

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. East Asia

South East Asia

- **Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario: US would be allowed to station forces at military bases in the Philippines; Aung San Suu Kyi visits Japan after twenty seven years; ASEAN Regional Forum defense officials' dialogue held in Shanghai; Malaysia frees thirty two Philippine nationals; Laos economy likely to grow 7.7 percent in 2013**

According to reports, the Philippines foreign secretary Albert del Rosario has said that the United States would be allowed to station forces at military bases in the Philippines if it went to war with North Korea. He made these remarks on April 13, 2013 while citing the treaty between the two allies. It would be worth noting that the Korean peninsula has been engulfed by escalating military tensions and dire threats of nuclear war since North Korea conducted a rocket test last December and a nuclear test in February this year. In recent years the Philippines has been seeking to improve its defence ties with the United States amid a festering territorial dispute with China over parts of the South China Sea. Some of its facilities are being used in ongoing annual joint military exercises between the Philippines and the United States, where the Pentagon deployed a dozen F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets.¹

In another development, according to reports, Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Japan on April 13, 2013, her first visit in twenty seven years to the country where she spent time as a university researcher nearly three decades ago. During her six-day trip, the Nobel laureate is expected to have meetings with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida as well as some of the approximately 10,000 Burmese who live in Japan.²

Reports noted that the ASEAN Regional Forum Defense Officials' Dialogue (ARF-DOD) was held in Shanghai on April 11, 2013. The dialogue was co-hosted by the defense ministries of China and Brunei, which is chairing ASEAN this year. The press release said nearly 60 representatives from ASEAN countries and 25 ARF member countries, including Russia, the United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea and Japan, as well as the ASEAN Secretariat, participated in the dialogue. ARF's contribution to the promotion of trust-building measures and precautionary diplomacy was much appreciated during the meeting.³

¹ "Philippines offers US its military bases in case of North Korea war", *NDTV News*, April 13, 2013, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/philippines-offers-us-its-military-bases-in-case-of-north-korea-war-353644>

² "Suu Kyi makes first Japan visit for 27 years", *AFP*, April 13, 2013, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i5aEoMqurUY9HyTc6vj5UpSLXCxQ?docId=CNG.1baa125a4bdc411c96aace7a1a263691.2c1>

³ "ASEAN regional forum for defense officials held in Shanghai", *Xinhua*, April 11, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-04/11/c_132301618.htm

In other developments, according to the Malaysian police sources, it has released thirty two armed Filipinos arrested on suspicion of trying to join an incursion by Islamic militants in an eastern state. The arrested Filipinos would be deported back to the Philippines after investigators concluded they had no link with the ongoing incursion.⁴

According to reports, the Laotian economy is expected to have sustainable growth of around 7.7 percent in 2013 as resource based industries, manufacturing and services continue to generate solid growth. It was also noticed that Laos will continue to see solid growth in the next few years, building on the achievements of the last five years.

As a caution, however, it was added that that country will have to shift its focus from absolute growth to quality of growth to ensure that the increases will follow an inclusive and sustainable path.⁵

B. Central Asia and Russia

Central asia

- **Kyrgyzstan and Turkey sign a number of bilateral documents as part of Turkish PM Erdogan's visit to Bishkek; Tajikistan and European Union discusses the prospects of improving bilateral ties; Iran and Tajikistan sign an MoU to complete the construction of the strategically important Istiqlol tunnel; Kyrgyzstan is committed to joining the Customs Union; Russia to continue the use of Baikonur space facilities; Kazakhstan's petrol production dipped by 18 per cent in 2013; Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev: Kazakhstan will assist in the economic development of Kyrgyzstan; United States hands over equipment and vehicles worth US\$ 2 million to border troops of Tajikistan**

According to reports, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey have signed a number of bilateral documents as part of the official visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Bishkek. These agreements include cooperation in the field of tourism, investment opportunities and forestry.⁶

In another development, according to reports, as part of Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon's visit to Brussels, the two countries have discussed the prospects of improving bilateral ties and regional cooperation. Special attention was given to development of a new European Union's Central Asian Strategy for 2014-2020 with issues like energy and health care topping the agenda.⁷

⁴ "Malaysia frees 32 Filipinos held over incursion", *AFP*, April 14, 2013, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j0NKAOOCZkgsIszDPV0LWijmrcUQ?docId=CNG.2d94e8527e6f80753342032988a9132f.2b1>

