

# THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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## I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

### A. South Asia

#### Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson Khaleda Zia demands for a fresh election; Government revises the GDP growth target; six priority projects for government; EU has no plan to cancel the GSP facility for Bangladesh; Bangladesh Nationalist Party forms four probe committees to investigate the recent attacks on Hindus**

According to reports, terming the present government illegal and isolated, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson Khaleda Zia demanded a fresh election under a neutral administration as soon as possible at a gathering on January 21. The gathering was to take place under the banner of the BNP-led 18-party alliance, but the BNP finally held it alone leaving out its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami in the face of strong criticism at home and abroad for its ties with the Islamist party that was involved in recent political violence. BNP policymakers also requested its alliance partners Khelafat Majlish, Islami Oikya Jote and Jamiate Olamaye Islam, all three Islamist parties not to attend the rally, according to party insiders. However, top leaders of Liberal Democratic Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Jatiya Gonotantrik Party, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh NAP and Bangladesh Labour Party, among other allies, were present.<sup>1</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the new governments in Bangladesh will fast-track six projects, including the Padma Bridge, a deep-sea port and the metro rail, to be implemented at a cost of \$15.5 billion. The other three projects are 1,320-megawatt Rampal Power Plant, 1,000MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, and the LNG Terminal Project for importing liquid gas. The decision came at the first meeting of the Fast Track Project Monitoring Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office on January 22, 2014. The committee reviewed the implementation status of the six projects.<sup>2</sup>

Reports noted that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has formed four probe committees to investigate the recent attacks on Hindus, countrywide violence, extrajudicial killing, human rights violation by law enforcers and oppression on 18-party alliance men. BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir formed the committees. Party sources said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia approved the committees after a meeting with Bangladesh Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad at her Gulshan office on January 22.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Govt illegal, isolated: Says Khaleda at rally; asks for fresh polls quickly", *The Daily Star*, January 21, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/govt-illegal-isolated-7657?archive=2014-01-21>.

<sup>2</sup> Byron, Rejaul Karim and Tusher, Hasan Jahid, "6 projects put on fast track", *The Daily Star*, January 23, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/6-projects-put-on-fast-track-8050?archive=2014-01-23>.

<sup>3</sup> "BNP forms 4 probe bodies", *The Daily Star*, January 23, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bnp-forms-4-probe-bodies-8182?archive=2014-01-24>.

The government plans to revise down the GDP growth outlook by around 1 percentage point, as it thinks the previous target at 7.2 percent was 'ambitious' amid political volatility. The new GDP growth target would be 6.3 percent.<sup>4</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, the European Union has no plan to cancel the GSP facility for Bangladesh at the moment. Currently, Bangladesh benefits from the most favourable trade condition under the Generalised System of Preferences, as no tariff is imposed on the country's products entering the 28-nation bloc, EU Ambassador in Dhaka William Hanna said. His comment comes amid news reports that the EU might reconsider the GSP benefit for Bangladesh following the January 5 election boycotted by the BNP.<sup>5</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **Tamil Nadu CM Jayalalithaa has set a five-point agenda for the fishermen level talks between India and Sri Lanka; MR visits Abu Dhabi; Sri Lankan assistance to Uganda; USAID announces new program to revive the fishery community in the North; Australian PM arrives in Sri Lanka; Iranian parliament is for the cooperation between Iran and Sri Lanka; Lalith Weeraratunga visits US to brief the American leaders about the developments in Sri Lanka; Vietnam assures its support to Sri Lanka in the UNHRC; Concerns for Sri Lanka's human rights records continues; Sri Lanka assumes the chairmanship of the Vienna Chapter of the Group of 77**

