drug smuggling. We have concrete plans in the framework of foreign ministries, defence ministries, security councils' apparatuses which allow (Moscow and Ashgabat) to effectively cooperate and prevent these threats'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ "Russia's State Duma Ratifies Protocol To Agreement with China on Yamal LNG", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852358>

⁵⁰ "Russia-Georgia Ties Going Out of "Deep Freeze Stage" — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, January 26, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/852213>

⁵¹ "Finland, Russia Agree To Cooperate To Solve Refugee Problem", *Itar-Tass*, January 27, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/852479>

⁵² "Russia's Upper House Ratifies Deal To Write Off 97% Of Mongolia's Debt", *Itar-Tass*, January 27, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852495>

⁵³ "Russia's Central Bank, BRICS Discuss Creation Of Global Bonds", *Itar-Tass*, January 27, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852580>

⁵⁴ "Moscow Ready To Help Turkmenistan To Protect Southern Borders — FM", *Itar-Tass*, January 28, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/852792>

Pakistani Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resource Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said, on January 28, that the construction of the North-South gas pipeline will start in July 2016. RT Global Resources, a subsidiary of Rostec, will build the North-South gas pipeline with capacity of 12.4 billion cubic meters per year in Pakistan by mid-2020. The 1,100km pipeline will connect LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminals in the port city of Karachi in Pakistan's south and Lahore in the north of the country.⁵⁵

Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has said, on January 29, that Russian weapons are being supplied to Fiji at the official request from that country and will be used to boost the efficiency of a peacekeeping mission in the Golan Heights. She added that Russia will expand comprehensive practical cooperation with Fiji and other southern Pacific states, including in the military technical sphere.⁵⁶

India-Russia Relations

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Rosobornexport refutes reports of losing its position in the Indian arms market; India shelves plan to buy 30 per cent stake in Russian potash project; India and Russia agreement for cooperation on a coordinated grant competition for conducting basic and exploratory scientific research.**

Deputy Director General of Russia's biggest arms trader Rosoboronexport, Sergei Goreslavsky has said, on January 29, that media allegations that Russia is rapidly losing its position in the Indian weapons market have nothing to do with the real state of things as military technical cooperation between the two countries is developing steadily. He stated 'India is our privileged partner and Rosobornexport is successfully implementing major defence projects for all types of armed forces in its interests... cooperation volumes might be either lower or higher in different years but the projects that are currently being implemented or are in a stage of preparation prove that our joint work, including under the important state program Make in India, is only expanding'.⁵⁷

India has shelved its plan to buy 30 per cent stake in Russian fertiliser producer ACRON's USD 2-billion potash mine project due to valuation issues. In December 2014, the two parties had signed an agreement to buy 30 per cent stake in ACRON's potash mine project. Potash is a decontrolled fertiliser and government pays fixed subsidy on it. India imports 100 percent of its requirement of potash, which is about four million tonnes (MT). In 2014-15, potash was imported at an average price of USD 320 per tonne. In the current fiscal so far, the country is estimated to import 3.3 MT of potash. Mainly used in the form of Muriate of Potash (MoP) by farmer as soil nutrient, Potash is also used in the manufacturing of complex NPK fertilisers. Russia and Ukraine are two major suppliers of potash to the country.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ "Construction of North-South Gas Pipeline in Pakistan To Start In July — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, January 28, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/852706>

⁵⁶ "Russian Weapons Exported To Fiji At Its Official Request — Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, January 28, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/853270>

⁵⁷ "Russian Arms Exporter Refutes Reports on Losing Its Positions on Indian Arms Market", *Itar-Tass*, January 29, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/853147>

⁵⁸ "India Shelves Plan To Buy 30% Stake in Russian Potash Project", *Money Control*, January 27, 2016 at http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/india-shelves-plan-to-buy-30-stakerussian-potash-project_5176181.html?utm_source=ref_article

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised about signing of an agreement between India and Russia in May 2015. The Agreement provides for competitive research grants to Indian and Russian researchers for joint implementation of research projects in areas of Basic and Exploratory Sciences. The Agreement is valid for a period of six years and could be extended through mutual consent between Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Russian Science Federation (RSF). This competition would be conducted in the areas of Mathematics, Computer & System Science; Physics & Space Science; Chemistry & Material Science; Biology and Life Science; Basic research for Medicine, Agricultural Science, Earth Science and Engineering Science.⁵⁹

E. United State of America

National

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **American solution – one not reliant on Russian-made RD-180 rockets; American economy barely advanced in the last three months of 2015; RDECOM scientists and engineers are stationed around the globe to explore international collaboration opportunities; Clinton's unsecured home computer server contained 22 emails with top secret information; Sanders often points to Scandinavian countries as models of his "democratic socialist" policies; The New York Times endorsed Clinton for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination; Democratic and Republican presidential hopefuls crisscrossed Iowa making last-minute appeals to voters.**

On January 27, 2016, Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics, described a novel concept to acquire access to space during his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Kendall told the committee that the proposed acquisition strategy will prepare the Defence Department for the future in space as well as driving down costs. And, he said, it will be an American solution – one not reliant on Russian-made RD-180 rockets as is today's Atlas 5 system. Given Russia's actions in Ukraine, the United States would like to stop using the Russian RD-180 engine. "The obvious and direct thing for the department to do would seem to be to pay for a new engine to replace the RD-180," he said.⁶⁰