⁵ "Laos economy to grow 7.7 percent in 2013", *Prensa Latina*, April 12, 2013, http://www.plenglish.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1303201&Itemid=1

⁶ "Kyrgyzstan, Turkey sign bilateral documents", *Times of Central Asia*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/politics-analyses-and-opinions/10419-kyrgyzstan-turkey-sign-bilateral-documents>

⁷ "Rakhmon, EU improve bilateral ties", *Times of Central Asia*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/politics-analyses-and-opinions/10417-rakhmon-eu-improve-bilateral-ties>

Reports noted that Iran and Tajikistan have signed an MoU to complete the construction of strategically important Istiqlol tunnel by the end of September 2013. The tunnel located 80 kms northwest of Dushanbe and has length of 5 km. It connects Dushanbe with Tajikistan's second largest city, Khujand. It is also a transit route between Dushanbe and Tashkent.⁸

President Almazbek Atambayev has said that Kyrgyzstan is committed to joining the Customs Union comprising of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.⁹

According to reports, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia will continue to use Kazakhstan's space station Baikonur despite tensions which have been brewing over license fees and rocket restrictions. Russia has a contract agreement with Kazakh officials to lease the space facility until 2050, paying \$115 million on an annual basis to use it.¹⁰

Reports noted that Kazakhstan's petrol production has dropped by 18.2 percent in the first three months of 2013 compared to levels produced during the same period in 2012. With total production for the January-March 2013 period amounting to 600,000 tons of petroleum, the decline can largely be attributed to the closure of its 3 refineries which will remain shut till 2016 for undergoing modernisation.¹¹

In other developments, according to reports, President Nazarbayev, during his official meeting with his Kyrgyz counterpart Almazbek Atambayev, has said that Kazakhstan will assist in the economic development of Kyrgyzstan. This includes strengthening the working of Kazakh-Kyrgyz investment fund, which is intended to hold US\$ 100 million of capital to sponsor investment projects in Kyrgyzstan.¹²

According to reports, the United States embassy in Dushanbe has handed over equipment and vehicles worth US\$ 2 million to border troops of Tajikistan. The vehicles should assist in combating the threat of narcotics and contraband trafficking.¹³

Russia

- **President Putin praises US decision to postpone an intercontinental ballistic missile test in order to avoid further escalation of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula; Russia agreed**

⁸ "Iran to finish Istiqlol Tunnel construction in Tajikistan", Times of Central Asia, April 11, 2013, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/economy-finance-and-investment-news/10420-iran-to-finish-istiqlol-tunnel-construction-in-tajikistan>

⁹ "Kyrgyzstan committed to joining Customs Union - President Atambayev", Central Asia Newswires, April 12, 2013, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/705357.html>

¹⁰ "Russia will continue to use Baikonur, Putin says", Central Asia Newswires, April 12, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13969>

¹¹ "Kazakh petrol production dips 18% in 2013", Central Asia Newswires, April 12, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/viewstory.aspx?id=13968>

¹² "Astana eager to assist Kyrgyz development, Nazarbayev says", Central Asia Newswires, April 11, 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=13960>

¹³ "U.S. Embassy hands over equipment and vehicles to Border Troops of Tajikistan valued at \$2 mln", Central Asian News Service, April 10, 2013, <http://en.ca-news.org/news:522700/>

with US stance on North Korea; Gazprom and Shell sign an Arctic shelf development agreement; Russia sets a target of achieving a US\$ 100 billion trade with Germany; India and Russia sign an agreement to cooperate in disaster management; Russia expresses its concern over the Al Qaeda's growing interest in Syria; Russia sends humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan; Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: Russia is ready to expand ties with Georgia; Russia to complete deliveries of Mi 35 helicopters to Brazil by the end of this year; Russia and Brazil are moving forward with their space cooperation; Russia and Slovakia have agreed to start negotiations on building a new nuclear power plant; Russia's Economic Development Ministry cuts growth forecast of the country to 2.4 per cent in 2013

According to reports, President Putin has praised the US decision to postpone an intercontinental ballistic missile test in order to avoid further escalation of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. He expressed hope that this gesture will be noted by North Korea and all parties would work together to diffuse the situation.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Russian government has said that it agrees with US stance on North Korea but warned that any military moves can be an obstacle in calming tensions in the Korean peninsula.¹⁵

Reports noted that Gazprom and Shell have signed a tentative deal to develop hydrocarbons in the Russian Arctic. Shell has also signed a memorandum with Gazprom Neft, Gazprom's oil arm, on cooperation in exploring and producing shale oil in Russia's West Siberia in the Bazhenov, Abalak and Frolovskaya rock formations.¹⁶

Russia has set a target of achieving a US\$ 100 billion trade with Germany. The current trade turnover between the two countries is US\$ 74 billion.