According to reports, Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa has set a five-point agenda for the fishermen level talks between India and Sri Lanka scheduled to be held on January 27. The Tamil Nadu government has already conveyed to the Centre that the talks should be held without prejudice to, and must not in any way, compromise the stand already taken by Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa in her petition W.P (Civil) No. 561/2008, filed in the Supreme Court, on India's territorial sovereignty over Katchatheevu. Further, the resolution to be passed in the talks would be subject to the clearance of the State government, an official release said. The agenda for the talks include: (a) Reiterating the traditional fishing rights of Tamil Nadu fishermen to fish in their fishing waters of Palk Bay irrespective of any artificially drawn boundaries with mutual harmony on either side; (b) reiterating the commitment made in previous discussions to abjure from violent attacks on TN fishermen on the high seas by the Lankan Navy and desisting from unfriendly acts like abduction, detention, long periods of incarceration of Tamil Nadu fishermen in Lankan jails and preventing the seizure, confiscation of their boats/ fishing equipment by Lankan authorities; (c) discussing ways to speedily facilitate the repatriation of fishermen and their boats abducted by the Lankan Navy; (d) suggesting ways for fishing on convenient and agreeable terms for both sides; (e) exchanging information such as distress incidents and environment friendly fishing operations to ensure sustainable and viable exploitation of fish and fishery resources in Palk Bay.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Byron, Rejaul Karim, "Govt to cut GDP growth forecast down to 6.3pc", *The Daily Star*, January 21, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/govt-to-cut-gdp-growth-forecast-down-to-6-3pc-7648?archive=2014-01-21>.

<sup>5</sup> "No EU plan to scrap GSP", *The Daily Star*, January 20, 2014 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/no-eu-plan-to-scrap-gsp-7507?archive=2014-01-20>.

<sup>6</sup> "Jayalalithaa Sets 5-point Agenda for Fisherfolk Meet", *The Daily Mirror*, January 26, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/42098-jayalalithaa-sets-5-point-agenda-for-fisherfolk-meet.html>.

Reports noted that the United States Embassy in Colombo through its development arm, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), announced a new program to revive the fishery community in the Maradankerny Division of Jaffna. This initiative is part of a significant USAID livelihoods project worth US\$1.5 million that focuses on empowering economic opportunities and accelerating permanent resettlement for many displaced families in the North, the Embassy said in a release.<sup>7</sup>

Reports noted that Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott arrived in Sri Lanka on January 24 on a transit visit and was received by Prime Minister D.M. Jayaratne at the Katunayake Bandaranaike International Airport.<sup>8</sup>

According to reports, Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi voiced the parliament's support for the development of cooperation between Iran and Sri Lanka in different areas. He made the remark in a meeting with Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Iran Mohammad Feisal Razin on January 26, 2014 adding that tapping into the potentials of the two countries would pave the way for boosting cooperation and improved bilateral and regional relations.<sup>9</sup>

According to reports, ahead of the March session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Presidential Secretary Lalith Weeratunga, who is in charge of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Recommendations by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), left for the United States on January 22 to brief the leaders of that country on the developments in Sri Lanka.<sup>10</sup>

According to reports, Vietnam has asserted that it will do its "utmost" to support Sri Lanka at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) where Sri Lanka would be challenged on the human rights and accountability issues at its next session in March. Vietnam, which is a member of the UNHRC for 2014-2016 tenure, has given this assurance when Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's special envoy and the General Secretary of Communist Party Minister D.E.W. Gunasekera met Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang and Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong on January 23 during his working visit to Viet Nam.<sup>11</sup>

According to reports, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of Sri Lanka has noted that it had received 7,752 complaints on alleged violations between the period of January - December of 2013.<sup>12</sup> However, according to the Human Rights Watch, Sri Lanka made little progress in 2013 in

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<sup>7</sup> "US grants US\$ 1.5 million to revive fishing communities in Northern Sri Lanka", *The Colombo Page*, January 23, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14A/Jan23\\_1390489574CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14A/Jan23_1390489574CH.php).

<sup>8</sup> "Australian PM here in transit", *The Daily Mirror*, January 24, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/42056-australian-pm-here-in-transit.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "Iran's Parliament backs expansion of ties with SL", *The Daily Mirror*, January 26, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/42114-irans-parliament-backs-expansion-of-ties-with-sl.html>.

<sup>10</sup> "Lalith Weeratunga in US", *The Daily Mirror*, January 23, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/41980-lalith-weeratunga-in-us.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "Viet Nam assures 'utmost' support to Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council", *The Colombo Page*, January 25, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14A/Jan25\\_1390629240CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14A/Jan25_1390629240CH.php).