The U.S. said on January 29 that its economy, the world's largest, barely advanced in the last three months of 2015. The Commerce Department said the anemic growth - just seven-tenths of a percent - reflected weaker consumer spending, investment cutbacks by businesses and slowing exports. The U.S. report, the first of three estimates of the country's economic growth for the October-to-December period, comes amid slowing economic advances throughout the world and

⁵⁹ "Agreement between the India and Russia for Cooperation on a Coordinated Grant Competition for Conducting Basic and Exploratory Scientific Research", *PIB*, January 27, 2016, Release ID :135823, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁶⁰ Garamone, Jim, "Kendall Describes Novel Way of Contracting for Space-Launch Services", *DoD News*, January 27, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/644946/kendall-describes-novel-way-of-contracting-for-space-launch-services>; and, "James Describes Way Forward to U.S-Built Complete Space-Launch System", *DoD News*, January 27, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/644908/james-describes-way-forward-to-us-built-complete-space-launch-system>

stock market turmoil across the globe during January. Analysts have mostly attributed falling stock prices to concern over plunging world oil prices and China's slowing growth.⁶¹

U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) scientists and engineers are stationed around the globe to explore international collaboration opportunities in scientific research and technology development, opportunities that will potentially close capability gaps for the U.S. Army. Three regional RDECOM organizations represent this international endeavour: RDECOM-Atlantic; RDECOM-Americas; and, RDECOM-Pacific. From basic science to insights on maturing technology, foreign research contributes to the development of U.S. products and provides solutions that improve American capabilities.⁶²

The U.S. State Department, for the first time, is saying that former secretary of State Hillary Clinton's unsecured home computer server contained 22 emails with top secret information and said those emails would not be released to the public. Spokesman John Kirby said on January 29 that the material includes seven email chains covering 37 pages of messages. He said the emails would not be disclosed, even with blacked-out boxes, as the agency released more of the emails from Clinton's tenure as the country's top diplomat. Kirby said the documents were not marked classified at the time they were sent, but are being upgraded now at the request of U.S. intelligence officials. State Department officials are checking whether any of the material was actually classified at the time it passed through her server, but Clinton has repeatedly said she did not send or receive any such classified material.⁶³

On the presidential campaign trail, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders often points to Scandinavian countries, including Denmark, as models of his self-proclaimed "democratic socialist" policies, such as free college tuition and a system of universal, single-payer health care. The Democratic candidate's costly proposals draw criticism from many conservatives, who have long used the phrase "socialism" as a political smear. Yet in a recent poll by the state's biggest newspaper, more likely Democratic caucus voters see themselves as socialist than capitalist. It would seem unlikely many people who live in Elk Horn, Iowa, would associate themselves with "socialism."⁶⁴

The New York Times on January 30 endorsed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination and said it favoured the long-shot candidacy of Ohio Governor John Kasich as the Republican nominee. The newspaper's editorial board — its opinion editors, who are separate from the newspaper's journalists who report stories — called Clinton "one of the most broadly and deeply qualified presidential candidates in modern history." If she were to win the Democratic nomination and the presidency in the November, she would become the first female U.S. president, replacing President Barack Obama when he leaves office a year from now. *The Times* said, "Mrs. Clinton has honed a steeliness that will serve her well in

⁶¹ Bredemeier, Ken, "US Economy Barely Advanced at End of 2015", *VOA News*, January 29, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-economy-barely-advanced-at-end-of-2015/3168452.html>

⁶² "U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command-Pacific Collaboration Efforts throughout the Asia-Pacific Region", *US PACOM*, December 29, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/639497/us-army-research-development-and-engineering-command-pacific-collaboration-effo.aspx>

⁶³ "US: 22 Clinton Emails Included 'Top Secret' Material", *VOA News*, January 30, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-22-clinton-emails-included-top-secret-material/3169677.html>

⁶⁴ "Gallo, William, in Rural Iowa, Some Voters Call Themselves 'Socialist,' Support Sanders", *VOA News*, January 30, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/rural-iowa-some-voters-call-themselves-socialist-support-bernie-sanders/3169910.html>

negotiating with a difficult Congress on critically important issues like climate change. It will also help her weather what are certain to be more attacks from Republicans and, should she win the White House, the possibility of the same ideological opposition and personal animus that President Obama has endured."⁶⁵

Democratic and Republican presidential hopefuls crisscrossed Iowa on January 30, making last-minute appeals to voters and tightening their attacks on rivals ahead of the state's crucial, first-in-the-nation nominating contest. With just two days to go before the Iowa caucuses, both the Democratic and Republican races appeared to be tightening. Almost every major candidate in both parties held campaign rallies and gave speeches across this rural Midwestern state. The notable exception for a time was GOP front-runner Donald Trump. The billionaire businessman instead looked past Iowa, opting to campaign in New Hampshire, which holds the nation's next nominating event February 9.⁶⁶

International: Asia

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Nicholson Jr selected to succeed Campbell as the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan; Obama's choice to take command of coalition and U.S. forces in Afghanistan; Carter encouraged U.S. Cyber Command to "intensify the fight" against the ISIL; Coalition military forces have continued to attack ISIL; CENTCOM announces the results of four more civilian casualty; U.S.-Russia memorandum of understanding on flight safety over Syrian airspace; USS Charlotte (SSN 766) arrives at Fleet Activities Yokosuka for a visit as part of its deployment to the Western Pacific; Sailors aboard USS Sampson (DDG 102) busy conducting search and recovery operations in the Java Sea; U.S. Navy warship sails through South China Sea waters claimed by China; USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) will shift its homeport from Diego Garcia to Naval Base Guam; Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions as part of Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise 16-1.**

