

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. East Asia

China

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Li Keqiang scheduled to visit three countries; Xi Jinping attends the first memorial ceremony for Nanjing Victims; China upset over Vietnam's call for sovereignty over the South China Sea islands; China and Ireland discuss bilateral relations; China upset over the United States stance over the South China Sea; China calls for blocking of bill for sale of arms to Taiwan; Chinese defence minister meets with the Portuguese air force chief of staff.**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will be starting a three nation tour in Asia and Europe from December 13. He will be visiting countries like Kazakhstan, Thailand and Serbia. Experts have stated that these visits, "will not only help further China's relations with the host countries, but also be of great significance to regional and sub-regional cooperation". The visits are scheduled for seven days.¹

While addressing a state commemoration for China's first National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre Victims on December 13, the Chinese President Xi Jinping said that, "anyone who tries to deny the massacre will not be allowed by history, the souls of the 300,000 deceased victims, the 1.3 billion Chinese people, and all people who love peace and justice in the world". The ceremony was presided over by Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.²

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said on December 11 that, "China has dismissed Vietnam's sovereignty claim for the Nansha and Xisha islands in the South China Sea". This act was called "illegal and invalid". This was in response to the Vietnamese foreign ministry claim that Vietnam held sovereignty over these islands.³

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the President of Ireland Michael Higgins on December 10. During the meeting Li said, "There is a long geographical distance between our two countries. However, there has been a long standing friendship between our two people". Both countries decided to focus on investments in science and technology.⁴

¹ "Premier's Eurasia Tour To Unleash Potential For Regional Cooperation", *China Daily*, December 14, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/14/content_19082162.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

² "Xi Attends China's First Memorial Ceremony For Nanjing Massacre Victims", *China Daily*, December 13, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/13/content_19078930.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

³ "China Dismisses Vietnam's Sovereignty Claim For South China Sea Islands", *China Daily*, December 12, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-12/12/content_19071132.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

⁴ Yinan, Zhao, "China and Ireland Strengthen Ties", *China Daily*, December 10, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/10/content_19060538.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

On December 9th the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said while commenting on the US State Department's document on the South China Sea that, "The document ignores basic facts and international legal principles". Hong further added that, "The United States has violated its commitment of not holding position and not taking sides in the South China Sea issue. Such a move is inconducive to the resolution of the South China Sea dispute and the peace and stability of the South China Sea".⁵

The Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the United States on December 8 it should block a bill related to arms sales to Taiwan. According to Hong Lei United States arms sales to Taiwan interfere with the internal affairs of China. This was in repose to media reports suggesting that the US Senate had passed a bill which would lead to sale of Perry-class frigates to Taiwan.⁶

On December 8, the Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan met with the Portuguese Air Force Chief of Staff Jose Pinheiro. During the meeting, Chang said that, "China is ready to work with Portugal to strengthen strategic mutual trust and promote bilateral military cooperation in such areas as training, military science and aeromedicine."⁷

Japan

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **General Election held in Japan; Controversial secrecy law comes into force in Japan.**

On December 14, election for Japan's lower house took place. The pre-election surveys have pointed towards a clear cut victory for the current LDP-Komeito coalition government. This victory will help Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to continue pursuing 'Abenomics' in order to revive Japan's deflation-mired economy.⁸

On December 10, the controversial secrecy law came into force in Japan. This law is to enable the heads of nineteen government ministries as well as agencies to designate certain information pertaining to areas like diplomacy, defence, counterterrorism, counterespionage, etc. as state secret if they are deemed to be sensitive. The leakers of such secrets are to face severe punishments under this law. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is optimistic that the new law will be instrumental in promoting Japan's exchange of sensitive information with other countries and forging closer

⁵ "China Rejects US Stance on South China Sea", *China Daily*, December 9, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/09/content_19052605.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

⁶ "China Urges US to Block Bill On Arms Sales to Taiwan", *China Daily*, December 9, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-12/09/content_19048101.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

⁷ "Chinese Defence Minister Meets Chief Of Staff Of Portuguese Air Force", *China Daily*, December 8, 2014 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/08/content_19045723.htm, accessed on December 15, 2014

⁸ "Voting Underway For Japan's Lower House Election", *Mainichi Daily*, December 14, 2014, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141214p2g00m0fp001000c.html>

bilateral ties with them. However, many Japanese are concerned that in the name of protecting national security, the new law could undermine the citizen's right to know.⁹