<sup>12</sup> "Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission received over 7,000 complaints last year", *The Colombo Page*, January 25, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14A/Jan25\\_1390658739CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14A/Jan25_1390658739CH.php).

accountability for serious human rights abuses committed during the civil war that ended in 2009.<sup>13</sup> The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also in its quarterly human rights report for the last quarter of 2013 stated that the Human rights situation in Sri Lanka had not improved in the last three months despite the intensified international focus on the country's human rights issues.<sup>14</sup>

Reports noted that Sri Lanka assumed the chairmanship of the Vienna Chapter of the Group of 77 from Sudan on January 22, 2014 at a formal meeting in Vienna attended by the Group's Ambassadors as well as the executive heads of Vienna based international organizations. Ambassador Aliyar Lebbe Abdul Azeez, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, officially took over the chairmanship of the Group of 77 (G-77) Vienna Chapter.<sup>15</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, President Mahinda Rajapaksa made one-day visit to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.<sup>16</sup>

Reports noted that Shiranthi Wickramasinghe Rajapaksa, the First Lady of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri-Lanka went to Uganda to lay a foundation stone and unveil the plan for the construction of a vocational training institute at UWESO's Masuliita Children's Home, a gift from the Sri-Lankan government to help uplift the lives of vulnerable children in Uganda.<sup>17</sup>

## Maldives

- **President Gayoom visits Sri Lanka; India to renovate Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH); India allows visa exemption for Maldivian medical tourists; India to supply oil to Maldives; Maldives is not for signing SOFA with the United States; Home Ministry orders implementation of all death sentences through lethal injection; British High Commissioner to the Maldives calls on President**

Reports noted that President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom made three days official visit to Sri Lanka on January 21, 2014 on an invitation by President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa in early December.<sup>18</sup> During the visits three agreements were signed between the governments of Maldives and Sri Lanka. The first agreement was regarding preventing transnational crime and strengthening cooperation between police forces in both countries. The second agreement was

<sup>13</sup> "Little Progress on Rights in Sri Lanka: Report", *The Daily Mirror*, January 21, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/41904-little-progress-on-rights-in-sri-lanka-report.html>.

<sup>14</sup> "No improvement in HR situation in SL-UK", *The Daily Mirror*, January 22, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/41944-no-improvement-in-hr-situation-in-sl-uk.html>.

<sup>15</sup> "Sri Lanka assumes chairmanship of Group of 77- Vienna Chapter", *The Colombo Page*, January 24, 2014 at [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_14A/Jan24\\_1390547117CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_14A/Jan24_1390547117CH.php).

<sup>16</sup> "President leaves for Abu Dhabi", *The Daily Mirror*, January 20, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/41810-president-leaves-for-abu-dhabi.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "Ugandans value the support of SL", *The Daily Mirror*, January 25, 2014 at <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/42096-ugandans-value-the-support-of-sl.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "President departs on state visit to Sri Lanka", *The Sun Online*, January 21, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19431>.



about strengthening cooperation regarding youth development and training. The third agreement was regarding strengthening cooperation between the two countries in sports.<sup>19</sup> President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has said the government has decided to award a plot of land to the High Commission of Sri Lanka in the Maldives to build its chancery in Male'. Sri Lankan government has also decided to grant a land to construct a High Commission of Maldives in Colombo.<sup>20</sup>

In another development, according to reports, speaking during the inauguration of Maldives-India friendship week to mark the golden jubilee of relations between the two countries, High Commissioner Rajeev Shahare said that the renovation of Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) would begin soon. The state-owned hospital was gifted to the Maldives by the Indian government in 1995.<sup>21</sup>

Reports noted that Indian government has allowed a 90-day exemption on visa for Maldivian travelling to the country on medical purposes. The restriction on a 60-day gap between two entries has also been lifted. Medical visa holders would be no longer required to report to the Foreign Regional Registration Office (FRRO) if their visa is for less than 180 days.<sup>22</sup>