According to reports, as part of Union Home Minister SK Shinde's visit to Russia, India and Russia have signed an agreement to cooperate in disaster management, including during natural calamities. The agreement will enable both the countries to help each other in the field of prevention and elimination of the consequences of emergency situations.¹⁷

Reports noted that Sistema will invest up to US\$1 billion in India in 2013-15. The company has said that it expects to break even by end of 2014 on operating income in all nine regions wherein it operated in India.¹⁸

¹⁴ "Moscow Hails US Decision to Delay Missile Test", Rianovosti, April 8, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130408/180512533/Moscow-Hails-US-Decision-to-Delay-Missile-Test.html>

¹⁵ "Lavrov Says Russia Agrees With U.S. on N. Korea", The Moscow Times, April 11, 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lavrov-says-russia-agrees-with-us-on-n-korea/478469.html>

¹⁶ "Gazprom, Shell sign Arctic shelf development deal", Russia and India Report, April 9, 2013, http://indrus.in/news/2013/04/09/gazprom_shell_sign_arctic_shelf_development_deal_23655.html

¹⁷ "India, Russia to cooperate in disaster management", Business Standard, April 11, 2013, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-russia-to-cooperate-in-disaster-management-113041100446_1.html

¹⁸ "Sistema Mulls \$1Bln India Investment", The Moscow Times, April 9, 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/sistema-mulls-1bln-india-investment/478391.html>

According to reports, Russia has expressed its concern over the Al Qaeda's growing interest in Syria.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Russia's Emergencies Ministry will send more humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan.²⁰

According to reports, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia appreciates the Georgian government's pragmatism and is ready to expand ties with it on sectors like trade, cultural, humanitarian and sport. As part of this initiative, Russian consumer rights watchdog Rospotrebnadzor has recently cleared 36 Georgian winemakers and four mineral water producers to resume deliveries to Russia. Georgian wine and mineral water is extremely popular in Russia, whose exports were banned as a result of the war of 2008.²¹

In other developments, according to reports, Russia will complete deliveries of 12 Mi 35 helicopters, worth US\$ 150 million, to Brazil by the end of this year. Nine helicopters have so far been delivered. Russia has also decided to deliver Pantsir surface-to-air missile systems to Brazil while the two countries will discuss the possibility of the joint development of an advanced surface-to-air missile system, Parana.²²

Russia has agreed to provide Serbia with a US\$500 million loan in order to finance the country's budget deficit.²³

Russia and Slovakia have agreed to start negotiations on building a new nuclear power plant in Slovakia.²⁴

Russia's Economic Development Ministry has cut its economic growth forecast for this year by a third to 2.4 percent. This will be Russia's worst since the beginning of the global economic crisis of 2008-09.²⁵

¹⁹ "Moscow Alarmed by Al Qaeda's Interest in Syria", Rianovosti, April 11, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130411/180589453/Moscow-Alarmed-by-Al-Qaedas-Interest-in-Syria.html>

²⁰ "Russia Flies Aid to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Jordan", Rianovosti, April 10, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130410/180555363/Russia-Flies-Aid-to-Syrian-Refugees-in-Lebanon-Jordan.html>

²¹ "Russia Ready to Expand Ties with Georgia - FM Lavrov", Rianovosti, April 11, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130411/180568156/Russia-Ready-to-Expand-Ties-with-Georgia-FM-Lavrov.html>

²² "Russia to Complete Helicopter Deliveries to Brazil in Fall", Rianovosti, April 10, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20130410/180562334/Russia-to-Complete-Helicopter-Deliveries-to-Brazil-in-Fall.html>

²³ "Russia to Grant Serbia \$500 Mln Loan", Rianovosti, April 10, 2013, <http://en.rian.ru/business/20130410/180555477/Russia-to-Grant-Serbia-500-Mln-Loan.html>

²⁴ "Rosatom Eyes Slovak Plant", The Moscow Times, April 11, 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/rosatom-eyes-slovak-plant/478472.html>