The Pentagon reported on January 27 that the U.S. Army commander, John W. "Mick" Nicholson Jr of NATO land forces has been selected to succeed Army Gen. John F. Campbell as the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.⁶⁷

On January 28, President Barack Obama's choice to take command of coalition and U.S. forces in Afghanistan told senators that Afghan forces need improvement in some capabilities, but have performed well in battle. Army Lt. Gen, John W. "Mick" Nicholson Jr. appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is considering his nomination to succeed Army Gen. John F. Campbell as commander of Operation Resolute Support and U.S. Forces Afghanistan. In his testimony, Nicholson stressed the need for a long-term, capabilities-based U.S. presence in

⁶⁵ "New York Times Endorses Clinton, Kasich in 2016 Race", *VOA News*, January 30, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/new-york-times-endorses-clinton-kasich/3169858.html>

⁶⁶ Gallo, William, "US Presidential Candidates Make Last-Minute Bids to Voters", *VOA News*, January 30, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-presidential-candidates-last-minute-bids-to-voters/3169422.html>

⁶⁷ Ferdinando, Lisa, "NATO Land Forces Commander to Succeed Campbell in Afghanistan", *DoD News*, January 27, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/645197/nato-land-forces-commander-to-succeed-campbell-in-afghanistan>

Afghanistan and said American security aid to the nation is rightly concentrated on the counterterrorism and the “train, advise and assist” missions.⁶⁸

Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said on January 27 that Defence Secretary Ash Carter encouraged U.S. Cyber Command to “intensify the fight” against the Islamic State of Iraq the Levant (ISIL). Carter and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., visited Cybercom headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland. They discussed a range of cyber-related topics with Cybercom leadership, the press secretary said, including efforts to degrade ISIL’s messaging campaign. Cook said that “The effort to accelerate the campaign to deliver a lasting defeat to ISIL includes targeting their use of the Internet to spread their message of hate, recruit fighters and inspire acts of terror”. Cybercom is charged with supporting interagency partners in the whole-of-government effort to counter ISIL messaging, in addition to other aspects of the counter-ISIL campaign.⁶⁹

U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted five strikes in Syria. And, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 18 strikes in Iraq, coordinated with and in support of Iraq’s government. The DoD reported that the strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, Syria, and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the group’s ability to project terror and conduct operations.⁷⁰

U.S. Central Command announced the results of four more civilian casualty assessments on January 29. After a thorough review of the facts and circumstances for each allegation, the preponderance of evidence indicates four separate U.S. strikes in Iraq and Syria, between July 27 and October 15, 2015, have likely resulted in the death of five civilians and injuries to an additional eight civilians. The Coalition takes all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties during the course of military operations. In all of the cases released today, assessments determined that although the strikes complied with the law of armed conflict and all appropriate precautions were taken, civilian casualties unfortunately did occur.⁷¹

On January 28, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said in a statement that the Defence Department officials held a video conference to discuss ongoing implementation of the U.S.-Russia memorandum of understanding on flight safety over Syrian airspace. The call was co-chaired by Acting Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs Elissa Slotkin and Joint

⁶⁸ Garamone, Jim, “Nicholson Praises Afghan Forces, Outlines Capabilities They Need”, *DoD News*, January 28, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/645686/nicholson-praises-afghan-forces-outlines-capabilities-they-need>

⁶⁹ Ferdinando, Lisa, “Carter Encourages Cyber Command to Intensify Fight Against ISIL”, *DoD News*, January 27, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/645212/carter-encourages-cyber-command-to-intensify-fight-against-isil>

⁷⁰ “Military Strikes Hit ISIL Terrorists in Syria, Iraq”, *DoD News*, January 31, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/647000/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>; and, “Military Airstrikes Continue against ISIL Terrorists in Syria and Iraq”, *US CENTCOM*, January 31, 2016, Release # 20160131-01 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/jan.31-military-airstrikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-and-ir>

⁷¹ “U.S. Central Command Releases Results of Iraq and Syria Civilian Casualty Assessments”, *US CENTCOM*, January 29, 2016, Release Number 20160129-05 at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/jan.-29-u.s.-central-command-releases-results-of-iraq-and-syria-civilian-ca>

Staff Director for Strategic Plans and Policy Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr. and their Russian Ministry of Defence counterparts.⁷²

The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Charlotte (SSN 766) arrived at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, on December 23, for a visit as part of its deployment to the Western Pacific. The visit strengthened the already positive alliance between the U.S. and Japan through the crew's interaction with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force. It also demonstrated the Navy's commitment to regional stability and maritime security in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. Charlotte is on a regularly scheduled six-month deployment to the Western Pacific. Charlotte not only will conduct important missions to strengthen theatre security, but will also engage with strong partners throughout the region.⁷³

As the ball dropped in Times Square to usher in 2015, more than 300 Sailors aboard USS Sampson (DDG 102) were busy conducting search and recovery operations in the Java Sea, following the crash of AirAsia Flight 8501 December 28, 2014. Days later USS Fort Worth (LCS 3) also joined the multi-national recovery effort, along with vessels and aircraft from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China and Russia. While tragic, the incident emphasized the value of maritime partnerships in the Indo-Asia Pacific. Allies and partner nations teamed up with U.S. 7th Fleet in more than 110 exercises to exchange information and training throughout 2015. Major exercises this year included AnnualEx, Ulchi Freedom Guardian, Malabar and nine different Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) series exercises. Consistent freedom of navigation and presence operations are designed to advance strategic objectives in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. All operations are conducted in accordance with international law.⁷⁴