South Korea

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **South Korean Unification Ministers insists of greater engagement with North Korea; South Korea hosts special summit with the ASEAN; South Korea President vows to make efforts towards holding trilateral summit with Japan and China.**

South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-Jae recently visited Washington. While delivering a keynote address at a forum on Korean Unification on December 10, he insisted that both South Korea and the US should make greater efforts towards engaging North Korea. According to him, dialogues and cooperation are necessary in order to make the pressure on North Korea more effective.¹⁰

South Korea recently hosted a special summit with ASEAN member states in Busan in order to commemorate the 25th anniversary of establishment of dialogue relationship between the two sides. The two-day summit launched on December 11 was based on the theme "Building Trust and Bringing Happiness". The main focus of the summit was to deepen South Korea's partnership with ASEAN. At present, ASEAN ranks second and third respectively as far as South Korea's trading partnership and investment destinations are concerned.¹¹ On the inaugural day of the summit, South Korean President Park Geun-hye called for greater liberalization of the FTA between South Korea and the ASEAN.¹²

South Korean President Park Geun-hye recently vowed to make more efforts towards holding a tripartite summit meeting with Japan and South Korea. While delivering the keynote address at the World Policy Conference held in Seoul on December 8, Park averred that the summit could take place if the three countries could successfully conclude the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the three countries. It needs to be noted that in November 2014, President Park talked about the possibility of such a dialogue. However more recently, she became sceptical about the prospect of a summit between the leaders of Japan and China.¹³

⁹ "Secrecy Law Takes Effect Amid Concern About Public's Right To Know", *Mainichi Daily*, December 10, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141210p2g00m0dm039000c.html>

¹⁰ "Unification Minister Calls for N. K. Engagement", *The Korea Herald*, December 11, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141211000888>

¹¹ "Korea, ASEAN Kick Off Summit", *The Korea Herald*, December 10, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141210000965>

¹² "Park Calls For Liberalization of FTA with ASEAN", *The Korea Herald*, December 11, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141211000761>

¹³ "Park Vows Efforts For Summit with China and India", *The Korea Herald*, December 8, 2014, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141208000641>

B. Russia

Russia

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Russia and Turkey sign eight joint cooperation documents; Russia closes down South Stream gas pipeline project and agrees to build a new pipeline to Turkey; Russia and Turkey agree on the need to settle Syrian crisis; Japan's Prime Minister pledges to settle territorial dispute with Russia; Russia condemns terrorist act in Jammu and Kashmir; Putin and Hollande meet in Moscow; Russia and Slovakia sign a new energy agreement; Russia and Sudan to step up military cooperation; President Putin bans weapons supplies to Ivory Coast; Russia and Nigeria sign memorandum on their Security Councils' cooperation.**

Russia and Turkey have signed eight joint documents on cooperation during President Vladimir Putin's state visit to Turkey on December 1. This includes cooperation in the sectors of energy and renewable sources of energy, nuclear power, promoting trade and investment and providing legal assistance in criminal cases and extradition.¹⁴

President Putin has declared, in Turkey on December 1 during his official visit to Istanbul that Russia will close down the South Stream gas pipeline project and instead build an offshore gas pipeline to Turkey with annual capacity of 63 billion cubic meters. He added that Turkey will receive 14 billion cubic meters and the rest delivered to the Turkish-Greek border for onward journey to Europe. It will also receive additional discounts.¹⁵

Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdogan has stressed on the need to create a common international platform for settling the Syrian crisis and fighting the "Islamic State" terrorist group. He stated that despite differences with Russia there is a need to settle the problem at this stage.¹⁶

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pledged, on December 1, to settle the territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands and conclude a peace treaty with Russia. The two countries did not sign a peace treaty after the end of Second World War and are locked in a dispute over their territorial claims of the four islands of Russia's Southern Kuriles — Shikotan, Khabomai, Iturup and Kunashir, that Japan calls its northern territories.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Russia and Turkey Sign Eight Joint Cooperation Documents", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/764577> Accessed on December 1, 2014.

¹⁵ "Moscow and Ankara Agree To Build Offshore Gas Pipeline to Turkey — Gazprom Head", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/764587> Accessed on December 1, 2014.