Reports noted that Managing Director of State Trading Organisation (STO) Adam Azim has said that an agreement has been reached with India's Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited regarding supplying oil to Maldives.<sup>23</sup>

According to reports, in June last year, a local online blog released scans of a document claiming to be a draft copy of a Status of Forces Agreement to be signed by Maldives and the United States. The agreement alleged to allow the U.S. to establish military bases in the Maldives. When Maldivian President was asked question regarding the possibility of signing the agreement, President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom said that Maldives would not pursue a State of Forces Agreement (SOFA) proposed by the US. United States has dismissed claims of seeking a permanent military base in the Maldives. Defence Minister Colonel (Rtd) Mohamed Nazim also said in an interview to Sun in April last year, "SOFA is an agreement that allows US military trainings to be conducted in different countries. It does not involve establishing a base. They have not proposed to establish a base, and the government has not decided on the SOFA agreement."<sup>24</sup>

According to reports, International Human Rights NGO Amnesty International has called on the Maldives to stop plans to resume executions for the first time in 60 years. The statement follows

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<sup>19</sup> "Maldives, Sri Lanka sign three agreements", *The Sun Online*, January 22, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19468>.

<sup>20</sup> "Government to award land for Sri Lankan embassy", *The Sun Online*, January 24, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19503>.

<sup>21</sup> "Renovation of IGMH will begin soon: India", *The Sun Online*, January 21, 2014 at <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.sun.mv/english/19429>.

<sup>22</sup> "India allows 90-day exemption on medical visa for Maldivians", *The Sun Online*, January 25, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19530>.

<sup>23</sup> "Indian company to supply oil to Maldives", *The Sun Online*, January 23, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19500>

<sup>24</sup> "US dismisses claims of seeking a permanent military base in Maldives", *The Sun Online*, January 26, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19550>

an order signed by Home Minister Umar Naseer directing the Maldives Correctional Service to start making “all necessary arrangements” for the implementation of all death sentences through lethal injection. While Maldives legally retains the death penalty, it has not carried out an execution since 1954. There are currently 19 prisoners on death row.<sup>25</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, British High Commissioner to the Maldives John Rankin has paid a courtesy call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. They discussed Maldives-UK bilateral relations and exchanged views on ways to further enhance cooperation between the two countries.<sup>26</sup>

## B. East Asia

### Japan

- **Japanese Prime Minister visits India, agrees to promote bilateral defense ties**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, on January 25, arrived at New Delhi to attend a bilateral summit. He attended India’s Republic Day ceremony on January 26 to underscore the two countries growing ties. He was the first Japanese Prime minister to attend the event.<sup>27</sup> During Abe’s visit, both the countries agreed to enhance bilateral defence ties. Both Abe and his Indian counterpart Dr. Manmohan Singh agreed to hold two separate meetings of foreign ministers and defence ministers of the two countries by the end of this year to discuss issues of mutual concern. The two countries have also agreed that the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) and Indian Navy would conduct a joint drill. Moreover, both are to participate in a joint defence exercise along with the US. On the economic front, Abe pledged to extend to India a soft loan worth 200 billion yen to be used in three projects, including an extension of New Delhi’s subway system and the promotion of renewable energy.<sup>28</sup>

### South Korea

- **South Korean President visits Switzerland, vows to promote bilateral cooperation in various fields**

On January 20, South Korean President Park Geun-hye went on a four-day long state visit to Switzerland. She is the first South Korean President to do so since the time two countries opened diplomatic ties in 1963. During her visit, both Park and her Switzerland counterpart Didier

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<sup>25</sup> “Amnesty International condemns attempts to resume executions”, *The Sun Online*, January 25, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19536>.

<sup>26</sup> “British High Commissioner calls on the President”, *The Sun Online*, January 21, 2014 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/19430>.