²⁵ "Growth Forecast Cut One-Third To Just 2.4%", The Moscow Times, April 11, 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/growth-forecast-cut-one-third-to-just-24/478546.html>

C. West Asia

Syria

- **Syrian media lashes out at UN envoy Brahimi**

According to reports, Al Baath Daily newspaper, a mouthpiece for the Syrian ruling party, has slammed the role of UN-Arab League envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi. The newspaper, on April 15, accused Brahimi of “not listening to the Syrian people” and suggested that he may resign from his position soon. The Syrian government has repeatedly criticised Brahimi on his efforts to reach a solution to the two-year old crisis in the country. Brahimi has urged “serious talks” between Bashar al Assad’s government and the opposition. Brahimi took over from former envoy Kofi Annan in September 2012 in a bid to find a political solution to the crisis.²⁶

Israel/Palestine

- **Palestinian PM Fayyad resigns**

Reports noted that Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad submitted his resignation on April 13 following a long-running dispute with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Fayyad has agreed to serve as caretaker until a new government can be formed. Fayyad’s resignation is seen as a major blow to US efforts to restart stalled peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians.²⁷

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEW

Jammu & Kashmir

- **Sarpanch of National Conference (NC) shot dead; Cabinet Secretary to visit Jammu & Kashmir; National Investigation Agency (NIA) team arrives in valley**

According to reports, unidentified gunmen shot dead a National Conference Sarpanch at Kulpora in Pulwama in south Kashmir on late April 8. A Police official said the gunmen fired upon Ghulam Muhammad Lone, an NC Sarpanch for Liddermand, in the compound of his residence injuring him critically. Later he succumbed to his injuries. It would be worth noting that Lone is the sixth Panchayat representative killed by the gunmen since the Panchayat polls ended in Jammu & Kashmir.²⁸

²⁶ “Syria daily slams peace envoy Brahimi”, The Daily Star, April 15, 2013 at <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Apr-15/213789-syria-daily-slams-peace-envoy-brahimi.ashx#axzz2Qc9jVrGY>

²⁷ “Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigns”, BBC News, April 13, 2013 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22139517>; Also see “Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad resigns”, Yahoo News, April 13, 2013 at <http://news.yahoo.com/palestinian-prime-minister-fayyad-resigns-180845696.html>

²⁸ “NC Sarpanch shot dead”, Greater Kashmir, April 8, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Apr/9/nc-sarpanch-shot-dead-88.asp>

Reports noted that Cabinet Secretary Ajit Kumar Seth will be visiting Jammu and Kashmir along with a delegation of Union Secretaries from April 13. A team will review various infrastructure development projects in the state. The team, comprising secretaries from around a dozen union ministries, will also review the Rs 30,000 crore Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan (PMRP).²⁹

In other developments, according to reports, continuing its investigations into former militant Syed Liyaqat Shah's arrest, a six-member team of National Investigation Agency (NIA) landed in the valley on April 11 for further probe. The team which met top brass of Jammu and Kashmir Police is also expected to meet Liyaqat's family too. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah discussed the matter with Union Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde. He pressed for time-bound probe by NIA into the entire episode. The issue also figured in J-K Assembly and legislators demanded immediate release of Liyaqat.³⁰

North East India

- **Meghalaya Chief Minister claims no easy solution to Assam-Meghalaya border issue; Bangladesh not to be affected by Meghalaya hydro power projects; Tripura state to be declared fully literate; Dima Hasao to hold polls; President Pranab Mukherjee to visit Manipur and Sikkim**

According to reports, Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma on April 8 admitted that the inter-State boundary dispute with Assam is not amenable to easy solution. Chief Minister Sangma, however, promised that his government would continue to make more vigorous efforts towards finding an enduring resolution to the problem. The four-decade-old boundary dispute between Meghalaya and Assam has witnessed a spate of incidents in recent past. Meghalaya has 12 areas of difference on the boundary with Assam.³¹

In another development, according to reports, amid fresh concerns in Bangladesh over the construction of two proposed dams in Meghalaya, State Power Minister Clement Marak said on April 10 that construction of the hydropower projects would not have any impact in Bangladesh. Power-starved Meghalaya is proposing to construct two dams: One across the Umiew River known as Mawphu Hydro Electric Project in East Khasi Hills, and another across Myntdu River known as Myntdu-Leshka Hydro Electric Project Stage-II in the West Jaintia Hills. The 85 MW Mawphu project would be built by the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (Neepco) on the Umiew River in East Khasi Hills District at an estimated cost of Rs 453.81 crore. Bangladesh opposed the construction of the two dams since both were on common rivers between Bangladesh and India. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni had asked New Delhi not to unilaterally proceed on building these dams, as Dhaka wants them to be sorted out in the Joint River Commission.³²