A U.S. Navy warship sailed through South China Sea waters claimed by China on January 30 in a "freedom of navigation" exercise, which China denounced as "grave misconduct." A spokesman at the Pentagon, Jeff Davis, said the passage by the guided-missile destroyer USS *Curtis Wilbur* was intended to enforce the international right to sail through such crucial navigation lanes. The warship passed within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island in the Paracel group, which is claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam as well as by China. In Beijing, a Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman said the U.S. destroyed peace and stability in the South China Sea with its maritime exercise, the second by an American warship in the area since October. The spokesman, Yang Yujun, expressed China's "resolute opposition" to the sail-by, and said Chinese armed forces will take "all necessary measures against any act of provocation by the United States."⁷⁵

⁷² "U.S., Russian Defence Officials Discuss Flight Safety Over Syria", *DoD News*, January 28, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/645768/us-russian-defense-officials-discuss-flight-safety-over-syria>

⁷³ "USS Charlotte Visits Yokosuka during Western Pacific Deployment", By Lt. j. g. Shane R. Moore, *US PACOM*, December 28, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/638100/uss-charlotte-visits-yokosuka-during-western-pacific-deployment.aspx>

⁷⁴ "7th Fleet 2015 Wrap Up: A Year of New Technology and Thriving Partnerships", By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Kofonow, *US PACOM*, December 31, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/639738/7th-fleet-2015-wrap-up-a-year-of-new-technology-and-thriving-partnerships.aspx>

⁷⁵ "Beijing Protests US Sail-By in South China Sea", *VOA News*, January 30, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/beijing-protest-us-sail-by-in-south-china-sea/3169744.html>

The U.S. Navy announced on December 23 that submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) will shift its homeport from Diego Garcia to Naval Base Guam. Emory S. Land will join USS Frank Cable (AS 40) in Guam to support four fast-attack submarines stationed there in addition to submarines rotationally deployed 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.⁷⁶

It's a scene that has played out in real life and on Hollywood's silver screen countless times. Service members are deployed to a country, tasked with distributing food, water and other emergency supplies to victims of a disaster. The people are hungry, thirsty, tired and perhaps have lost their homes. In this distressing state, they panic over the thought there won't be any for them, or there won't be enough to support their family. The panic spreads, and the crowd becomes a mob, and the mob becomes a riot. Marines with Golf Battery, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit experienced this same scenario while training to conduct humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions as part of Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise 16-1, December 2015, on Camp Courtney in Okinawa, Japan. The mission was one of many the Marines and sailors of the 31st MEU had to complete as part of MEUEX, an exercise designed to prepare the MEU for its upcoming deployment.⁷⁷

India-US Relations

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **State Department considering a reversal of de-hyphenating U.S. relations with India and Pakistan; "Optimism and excitement" regarding the India-US defence cooperation; Commercial end of the nuclear deal is moving slower than hoped; Resolution of cases of Transfer Pricing Disputes with US under MAP.**

Seven years after the State Department was restructured to 'de-hyphenate' U.S. relations with India and with Pakistan, it is considering a reversal of the move, reported *The Hindu*. A proposal to re-merge the office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) back with the Bureau of South and Central Asia (SCA) that handles India, the rest of the subcontinent and Central Asian republics is under "active" consideration, senior-level sources told *The Hindu*. The re-merger proposal is ostensibly timed with the international troops pullout from Afghanistan. The de-hyphenation policy of the U.S. was crystallised when the SRAP was set up in 2009 soon after President Barack Obama had taken over, with the appointment of Richard Holbrooke.⁷⁸

There is an "optimism and excitement" regarding the India-US defence cooperation, Admiral Harry Harris, commander of the US Pacific Command (Pacom) has said ahead of his visit to the

⁷⁶ "Emory S. Land to be Stationed in Guam", By Submarine Force Pacific Public Affairs, *US PACOM*, December 28, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/638096/emory-s-land-to-be-stationed-in-guam.aspx>

⁷⁷ "31st Marine Expeditionary Unit Trains for Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief Mission", By Cpl. Thor Larson, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, *US PACOM*, December 28, 2015 at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/tabid/5693/Article/638093/31st-marine-expeditionary-unit-trains-for-humanitarian-assistance-disaster-reli.aspx>

⁷⁸ Haidar, Suhasini and George, Varghese K., "U.S. Considers Re-Merger of India, Pakistan Desks", *The Hindu*, February 1, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-considers-remerger-of-india-pakistan-desks/article8175829.ece>

country, underlining that improving military-to-military ties is his top priority. "I see nothing but optimism and excitement with our military-to-military relationship with India on almost every level," Admiral Harris said in response to a question at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington on January 27. Harris, who is scheduled to visit India in March, said India-US military to military relationship is important not because it's a counter to China. "It is because we share democratic values and we share a common view of the imperative in the Indo-Asia Pacific region," he said.⁷⁹

One year after the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear deal was announced as done, the commercial end of the deal is moving slower than hoped, says the co-chair of the U.S. Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, Ami Bera. Mr. Bera, who had accompanied U.S. President Barack Obama for his Republic day visit in January 2015, had predicted "billions of dollars" in trade for U.S. companies after India clarified its liability laws at the time. The two companies that had been expected to close deals for nuclear power reactors were GE-Hitachi and Toshiba-Westinghouse, each of which had planned six reactors each several years ago, but had shelved them after India refused to amend its nuclear liability laws. "I wouldn't use the term disappointed, but it's not moving as fast as I would have liked to see," Mr. Bera said in an exclusive interview to *The Hindu* during a visit to Delhi recently.⁸⁰