<sup>27</sup> “Abe leaves for India trip”, *The Japan Times*, January 26, 2014, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000974111>

<sup>28</sup> “Japan, India up security cooperation”, *The Japan Times*, January 26, 2014, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000974548>



Burkhalter held summit level talk and agreed to promote bilateral cooperation on areas like trade, science, technology and industrial innovation. The two countries also signed twelve memorandums of understanding, including agreements on improving investment conditions to help promote mutual business cooperation, boost exchanges between the research institutions and science colleges of each country. The two also signed an agreement on training in Switzerland for twenty Koreans working at Swiss companies after graduating from vocational high school every year.<sup>29</sup>

## North Korea

- **North Korea expresses its readiness to rejoin the Six party Talks (SPT); North Korea makes some conciliatory steps towards South Korea, but Seoul remains suspicious of its intentions;**

Amb. Sin Son-ho, North Korean top envoy to the UN, recently stated that Pyongyang is ready to rejoin the Six party Talks (SPT). He however also stated that the timing for resumption of those talks would primarily depend on “those who oppose” them, primarily hinting at the US and South Korea. Sin also urged Seoul to take Pyongyang’s repeated offers for dialogue seriously.<sup>30</sup>

North Korea, on January 20, called on South Korea to put an end to all slender between the two sides. This was significant considering that only three days ago the former rejected Pyongyang’s proposal to cancel the joint military exercises that are scheduled to be held between South Korea and the US from late February till April this year. While commenting on South Korea’s rejection, North Korea’s propaganda newspaper Rodong Sinmun stated that the South Korean authorities “should dispel prejudice and unnecessary suspicion towards their compatriots to salvage North-South relations.”<sup>31</sup> South Korea however seems to remain suspicious of Pyongyang’s intentions and has not taken the latter’s reconciliation offer seriously. Instead Seoul has called on Pyongyang to demonstrate its sincerity through actions as the latter’s intentions can no longer be judged through words.<sup>32</sup>

## C. Russia

### Russia

- **Foreign Minister Lavrov: Inter-Syrian dialogue needs to be enlarged to make it truly representative; Russia has rules out talks with terrorists in Syria; Russia delivers a new humanitarian consignment for Syrian refugees; Russia warns against unilateral interpretation of Geneva Communiqué; Prime Minister Medvedev criticises the revocation of Iran’s**

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<sup>29</sup> “Korea, Switzerland sign trade, technology deals”, *The Korea Herald*, January 21, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140120000993>

<sup>30</sup> “NK envoy says six-way talks depend on S. Korea, US,” *The Korea Herald*, January 25, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140125000040>

<sup>31</sup> “N.K renews calls for halt to ‘slender’”, *The Korea Herald*, January 20, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140120000728>

<sup>32</sup> “Seoul snubs N. Korean overture, calls for action”, *The Korea Herald*, January 24, 2013, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140124000680>

invitation to Geneva-2; Putin and Obama discuss peace conference on Syria; Russia calls for non-interference in Ukraine's internal affairs; Russia refutes allegations of the arrival of Russian riot police in Kiev; Russia-EU summit scheduled for January 28 to focus on economic ties, Syria and Iran; FM Lavrov calls upon Russia to do 'everything' for stability in Balkans; Russia has seeks to enhance cooperation with Norway; Finland backs a visa free regime between Russia and EU; Russian and German Foreign Ministers discuss Syria and Ukraine; Russia to establish multi-discipline research and development center on Svalbard; Russia to modernize its Antarctic stations; FM Lavrov outlines Russia's G8 Presidency priorities; Russia seeks UN's central role in normalizing situation in Afghanistan; Russia and Belarus discuss plans for implementation of joint projects; Russia and Palestine sign a number of agreements; Russia will strive for deeper integration in the Asian-Pacific region; Russia and Tajikistan have discussed bilateral economic relations; Russia and Japan to continue with their peace treaty talks; FM Lavrov hope that Latin America will become visa-free zone for Russians; Industrial output stagnated in Russia in 2013; President Putin orders ministries to study the possibility of creating a military space system

According to reports, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that the dialogue between the Syrian government and opposition needs to be enlarged to make it truly representative and that the current dialogue is just the first step towards bringing peace in Syria.<sup>33</sup>

Reports noted that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has dismissed reports that Russia is willing to talks to terrorists operating in Syria. He also declared that this stand is shared by all members of the G8.<sup>34</sup>