¹⁶ "Turkey and Russia Agree On Need To Settle Syrian Crisis Despite Differences – Erdogan", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/764603> Accessed on December 1, 2014.

¹⁷ "Japan's Prime Minister Pledges To Settle Territorial Dispute with Russia", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/764434> Accessed on December 1, 2014.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has condemned the terrorist strikes in Jammu and Kashmir and called on India and Pakistan to coordinate efforts to fight international terrorism.¹⁸

Presidents of Russia and France Vladimir Putin and Hollande have met at Moscow's Vnukovo airport on December 6. Mr. Hollande made a stop in Moscow on the way back to Paris from Kazakhstan, where he was on a two-day visit. The two leaders discussed developments in Ukraine and bilateral ties.¹⁹

Russia and Slovakia have signed an agreement on December 5 for a new oil supply deal. It calls for an annual supply of up to six million tonnes of oil to Slovakia via the Druzhba pipeline while the same amount of Russian oil will transit through Slovakia to other European countries. The deal will come into force from January 2015 and end in 2029.²⁰

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, on December 3 after a meeting with his Sudanese counterpart Ahmed Karti in Khartoum, that the two countries have agreed to 'step up their military technical cooperation that will not upset the balance of power in the region and will be in full compliance with the countries' international obligations.'²¹

President Vladimir Putin has on December 3 banned the supplies, sale and transfer of weapons from Russia and Russian citizens to Ivory Coast. The ban has been imposed in connection with April 29, 2014 UNSC resolution that criticised the prevailing political crisis in the country.²²

Russia and Nigeria have signed a memorandum on, December 3 in Moscow, on the interaction and cooperation between their Security Councils.²³

(December 1-7, 2014)

- **Gazprom and CNPC to develop underground gas storage cooperation; Russia signs a military and technical cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan; Gazprom to supply LNG to Baltic consumers; Russia supplies 4 military transport helicopters to Peru; Russia establishes Arctic Strategic Command; Russian Armed Forces' training programme for 2014 wrapped up; Russia eliminates 84.5 per cent of chemical weapons stockpile; Rouble tumbles to record lows; Russian government warns of recession in 2015; President Putin's ratings continue to be**

¹⁸ "Russia Condemns Terrorist Act in Jammu and Kashmir — Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, December 7, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/765800> Accessed on December 7, 2014.

¹⁹ "Putin, Hollande Have Meeting at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport", *Itar-Tass*, December 6, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/765545> Accessed on December 6, 2014.

²⁰ "Russia, Slovakia Agree on New 15 Years of Oil Supplies", *Itar-Tass*, December 5, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/765299> Accessed on December 5, 2014.

²¹ "Russia, Sudan to Step Up Military Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, December 3, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764849> Accessed on December 3, 2014.

²² "Putin Bans Weapons Supplies to Ivory Coast", *Itar-Tass*, December 3, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764924> Accessed on December 3, 2014.

²³ "Russia, Nigeria Sign Memorandum On Security Councils' Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, December 3, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/764951> Accessed on December 3, 2014.

high; Putin calls Crimea's reunification with Russia historical; Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkmenistan open new railways.

Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) plan to cooperate in the sphere of underground gas storage in China to ensure reliable natural supplies from Russia. Gazprom has signed agreements to supply 68 billion cubic meters of gas to China by the eastern and western routes.²⁴

Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved a law ratifying a military and technical cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan. It regulates mutual military supplies for the two countries' armed forces, law enforcement agencies and security services. It also envisages a more favourable regime for interaction of the sides in development, production, operation, repair, modernization, prolongation of the service life, and utilization of armaments and military equipment. The agreement is valid for five years and is automatically renewed for successive five year periods.²⁵

Gazprom plans to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Kaliningrad to consumers in the Baltic States that are not connected to a gas transportation system. The facility will produce 21,000 tons of LNG per year and has a gas refuelling compressor station with a daily capacity of 6,000 cubic meters.²⁶

Russia has delivered a first batch of four military transport helicopters Mi-171Sh to Peru. In total, it will supply 40 such helicopters to Lima by 2015.²⁷

Russia has operationalised a new Joint Strategic Command, dubbed the North, on December 1. It has been reported that Russia plans to build 13 airfields, one aviation training ground and 10 technical radars and air guidance stations in the Arctic region. The new command, which will be named as a fifth Russian military district, is aimed at protecting Russian interests in the Arctic region, and the Northern Fleet will become its main striking force.²⁸

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu has declared that the Russian armed forces have completed their training programmes for 2014. This has seen a number of military exercises being organised that include snap checks in the Western, Eastern and Central Military Districts as well the two big drills - Vostok-2014 and Russia-China Naval Interaction-2014.²⁹

²⁴ "Gazprom, CNPC to Develop Underground Gas Storage Cooperation", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/764786> Accessed on December 2, 2014.