²⁹ "Cabinet Secretary to visit JK on April 13", *Greater Kashmir*, April 8, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Apr/9/cabinet-secretary-to-visit-jk-on-april-13-87.asp>

³⁰ "NIA team arrives", *Greater Kashmir*, April 11, 2013 at <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2013/Apr/12/nia-team-arrives-87.asp>

³¹ "No easy solution to boundary dispute with Assam: Sangma", *The Assam Tribune*, April 9, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr0913/at045>

³² "Meghalaya hydro projects won't affect Bangladesh: Marak", *The Assam Tribune*, April 11, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1113/at047>

According to reports, India's north-eastern State of Tripura will be declared fully literate in September this year, said the state finance minister Badal Choudhury on April 12. According to a government survey conducted by the eight district magistrates in August last year, there are only 1,47,261 people of the state's 3.7 million people, including those aged 50 and above, who are illiterate. As per the adult literacy guidelines of the union ministry of human resource development, people aged between 15 to 45 years would be targeted under the literacy mission.³³

Reports noted that altogether 1,15,765 voters from 28 constituencies would be able to exercise their franchise in the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (Dima Hasao) poll, the dates of which were announced on April 12 by the Assam State Election Commission (ASEC). ASEC Commissioner Biren Dutta informed that the Council would go for poll on May 20 and the date of notification has been fixed on April 12.³⁴

In other developments, reports noted that President Pranab Mukherjee will visit the north-eastern states of Manipur and Sikkim on a three-day tour beginning April 15.³⁵

III. UNITED NATIONS (UN) REVIEW

- **Five Indian peacekeepers killed in South Sudan, UN condemns the killing; India and Germany to intensify efforts for UNSC reform; UN welcomes Yemen's efforts to restructure security sector**

According to reports, in South Sudan, five Indian soldiers were killed when the UN convoy they were escorting as part of their peacekeeping operations came under heavy fire from armed rebels. The UN will pay the relatives of victims a grant of US\$ 70,000 apart from the compensations to be paid by the Indian government.³⁶ Meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the UN Security Council strongly condemned the killing³⁷ while India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh expressed anguish at the killing.³⁸

³³ "Tripura to be declared fully literate", *The Assam Tribune*, April 12, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1213/at045>

³⁴ "Dima Hasao polls on May 20", *The Assam Tribune*, April 12, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1313/at06>

³⁵ "President's three-day visit to Sikkim, Manipur begins Monday", *The Assam Tribune*, April 14, 2013 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr1413/at035>

³⁶ "Five Indian peacekeepers killed in South Sudan ambush", *The Times of India*, April 09, 2013 at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-09/india/38402918_1_jonglei-south-sudan-unmiss

³⁷ "South Sudan: UN officials, Security Council condemn deadly attack on peacekeepers", *UN News Centre*, April 09, 2013 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44603&Cr=South+Sudan&Cr1=#.UW4s1aLe4y5>

³⁸ "PM anguished at Indian UN peacekeepers' killing", *IANs live*, April 10, 2013 at http://www.ianslive.in/index.php?param=news/PM_anguished_at_Indian_UN_peacekeepers_killing-394479/TopStory/30

In another development, India's External Affairs Minister, Salman Khurshid and his German counterpart, Guido Westerwelle announced that both the countries will jointly intensify efforts through the G4 to gain permanent membership in an expanded UN Security Council. They also said that they would continue to work to strengthen the rule of law at the global level.³⁹

In other developments, according to reports, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Security Council welcomed the Yemeni President, Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi's efforts to restructure the country's security sector and also called upon all parties to honour the timetable and benchmarks set out in the Transition Agreement.⁴⁰

³⁹ "India, Germany will step up pressure for UN Security Council seat", *IBN Live*, April 15, 2013 at <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/india-germany-will-step-up-pressure-for-un-security-council-seat/385363-2.html>

⁴⁰ "Yemen: Ban, Security Council welcome efforts to reform armed forces", *UN News Centre*, April 12, 2013 at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44638&Cr=yemen&Cr1=#.UW4szqLe4y5>