According to reports, Russia has delivered a 33 ton humanitarian consignment to Beirut for Syrian refugees. In 2013, the Russian Emergencies Ministry had sent over 200 tons of humanitarian aid to Syria and neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan. Another 70 ton was delivered to Palestinian refugees in Syria.<sup>35</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has stressed on the importance of strict compliance with the Geneva Communiqué on Syria and felt that the US and some European countries are tempted to interpret the Communiqué in terms of changing the regime in Syria.<sup>36</sup>

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said that the revocation of Iran's invitation to take part in the Geneva-2 international peace conference on Syria was an "absolutely inadmissible thing" and will undermine international efforts on the Syrian crisis settlement.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Inter-Syrian dialogue needs to be enlarged to make it truly representative – FM", Itar-Tass, January 25, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716276>

<sup>34</sup> "Russia foreign minister: no talks with terrorists in Syria", Itar-Tass, January 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716319>

<sup>35</sup> "Russia delivers new humanitarian consignment for Syrian refugees", Itar-Tass, January 23, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715940>

<sup>36</sup> "Lavrov warns against unilateral interpretations of Geneva Communiqué", Itar-Tass, January 22, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715804>

<sup>37</sup> "Medvedev says revocation of Iran's invitation to Geneva-2 is absolutely inadmissible", Itar-Tass, January 22, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715592>

Reports noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Barrack Obama have discussed the peace conference on Syria, over phone on January 21. They also touched upon a number of other issues, including implementation of deals to settle the Iranian nuclear problem and development of Russia-US trade and economic relations.<sup>38</sup>

Russia has called for non-interference in Ukraine's internal affairs and said that the country should not be threatened with sanctions. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has also urged the West not to encourage actions of militants in Ukraine.<sup>39</sup>

According to reports, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia seeks to develop cooperation with Norway. He spoke after a meeting with his Norwegian counterpart Borge Brende on January 20 in Moscow. Prospects of bilateral cooperation, including power industry, fisheries, environmental protection, nuclear and radiation safety, the strengthening of contacts between the northern regions and in the border areas, Russia's economic and scientific presence at the Spitzbergen archipelago and topical humanitarian problems, were discussed.<sup>40</sup>

Russia's embassy in Kiev has refuted Ukrainian media reports about alleged arrival of Russian riot police in Kiev.<sup>41</sup>

According to reports, Russian president's aide Yuri Ushakov has said that the Russia-EU summit, scheduled for January 28, will primarily focus on trade and economic cooperation, the situation around Syria and Iran's nuclear programme. The two sides will also discuss prospects of EU-Russia relations, visa free travel, Eurasian integration processes, Partnership for Modernization initiative, Third Energy package, South Stream pipeline and Russia's G20 and G8 presidencies.<sup>42</sup>

According to reports, Foreign Minister Lavrov has said that Russian must do everything to ensure stability in the Balkans. He observed that there exist a lot of problems in the region wherein he referred to the emergence of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Lavrov that Russia supports the process of forging relationship between Belgrade and Pristina.<sup>43</sup>

According to reports, Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja has said that Finland upholds prospects for introducing visa free formalities between the European Union and Russia.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "Putin, Obama discuss peace conference on Syria over phone", Itar-Tass, January 21, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715584>

<sup>39</sup> "Moscow calls for non-interference in Ukraine's internal affairs", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716099>

<sup>40</sup> "Russia seeks to develop cooperation with Norway", Itar-Tass, January 20, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715253>

<sup>41</sup> "Russian embassy in Kiev refutes media allegations about arrival of Russian riot police", Itar-Tass, January 26, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716345>

<sup>42</sup> "Russia-EU summit to focus on economic ties, Syria and Iran - Kremlin aide", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716132>

<sup>43</sup> "Russia must do everything for stability in Balkans - Lavrov", Itar-Tass, January 21, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715465>

<sup>44</sup> "Finland backs prospects for introducing visa free regime between EU, Russia - FM", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716185>

Foreign Ministers of Russia and Germany Sergey Lavrov and Frank-Walter Steinmeier have discussed, over the phone, the current situation in Ukraine and problems of Syrian settlement.<sup>45</sup>