²⁵ "Russia Signs Deal on Military and Technical Cooperation with Kazakhstan", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764660> Accessed on December 2, 2014.

²⁶ "Gazprom To Supply LNG to Baltic Consumers Out Of Transportation System", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/764532> Accessed on December 1, 2014.

²⁷ "Russia Makes First Supply Of 4 Military Transport Helicopters to Peru", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/764650> Accessed on December 2, 2014.

²⁸ "Russia's Defence Ministry Establishes Arctic Strategic Command", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764428> Accessed on December 1, 2014

²⁹ "Russian Armed Forces' Training Program For 2014 Completed — Defence Minister", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764441> Accessed on December 1, 2014

The chairman of the State Commission on Chemical Disarmament Mikhail Babich has said on December 1 that Russia eliminated 84.5 per cent of chemical weapons. Russia plans to destroy its entire stockpile by 2020.³⁰

The Russian rouble has fallen to a five year old record low and stood at 52.5 roubles to a dollar. The fall in oil prices have significantly contributed to this fall. At present crude oil accounts for a third of Russia's exports.³¹

The Russian government has warned the economy will fall into recession next year and has attributed it to Western sanctions and falling oil prices. The Economic Development Ministry has estimated that the economy will contract by 0.8 per cent next year. It had previously estimated the economy will grow by 1.2 per cent in 2015.³²

The Head of the All-Russia Centre for Studies of Public Opinion (VTSIOM) Valery Fedorov has said that rating polls of November 22-23, 2014 showed that President Putin enjoys the support of 87.5 per cent of respondents polled.³³

President Vladimir Putin, during the annual state of the nation address to Parliament on December 4, has said that Crimea remains an unalienable part of Russia and is of huge civilizational and sacral importance for the country. He recalled that it was in Crimea, named Korsun in the past, where Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized as a Christian and then baptized all Rus.³⁴

A new North-South railway corridor has been inaugurated by Presidents of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran on December 3 in Ashgabat. The railroad is part of the North-South Corridor, linking the train stations of Uzen in Kazakhstan with Gyzylgaya-Bereket-Etrek in Turkmenistan and Gorgan in the Iranian province of Golestan. From there, it is connected to Iran's national rail network, making its way to Gulf ports.³⁵

Russia

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **President Putin undertakes an official visit to India; Russia and India look to increase trade turnover to US\$ 30 billion by 2025; Russia to participate in Pakistan's infrastructure projects;**

³⁰ "Russia Eliminates 84.5% Of Chemical Weapons Stockpile — Russian Official", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764497> Accessed on December 1, 2014

³¹ "Cheap Oil Sends Russian Ruble To Record Lows", *Itar-Tass*, December 1, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/764507> Accessed on December 1, 2014

³² "Russia Warns Of Recession in 2015", *BBC News*, December 2, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30288739> Accessed on December 2, 2014

³³ "President Putin's Rating Remains At Peak Level Since May — Pollster", *Itar-Tass*, December 2, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/764692> Accessed on December 2, 2014.

³⁴ "Putin Calls Crimea's Reunification With Russia Historical", *Itar-Tass*, December 4, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/765053> Accessed on December 4, 2014.

³⁵ "Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkmenistan to Open New Railways", *Itar-Tass*, December 3, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/764933> accessed on December 3, 2014.

Russian and American Foreign Ministers meet in Rome; Russia negotiating possible LNG supplies to Bahrain; Russia voices safety concerns over Ukraine's switch from Russian to US nuclear fuel; Russia considers America's Ukraine Freedom Support Act overtly confrontational.