One of the significant steps taken by Central Board of Direct Taxes(CBDT to boost investment sentiments among MNCs is the landmark Framework Agreement signed with the Revenue Authorities of USA in January, 2015. This agreement was finalised under the Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) provision contained in the India-USA Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC). The agreement seeks to resolve about 200 past transfer pricing disputes between the two countries in the Information Technology (Software Development) Services [ITS] and Information Technology enabled Services [ITeS] segments. More than 100 cases have already been resolved and some more are expected to be resolved before the end of this fiscal. Prior to resolution of disputes under the Framework Agreement the US bilateral APA programme was closed to India.⁸¹

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Indian Air Force shoots down unidentified flying object near Jaisalmer; The Beta Version of Integrated Quartermaster Package for automating all logistics functions at the unit level released.**

⁷⁹ "'Common values and views': Military Ties are Top Priority in India-US Relations, Says US Pacific Command Chief", *The First Post*, January 28, 2016 at <http://www.firstpost.com/world/common-values-and-views-military-ties-are-top-priority-in-india-us-relations-says-us-pacific-command-chief-2601908.html>; and, "Improving Indo-US Military-To-Military Ties a Top Priority: US Pacific Command", *The Economic Times*, January 28, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/improving-indo-us-military-to-military-ties-a-top-priority-us-pacific-command/articleshow/50753910.cms>

⁸⁰ Haidar, Suhasini, "Business Yet To Take Off: U.S. Congressman", *The Hindu*, January 26, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indous-nuclear-deal-business-yet-to-take-off-says-us-congressman/article8152694.ece>

⁸¹ "Resolution of More Than 100 Cases of Transfer Pricing Disputes with USA Under MAP", *PIB*, January 28, 2016, Release ID :135867, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

The Indian Air Force on January 26, 2016 picked up an unidentified flying object moving easterly in Jaisalmer Area in Rajasthan. Subsequently, an Indian Air Force fighter jet intercepted the object which was found to be a balloon of about 3 meters diameter. Due to heightened security alert, the balloon was shot down as it would have been carrying unknown payload. However, on analysis of the debris it was established that there was no dangerous payload in the balloon.⁸²

The Beta Version of Integrated Quartermaster Package (IQMP) was released on January 28, 2016 as a pre-cursor to the final release of IQMP. As part of ongoing efforts, DGIS with the help of M/s Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, has developed Integrated Quartermaster Package for automating all logistics functions at the unit level. This has been developed as a web based application using contemporary technology and aims at equipping units with a software application for managing the internal logistics activities at unit level. In IQMP, total 12 important modules pertaining to various logistics functions in the unit have been developed in an integrated manner as part of a single application. The full functional Beta Version of IQMP will undergo rigorous testing in the test bed units comprising of all Arms & Services across all the Army Commands. The final roll out of the IQMP is planned in the Indian Army by the middle of 2016.⁸³

International

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **China is likely to maintain a carrier capability in the South China Sea to protect its interests; Egyptian Armed Forces receives another three Dassault Rafale multirole fighters.**

According to media reports China is likely to maintain a carrier capability in the South China Sea to protect its interests. According to Chinese viewpoint, recent operations by the United States in the area have validated the need for an aircraft carrier there. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is likely to deploy at least one aircraft carrier for permanent operations in the South China Sea once its second ship is fully operational. For the Northern Sea, Yellow Sea, and Eastern Sea, China does not need an aircraft carrier. Chinese land-based aircraft are capable of reaching places like the Diaoyu Islands, where China is in dispute with Japan. However, the same cannot be said of China's territories in the South China Sea.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, reports say that the Egyptian Armed Forces has received another three Dassault Rafale multirole fighters. The Egyptian Armed Forces released photographs and a video showing the three aircraft landing at Cairo West Air Base and lining up with the three that were delivered in October 2015. Like the first batch, all the new ones are two-seat aircraft. Egypt had ordered in February 2015, 16 Rafale B two-seat and eight Rafale C single-seat aircraft. Deliveries of the aircrafts have been expedited by transferring the aircrafts that were already being produced for the French Air Force.⁸⁵

⁸² "IAF Jet Targets 'Balloon-Like' Object in Rajasthan," *PIB*, January 27, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=135837>

⁸³ "Vice Chief of the Army Staff Releases Beta Version of Integrated Quartermaster Package (IQMP) for the Indian Army," *PIB*, January 28, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=135881>

⁸⁴ "Beijing 'to Continue To Use Carrier Capability For South China Sea Operations,'" *IHS Jane's*, January 28, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/57566/beijing-to-continue-to-use-carrier-capability-for-south-china-sea-operations>

⁸⁵ "Egypt Receives another Three Rafale Fighters," *IHS Jane's*, January 28, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/57564/egypt-receives-another-three-rafale-fighters>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **LeT militant arrested from J&K's Budgam district; Republic Day celebrations pass off peacefully in Kashmir; Union Cabinet approves raising of 17 IR Bns; Udhampur shooting: CRPF injured BSF jawans: NIA; Three militants, including top Lashkar commander killed in Kupwara encounter.**

A Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant Basharat Ahmad Shah was arrested from Chadoora area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district of J&K, a police official said on January 25. One AK rifle, two magazines and a hand grenade were recovered from his possession, the official added.⁸⁶

Republic Day functions passed off peacefully in Jammu and Kashmir, while a militant was killed in south Kashmir's Anantnag district in a pre-dawn operation on January 26. However, the normal life remained disturbed in the Valley due to a separatists' shutdown call. Unprecedented security arrangements were made in Jammu and Srinagar. The authorities snapped the internet services in the Valley in the morning and unbarred it in the afternoon. Senior separatist leaders, including Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik, had called for a shutdown and asked people to observe the day as "Black Day". The shutdown call impacted the normal life and all major business centres and markets remained closed.⁸⁷

The Union Cabinet under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the raising of 17 India Reserve Battalions (IR Bns) by Jammu & Kashmir and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States. It includes five IR Bns in the state of J&K, four IR Bns in Chhattisgarh, three IR Bns in Jharkhand, three IR Bns in Odisha and two IR Bns in Maharashtra. The Government of India introduced the scheme of Indian Reserve Battalions in the year 1971.⁸⁸

Injuries caused to the 14 BSF jawans travelling in a bus that came under the attack by Lashkar militants on August 5, 2015 at Udhampur were result of a "friendly fire" by the CRPF who arrived at the scene soon after the attack on the BSF convoy, said government officials. This has been established during the five-month-long probe carried out by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) that is all set to file a charge sheet against nine persons including the Lashkar militant and Pakistan national Mohd Naved, on January 28.⁸⁹

The army has claimed that three Lashkar-e-Taiba militants, including a top commander, were killed in an encounter with security forces in north Kashmir's Dardpora village since January 29

⁸⁶ "LeT Militant Arrested From Kashmir's Budgam District", *The Economic Times*, January 25, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/let-militant-arrested-from-kashmirs-budgam-district/articleshow/50715413.cms>

⁸⁷ Ashiq, Peerzada, "Peaceful Republic Day in Kashmir Amidst Shutdown Call", *The Hindu*, January 26, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/peaceful-republic-day-in-kashmir-amidst-shutdown-call/article8154657.ece>

⁸⁸ "Cabinet Approves Raising of 17 Indian Reserve Battalions by J&K and LWE States", *PIB*, Release ID: 135829, January 27, 2016 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁸⁹ Tripathi, Rahul, "Udhampur Shooting: CRPF Injured BSF Jawans; NIA Set To File Charge Sheet in the Attack", *The Economic Times*, January 28, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/udhampur-shooting-crpf-injured-bsf-jawans-nia-set-to-file-chargesheet-in-the-attack/articleshow/50749042.cms>

night. Police has identified one of the slain militant as Abu Usama alias Zarar, a top Lashkar commander and resident of Pakistan. Police said Usama had infiltrated into Kashmir last summer and was active in the area for months. Two other militants are yet to be identified. The forces also claimed to have recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition from the militant hideout.⁹⁰

Northeast India

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Three NSCN (K) cadres surrender in Nagaland; President's Rule imposed in Arunachal Pradesh; Three policemen injured in grenade attack in Assam; Garo militants join platform of northeast militants in Myanmar; GNLA area commander killed in Meghalaya.**

Three cadres of NSCN (K) surrendered before government authorities at Peren district of Nagaland on January 25, Assam Rifles officers said on January 26. The cadres, whose identities were not disclosed for safety reasons, surrendered with three pistols, ammunition and a grenade in front of the Peren Deputy Commissioner and superintendent of police and the commandant of the 18 Assam Rifles.⁹¹

President of India has signed a Proclamation under article 356(1) of the Constitution, imposing President's Rule in relation to the State of Arunachal Pradesh and keeping the Legislative Assembly of the State in suspended animation with effect from January 26, 2016. Taking cognisance of the constitutional breakdown that has taken place in the State of Arunachal Pradesh as reported by the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, the Union Cabinet, in its meeting held on January 24, had recommended the President of India to issue such proclamation.⁹²

Three policemen were injured when unidentified persons hurled a grenade at them during patrol duty in Assam's Dima Hasao district in the wee hours on January 28, a police officer said. The grenade was hurled at the policemen at 2 am while they were on duty in Ram Nagar under Haflong police station injuring three of them, the officer said, adding, the condition of one of them was said to be critical. Investigations are on and a search has been launched to nab the miscreants, the officer added.⁹³

In a matter of serious concern for the security agencies in Assam, the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) of Meghalaya has also joined the United Liberation Front of West South East Asia. Pointing out that anti-talk faction of the Ulfa was instrumental in roping in the GNLA, security sources said that a top Ulfa commander, Drishti Rajkhowa who recently visited Garo hills in Meghalaya, played a key role in bringing the GNLA in their fold. Informing that security agencies had prior input on this development, sources said that a joint call to boycott the celebrations of

⁹⁰ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K: Three Militants, Including Top Lashkar Commander Killed in Kupwara Encounter", *The Indian Express*, January 31, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-three-militants-including-top-lashkar-commander-killed-in-kupwara-encounter/>

⁹¹ "Three NSCN (K) Cadres Surrender with Arms And Ammunition", *The Times of India*, January 26, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Three-NSCNK-cadres-surrender-with-arms-and-ammunition/articleshow/50732597.cms>

⁹² "President's Rule Imposed in Arunachal Pradesh Today", *PIB*, Release ID: 135814, January 26, 2016 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁹³ "Three Policemen Injured in Grenade Attack in Assam", *Business Standard*, January 28, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/three-policemen-injured-in-grenade-attack-in-assam-116012800437_1.html