Russian Minister for Natural Resources and Environment Sergey Donskoy has said that Russia is exploring the possibility of establishing a multi-discipline research and development center on the Svalbard archipelago in Norway in order to study climate change.<sup>46</sup>

Minister for Natural Resources and Environment Sergey Donskoy has said that Russia will start financing modernization of its stations and bases in the Antarctic by 2015.<sup>47</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia seeks the United Nations' central role in efforts towards normalizing the situation in Afghanistan. These were his opening remarks during the talks with Jan Kubis, head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in Moscow on January 21.<sup>48</sup>

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich and Belarusian First Vice-Premier Vladimir Semashko have synchronized plans on joint projects in different fields. These include plans for plans of Roselektronika and Integral, MAZ and KamAZ, Peleng and Roskosmos, as well as of companies Grodno Azot and EuraKhim.<sup>49</sup>

Foreign Ministers of Russia and Palestine, Sergei Lavrov and Riyad al-Maliki, have signed three documents - on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs affairs, on cooperation between the interior ministries and a memorandum on mutual understanding between the healthcare ministries. These agreements were signed during the visit of President Mahmoud Abbas to Moscow on January 24.<sup>50</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in 2013 was an important factor in balancing international relations and that Russia's deeper integration in the Asian-Pacific region is a national priority for the whole of 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "Russia, Germany FMs discuss situation in Ukraine, Syria in telephone talk – corr", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716177>

<sup>46</sup> "Russia to establish multi-discipline research and development center on Svalbard", Itar-Tass, January 23, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715960>

<sup>47</sup> "Russia to modernize its Antarctic stations, bases in 2015 - Environment Ministry", Itar-Tass, January 23, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715926>

<sup>48</sup> "Lavrov: Russia seeks UN's central role in normalizing situation in Afghanistan", Itar-Tass, January 21, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715483>

<sup>49</sup> "Russia, Belarus synchronize plans of joint projects in different fields", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716183>

<sup>50</sup> "Russian, Palestinian FMs sign agreement on cooperation in customs, healthcare", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716156>

<sup>51</sup> "Moscow-Beijing cooperation was important balancing factor in 2013 – diplomat", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715429>

Russia and Tajikistan have held the 12<sup>th</sup> session of their intergovernmental commission (IGC) meeting for economic cooperation in Dushanbe on January 25. Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at US\$ 1 billion in 2013. A total of 18 items were on the agenda.<sup>52</sup>

In other developments, according to reports, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has told the Japanese Parliament that Japan and Russia will continue discussing prospects for a future peace treaty. Mr. Abe is expected to visit Russia in February for the Olympic opening ceremony in Sochi.<sup>53</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has expressed hope that the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean will become a visa-free zone for Russian travellers in the foreseeable future. At present, 11 countries of Latin America have introduced visa-free regulations for Russian tourists with Paraguay being the latest to do so. In the past, Russia has actively cooperated with a number of integration structures in the region, including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations.<sup>54</sup>

Trade and Industry Minister Denis Manturov has said that Russia experienced zero growth in industrial output in 2013. This comes in the backdrop of Russia's overall economic growth slowing down to 1.3 per cent in 2013, it's lowest since the global recession of 2009.<sup>55</sup>

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has outlined the priorities of Russia's G8 presidency, listing among them fight against extremism and drug threat, as well as health protection and management of risks connected with natural calamities.<sup>56</sup>

Deputy Premier Dmitry Rogozin has said that specific proposals to set up the strategic aerospace defence systems holding will be worked out in the next few weeks. These include both the 'information' and 'fire' systems.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Russia-Tajikistan IGC to discuss econ partnership priorities", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716030>

<sup>53</sup> "Tokyo, Moscow continue peace treaty talks - Japan's PM", Itar-Tass, January 24, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/716111>

<sup>54</sup> "Lavrov hopes Latin America to become visa-free zone for Russians", Itar-Tass, January 21, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715507>