President Putin has undertaken an official visit to India as part of the 15th Annual India-Russia summit. In total, 25 agreements were signed with President Putin declaring that India remains a priority for Moscow. The two countries plan to expand payments in national currencies and agreed to continue consultations on the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union.³⁶

Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov has said that Russia and India have set a trade turnover target to US\$ 30 billion by 2025. Priority will be given to joint projects that include R&D, development of infrastructure and high technology initiatives.³⁷

Russian Technologies State Corporation's representative Andrey Korobov and Pakistan's Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had a meeting on December 10 in London wherein it was reaffirmed that Russia remains interested in building energy and transportation infrastructure in Pakistan.³⁸

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has met with his U.S counterpart John Kerry in Rome on December 14. The main theme of discussion was the Middle East crisis including developments in Syria.³⁹

Russia is negotiating possible supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Bahrain with financing from Russia's Vnesheconombank (VEB). Bahrain has no sources of natural gas and its oil reserves are running short. Talks with closest gas exporters Qatar and Iran are complicated due to political contradictions. Bahrain plans to open an LNG terminal in 2015.⁴⁰

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has questioned the compatibility of the United States nuclear fuel for use in Ukraine's nuclear power plants (NPP) that were built by the Soviet Union. He termed the development 'dangerous'.⁴¹

³⁶ "Putin: Ties With India Foreign Policy Priority For Russia", *Itar-Tass*, December 11, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/766497> Accessed on December 15, 2014

³⁷ "Russia, India Intend To Increase Trade Up To \$30 Billion — Minister", *Itar-Tass*, December 12, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766664> Accessed on December 15, 2014

³⁸ "Russia to Participate In Pakistan's Infrastructure Projects", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766063> Accessed on December 15, 2014

³⁹ "Russia's Lavrov, US' Kerry Meeting in Rome", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/766861> Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁴⁰ "Russia Negotiating Possible LNG Supplies To Bahrain", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766863> Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁴¹ "Medvedev Voices Safety Concerns Over Ukraine's Switch From Russian to US Nuclear Fuel", *Itar-Tass*, December 14, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766889> Accessed on December 15, 2014

A Russian Foreign Ministry post stated that 'Moscow regards the Ukraine Freedom Support Act approved by both houses of the US Congress as overtly confrontational and says that Russia will not yield to blackmail of the United States'.⁴²

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Foreign Minister Lavrov says that peace can be arrived at in Ukraine; Russia and Hungary sign a nuclear project cooperation agreement; South Korea calls for trilateral cooperation projects with Russia and North Korea; President Putin visits Uzbekistan; Uzbek President says Russia plays a stabilizing role in Central Asia; Russia's Central Bank raises key rate by 100 basis points to 10.5 per cent; Capital outflow to reach US\$ 120 billion in 2015; Russian stock market sees continued volatility.**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that a chance has emerged to ensure peace in Ukraine. With ceasefire in eastern part of the country holding, Mr. Lavrov called for economic restoration of the country and initiating a political dialogue that encompasses all and leads to constitutional reforms.⁴³

Russia and Hungary have signed, on December 9, a general framework agreement to build two new units of the Paks nuclear power plant. Paks is Hungary's sole nuclear power plant with four VVER-440 reactors. Its first unit was launched in 1982. Electric power produced at the nuclear plant currently accounts for around 50% of the country's nuclear power output.⁴⁴

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Trutnev, during his visit to Seoul on December 9, has said that South Korea is in favour of promoting trilateral projects involving Russia and North Korea. At present, more than 600 South Korean companies are present in the Russian market. In the past, Russia has invited South Korean companies to develop its Far East.⁴⁵

Russian President Vladimir Putin has held talks with President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov while on an official visit to Uzbekistan on December 10. A number of bilateral agreements were signed that included an intergovernmental agreement on the priority areas for developing and deepening economic cooperation in 2015-2019, an intergovernmental agreement on regulating reciprocal financial claims and obligations (debt settlement), a protocol on cooperation in fighting drugs and a cooperation programme between the two countries' foreign ministries. It was also stated that Russia will start talks with Uzbekistan on a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union.⁴⁶