Republic Day in Northeastern states had made it more apparent. The GNLA was signatory to the joint appeal of the conglomerate with Coordination Committee (CorCom), and Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC).⁹⁴

An area commander of Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) Pangkam (Purno R Sangma) was killed in an encounter between a joint team of East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills police near Shallang village in West Khasi Hills on January 30. Pangkam was the second in command to the EGH commander of the outfit, Jimmy (Ajan Momin). Police recovered one pistol, four mobiles, documents and seals along with a wireless set from the hideout.⁹⁵

Left-wing Extremism

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **Two Maoists killed by rival group in Jharkhand: Police; Two Maoist leaders gunned down in Odisha; Three Maoists gunned down in Dantewada; Maoist IED blast kill seven policemen in Jharkhand; Chhattisgarh creates post of Special DG to tackle Naxal menace; Top 'Maoist' killed in Bihar encounter.**

Two members of a Maoist outfit Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad (JJMP) were killed by a rival group in Palamau district of Jharkhand on January 25, the police said. According to the police, the bodies of two JJMP guerrillas identified as that of JJMP area commander Chanchal Paswan and his associate Kamlesh Paswan were recovered from Chando-Basriya village under Chainpur police station area of Palamau district on January 25. In another incident, Maoist guerrillas torched a BSNL mobile tower at Kalapahar in the Chattarpur police station area of Palamau district. The incident happened late on January 24 night, police sources said.⁹⁶

Two hardcore Maoists were killed in an exchange of fire between security forces and the CPI (Maoist) cadres along bordering areas of Deogarh and Angul districts of Odisha on January 24. The slain extremists were identified as Puttapaka Kumaraswamy alias Sushil, secretary of Kalinganagar divisional committee and a member of CPI (Maoist)'s State committee, and his wife Sindri Lingo alias Soni, who was also a senior cadre in the Naxalite group. While Sushil, who hails from Warangal district of Telengana, was carrying a cash reward of Rs.20 lakh on his head, Rs 5 lakh reward was announced for his wife Soni. An Insas rifle and Maoist literatures were recovered from the spot.⁹⁷

Three Maoist guerrillas were killed in an encounter with the police in restive Dantewada district of south Chhattisgarh on January 27, the police said. "A small team of 12 DRG (District Reserve Guard) men was sent to Metapal forest under Katekalyan police station of Dantewada on the basis of some specific inputs about Maoists' movement. As the police team reached Terra para and

⁹⁴ Anand, Manoj, "Garo Militants Join Platform of Northeast Militants in Myanmar", *The Asian Age*, January 29, 2016 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/garo-militants-join-platform-northeast-militants-myanmar-343>

⁹⁵ "GNLA Area Commander Killed in Meghalaya", *The Assam Tribune*, January 31, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan3116/oth053>

⁹⁶ "Two Maoists Killed By Rival Group in Jharkhand: Police", *Business Standard*, January 25, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/two-maoists-killed-by-rival-group-in-jharkhand-police-116012501042_1.html

⁹⁷ "Two Maoist Leaders Killed By Security Forces", *The Hindu*, January 25, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-otherstates/two-maoist-leaders-killed-by-security-forces/article8149259.ece>

Lakhpal hills, a fierce gun battle ensued between both the sides. No one from the police side was injured in the encounter. After searching the spot of the encounter, three dead bodies of Maoists in uniform were recovered by the police team," Bastar range Inspector General (IG) of Police, Mr. SRP Kalluri said in a statement. The IG also claimed that all three Maoists killed on January 27 were involved in the Maoists' attack on the Congress party convoy in May 2013 in Jiram Ghati. The police also recovered one 315 pistol and two locally made guns from the spot of the encounter. With this encounter, Bastar police have recovered 40 dead bodies of the Maoists without any operation losses in last three months," Mr. Kalluri added.⁹⁸

With the recovery of four more bodies of police personnel, the toll in the IED blast triggered by Maoists at Kalapahari area in Palamau district of Jharkhand on January 27 has climbed to seven, Palamau Deputy Commissioner K Srinivasan said on January 28. Srinivasan had on January 27 told media that three policemen had been killed in the blast and seven others injured. This was the first major strike this year.⁹⁹

Chhattisgarh has constituted a post of Special Director General of Police (Anti-Naxal Operations) to effectively combat Left Wing Extremism in the state and has given the charge to senior IPS officer D M Awasthi as part of a minor reshuffle in the top. Awasthi, a 1986-batch DG-rank IPS officer has also been assigned the charge of another crucial offshoot of the state police - the Special Intelligence Branch (SIB). According to sources in the police department, anti-Naxal operations have been stepped up in the worst-hit Bastar region for the past few months. Keeping in view recent developments, the creation of the post of Special DG for anti-Naxal operations indicates more aggressive counter insurgency operations in near future, they said.¹⁰⁰

Dreaded Maoist Chirag Da alias Pramod alias Ram Chandra Mahto was shot dead in a police encounter at the Charkapaththar area of Jamui forests in Bihar on January 30, said police. Chirag Da, who was the member of Purvi Bihar Paschimottar Jharkhand Special Area Committee, was wanted in 20 cases in Bihar and over three dozen cases in Jharkhand. He carried a bounty of Rs 25 lakh on his head in Jharkhand and Rs 5 lakh in Bihar. A looted police rifle, a 9-mm pistol, a country made rifle, three live cartridges and three cell phones were recovered from the spot. Meanwhile, in another encounter in adjoining Munger district, Dharhara police station sub-inspector Bhavesh Kumar was killed.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Dahat, Pavan, "Three Maoists Gunned Down in Dantewada", *The Hindu*, January 27, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/three-maoists-gunned-down-in-dantewada/article8158536.ece>