<sup>55</sup> "Russia Sees Stagnation in Industrial Output in 2013", Rianovosti, January 22, 2014, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20140123/186808754/Russia-Sees-Stagnation-in-Industrial-Output-in-2013.html>

<sup>56</sup> "Lavrov outlines Russia's G8 presidency priorities", Itar-Tass, January 21, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715422>

<sup>57</sup> "Putin orders ministries to study possibility of creating military space system", Itar-Tass, January 20, 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/715366>



## II. DEFENCE REVIEW

### National

- **AGNI-IV, the 4000 kms range Nuclear Capable Ballistic Missile successfully launched; Indian Air Force expresses reservations about Indo-Russian project to co-develop a futuristic Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft**

Reports noted that AGNI-IV, the 4000 kms range Nuclear Capable Ballistic Missile was successfully launched on January 20 from the Wheeler island off the coast of Odisha. This was the third consecutive successful trial and the last one in the series of development launches. DG, DRDO and Scientific Advisor to Defence Minister, Avinash Chander said on the occasion, "The event is of greater significance since the system was tested in its deliverable configuration with the active participation of Strategic Forces Command (SFC) personnel. The missile is now ready for induction and its serial production will now begin." Significantly, this launch takes India's level of deterrence and its preparedness and effectiveness to newer heights. Agni-IV is equipped with state-of-the-art Avionics, 5th generation On Board Computer and distributed architecture. It has the latest features to correct and guide itself for inflight disturbances.<sup>58</sup>

In another development, according to reports, the Indian Air Force has expressed reservations about Indo-Russian project to co-develop a futuristic Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) and Russia's ability to meet her promises in this regard. IAF officials argue that the FGFA has shortfalls in terms of performance and other technical features. The IAF's three top objections to the FGFA are: (a) The Russians are reluctant to share critical design information with India; (b) The fighter's current AL-41F1 engines are inadequate, being mere upgrades of the Sukhoi-30MKI's AL-31 engines; and (c) It is too expensive.<sup>59</sup>

### International

- **Germany's new defense minister for a greater engagement of Germany in Africa; French Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian: US military's partnership with France in Africa is indispensable in the fight against extremist groups in the Sahel region**

According to reports, Germany's new defense minister has stressed on the need for a greater engagement of Germany in Africa. She opined that Germany should send additional military trainers to Mali and support the French intervention in Central African Republic. German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen said she foresaw boosting the training mission in Mali from its

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<sup>58</sup> "India Successfully Test Fires Agni-IV," PIB, January 20, 2014, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=102610>

<sup>59</sup> "Russia can't deliver on Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft: IAF", Business Standard, January 21, 2014, at [http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/russia-can-t-deliver-on-fifth-generation-fighter-aircraft-iaf-114012100059\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/russia-can-t-deliver-on-fifth-generation-fighter-aircraft-iaf-114012100059_1.html)



current mandate of 180 personnel, with 99 now on the ground, to up to 250, and deploying a medical services airbus to back up the French mission in CAR. "In Central Africa, a bloody war is unfolding between Christians and Muslims. We cannot allow this conflict to set the entire region ablaze," she added.<sup>60</sup>

In another development, according to reports, French Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian has emphasized that US military's partnership with France in Africa is indispensable in the fight against extremist groups in the Sahel region. France is fighting against extremist groups in the Sahel region. Reinforcing US-French cooperation in the restive Sahel region is the main challenge of France currently. France has admired US role in its fight against terrorism in the region. In the French operation in Mali launched in January 2013, the US has provided aerial refueling tankers, cargo aircraft and intelligence, including unmanned drone aircraft. The Americans also have flown peacekeeping troops from Burundi and Rwanda to CAR, where a French contingent is working alongside an African Union force.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "German Defense Minister Signals Greater Role In Africa," Defense News, January 26, 2014, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140126/DEFREG01/301260026/German-Defense-Minister-Signals-Greater-Role-Africa>

<sup>61</sup> "French Defense Minister: US 'Indispensable' Ally In Africa," Defense News, January 26, 2014, at <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140126/DEFREG01/301260021/French-Defense-Minister-US-Indispensable-Ally-Africa>