⁴² "Russian Foreign Ministry Dubs US Ukraine Freedom Support Act as Overtly Confrontational", *Itar-Tass*, December 12, 2014 <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/766735> Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁴³ "Chance Emerges To Ensure Peace in Ukraine — Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, December 12, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/766618> Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁴⁴ "Russia, Hungary Sign Agreement On Paks Nuclear Project", *Itar-Tass*, December 9, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/765936> Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁴⁵ "South Korea Speaks For Trilateral Projects with Russia, North Korea", *Itar-Tass*, December 9, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/765845> Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁴⁶ "Post-Soviet Integration Processes To Benefit Moscow-Tashkent Relations — Putin", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766223>. Accessed on december 15, 2014.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov has said that Russia plays a stabilizing role in Central Asia and the two countries share similar views on the evolving Afghan security situation.⁴⁷

The Central Bank of Russia has raised its key rate by 100 basis points to 10.5 per cent amid increased inflationary expectations. Annual inflation is expected to exceed 10 per cent in the first quarter of 2015.⁴⁸

The Russian Central Bank has raised its forecast on capital outflow in 2015 to US\$ 120 billion from US\$ 99 billion.⁴⁹

Russian stocks continued their downward spiral against the backdrop of a fall in global oil prices. The MICEX dropped 3.13 per cent to 1,481.27 and RTS fell 4.22 per cent to 870.37.⁵⁰

C. Iran, Iraq and the Gulf

Iran

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Iran's President warns against corruption; Israeli PM boasts of halting 'bad' Iran nuclear deal**

President Hassan Rouhani in a televised address to the nation has spoken out against corruption in Iran and warned that it is "endangering" the country's Islamic Revolution. He said money once "given under the table now is being given on the table". Mr Rouhani also called for the "elimination" of monopolies.⁵¹

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel played a key role in stopping a deal between world powers and Iran in limiting its nuclear programme from going ahead last month. Calling it the most "vital national security challenge we face," Israel and its allies "must use the time available to increase the pressure on Iran to dismantle its nuclear weapons capability," Netanyahu said.⁵²

⁴⁷ "Uzbekistan President Says Russia Plays Stabilizing Role in Central Asia", *Itar-Tass*, December 10, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/766177>. Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁴⁸ "Russia's Central Bank Raises Key Rate By 100 Basis Points To 10.5%", *Itar-Tass*, December 11, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766402>. Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁴⁹ "Russia's Central Bank Worsens 2015 Capital Outflow Forecast To \$120 Billion", *Itar-Tass*, December 11, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/766496> Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁵⁰ "Russian Stocks Plunge On Falling Oil, Geopolitical Tensions", *Itar-Tass*, December 8, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/economy/765805> Accessed on December 15, 2014.

⁵¹ "Iran's President Rouhani Warns Against Corruption", *BBC News*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30378662>

⁵² "Israeli PM Boasts Of Halting 'Bad' Iran Nuclear Deal", *Alarabia*, December 8, 2014 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/12/08/Israel-played-key-role-to-stop-bad-iran-nuclear-deal-PM.html>

Iraq

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **ISIS using Westerns as cannon fodder, Australia says; 160,000 Iraqi Christians flee Mosul in Iraq; Mehdi Army readies to fight for Sammara; Syria and Iran condemn Damascus air strikes; WFP to resume food assistance to Syrian refugees.**

Australia's Attorney-General George Brandis said that ISIS is using Westerns as cannon fodder in the battles occurring in Iraq and Syria, stating that the number of Australians killed in the war has increased. Australian officials previously announced that at least 70 of its citizens are fighting with ISIS, and according to Brandis, the number of Australians killed while fighting for the group has numbered between 15-20 within a few weeks.⁵³

According to a Christian lawmaker at least 160,000 Iraqi Christians have been forced out of their homes in the city of Mosul after the Daesh terrorists seized Iraq's second largest city in June this year after ISIS threatens to convert, pay taxes or face death. The majority of Christians have taken shelter in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.⁵⁴

Iraq's powerful Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has put his militia on alert to battle Islamic State militants for the city of Samarra, home to a very important Shi'ite mosque. Sadr's office said the announcement was a response to the "exceptional conditions and imminent danger to the sacred city of Samarra from the legions of terrorists".⁵⁵

Syria has called for UN sanctions against Israel over alleged air strikes on Syrian soil, including one on Damascus' main international airport there by calling it a heinous crime against Syria's sovereignty. Israel has said it will not allow "sophisticated weapons" to fall into the hands of its enemies referring to Assad's ally Hezbollah. The Syrian and Iranian foreign ministers, speaking jointly in Tehran on December 8, described the latest developments as an act of aggression.⁵⁶