⁹⁹ "Seven Killed In IED Blast Triggered by Maoists in Jharkhand", *The Indian Express*, January 28, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/seven-killed-in-ied-blast-triggered-by-maoists-in-jharkhand/#comments>

¹⁰⁰ "Post of Special DG Created To Tackle Naxal Menace in Chhattisgarh", *The Economic Times*, January 28, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/post-of-special-dg-created-to-tackle-naxal-menace-in-chhattisgarh/articleshow/50754330.cms>

¹⁰¹ "Top 'Maoist' Killed in Bihar Encounter", *The Indian Express*, January 31, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/top-maoist-killed-in-bihar-encounter/>

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(January 25-31, 2016)

- **India's new PR in UN; GA debates UNDP and SDGs; India's women peacekeepers from Liberia to return home; India at the WHO Executive Board Session on Ebola; CD commences its work in 2016; Marshall Islands to sue nuclear proliferators who have accepted ICJ jurisdiction.**

Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, who had been named as India's new Permanent Representative (PR) to the UN in New York, presented his credentials to the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on January 25. He is India's 21st PR to the UN in New York.¹⁰² In an open debate on the situation in the Middle East in the Security Council, the PR expressed his concern regarding escalation of conflict in Gaza and the stalled peace negotiations on Syria and Yemen.¹⁰³

In a debate preceding the UNDP's 50th anniversary, India's First Secretary, Noor Rahman Sheikh, said India's commitment to the UNDP will remain steadfast. He also said that India would like South-South Cooperation to remain complementary to North-South cooperation and not a substitute to it. He also reiterated India's request for excluding the assessment of functioning parliaments and security sector institutions from monitoring under the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) of the UNDP.¹⁰⁴ In an informal meeting on the SDG indicators, India's Counsellor Amit Narang issues of measurability, methodologies and international cooperation on SDGs required much more attention.¹⁰⁵

India participated in the 138th session of the WHO Executive Board from January 25-30. Several statements were made with regard to emergency responses to Ebola epidemic and building of national capacities for the same.¹⁰⁶

India's PR to Conference on Disarmament (CD) DB Venkatesh Varma, participated in the first meeting of the CD in the new year and highlighted key resolutions of the General Assembly that India would like pursued by the CD, namely the ones on concluding a comprehensive convention on nuclear terrorism, convention on prohibition of use or threat to use nuclear weapons under any

¹⁰² "Syed Akbaruddin Presents Credentials at U.N", January 26, 2016, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/syed-akbaruddin-presents-credentials-at-un/article8154931.ece>

¹⁰³ "Statement by Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, Permanent Representative at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on 'the Situation in the Middle East Including the Palestinian Question' ", January 26, 2016, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2369>. Also see "India Seeks Resumption of Comprehensive, Long Lasting Peace Process To Palestinian Issue", January 27, 2016, at <http://www.india.com/news/india/india-seeks-resumption-of-comprehensive-long-lasting-peace-process-to-palestinian-issue-894797/>

¹⁰⁴ "Statement Made by Shri Md. Noor Rahman Sheikh, First Secretary at First Regular Session of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board", January 25, 2016, at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2368>

¹⁰⁵ "Informal Meeting of the General Assembly, Briefing on the Global Indicator Framework of the SDGs, Intervention by Amit Narang, Counsellor", January 28, 2016 at <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2370>

¹⁰⁶ "Statement by Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India, H.E. Mr. Ajit Kumar at the World Health Organization Executive Board - 138th Session, Agenda item 2: Report by the Director General in Geneva", January 25, 2016. For related statements see, PMI Geneva, "Recent Statements", at <http://www.pmindiaun.org/http://www.pmindiaun.org/pages.php?id=1228>

circumstances, treat banning production of fissile material and establish a working on prevention of an arms race in outer space.¹⁰⁷

As part of the drawdown of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) women peacekeepers of the Indian Formed Police Unit (FPU) in Liberia since 2007 were accorded a warm farewell as they completed 9 years of duty. Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf thanked them for encouraging their women to join security forces and said nearly 17 per cent of Liberia's police were women.¹⁰⁸

Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean is attempting to sue India, Pakistan and Britain for failing to halt the nuclear arms race. The first hearings will take place in March 2016. For failing in their obligations under the NPT, a case was made against 9 countries- China, Britain, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia and the United States, on March 1, 2014, the 60th anniversary of the testing of a hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll. However, only those who have accepted ICJ jurisdiction are liable to be sued.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Statement by Ambassador DB Venkatesh Varma Permanent Representative of India at the CD Plenary, January 26, 2016, at <http://meaindia.nic.in/cdgeneva/?4643?000>

¹⁰⁸ "Liberia Bids Farewell To Indian Women Peacekeepers", *The Indian Express*, January 27, 2016, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-news/liberia-bids-farewell-to-indian-women-peacekeepers/>

¹⁰⁹ "Marshall Islands Sue Britain, India and Pakistan over Nuclear Weapons", *The Guardian*, January 30, 2016, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/30/marshall-islands-sue-britain-india-and-pakistan-over-nuclear-weapons>