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said that Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries will receive food assistance within the next few days, after the aid was suspended at the beginning of the month of December. The WFP had suspended food aid on December 1st and launched a fundraising campaign, with a \$64m target. Through the campaign, WFP was able to collect \$80m.⁵⁷

⁵³ Sarhan, Amre, "Australia Accuses ISIS of Using Westerns As Cannon Fodder", *Iraq news*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/australia-accuses-isis-using-westerns-cannon-fodder/>

⁵⁴ "160,000 Iraqi Christians Flee Mosul in Iraq", *Gulfnews*, December 14, 2014 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/iraq/160-000-iraqi-christians-flee-mosul-in-iraq-1.1426729>

⁵⁵ Hameed, Saif, "Iraq's Sadr Readies Militia To Fight for Samarra", *Reuters*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sadr-idUSKBN0JP1JL20141211>

⁵⁶ "Syria and Iran Condemn Damascus Air Strikes", *Aljazeera*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/syria-iran-condemn-damascus-air-strikes-2014128145432962133.html>

⁵⁷ "WFP to Resume Food Assistance To Syrian Refugees", *Daily News Egypt*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/12/10/wfp-resume-food-assistance-syrian-refugees/>

The Gulf

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **NATO chief hails Gulf role in fight against extremism; Oman arrests human rights defender: Gulf rights group; Saudi committed to Gulf security; Qatar joins Gulf partners in backing Sisi's Egypt.**

The NATO's secretary-general praised Gulf countries for their role in fighting extremists in Syria and Iraq, and said tackling the threat the militants pose will require long-term multinational efforts. He said it is important that the OPEC nations and other regional countries are playing a part in the fight against extremists.⁵⁸

Omani authorities have arrested a human rights defender who led Arab spring-inspired protests in the sultanate in 2011. The GCHR said Jadad, who has "health issues," was arrested without a warrant or specific charge and has been held incommunicado, without access to his family or lawyer. The group described him as a "prominent" human rights defender, known for his active role in organising and leading pro-reform protests in the southern province of Dhofar in 2011.⁵⁹

At the 19th summit in Abu Dhabi, King Abdullah is reported to call for increased military cooperation, stressing the need to transform the Peninsula Shield from a symbolic power to an active force for the protection of allies from enemies. He suggested a number of mechanisms for the development of cooperation among leaders of the GCC member states during the 26th session in December 2005 in Abu Dhabi, most notably his recommendation for the Joint Defence Council to study the development of the Peninsula Shield Forces.⁶⁰

Qatar joined its neighbours in supporting Egypt under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whose crackdown on the Doha-backed Muslim Brotherhood had divided the Gulf monarchies for months. Leaders of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, in their final statement, announced their "full support to Egypt" and the "political programme of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi". Doha has been at odds with its gulf partners over the issue of Muslim Brotherhood which led to withdrawal of Ambassadors from the Qatar by Saudi, Bahrain and UAE.⁶¹

⁵⁸ "Nato Chief Hails Gulf Role In Fight Against Extremism", *Khaleej Times*, December 12, 2014, at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2014/December/middleeast_December114.xml§ion=middleeast

⁵⁹ "Oman Arrests Human Rights Defender: Gulf Rights Group", *Alarabia*, December 12, 2014 at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2014/12/12/Oman-arrests-human-rights-defender-Gulf-Group.html>

⁶⁰ "KSA Committed To Gulf Stability", *Gulfnews*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/672326>

⁶¹ "Qatar Joins Gulf Partners In Backing Sisi's Egypt", *Daily Mail*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2867405/Qatar-joins-Gulf-partners-backing-Sisis-Egypt.html>

North Africa

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Half of Yemen's population needs aid; Yemen's Houthi fighters push al-Qaeda out of key district; Libya's airlines banned from EU skies ;**

The United Nations special envoy for Yemen says it faces daunting security, economic and political challenges and that a recent peace agreement among its major parties is the only way to move the impoverished country forward. Jamal Benomar briefed the UN Security Council. Rebels known as Al Houthis took control of much of the capital, Sana'a, in September. Benomar said, the peace deal and formation of a new government that followed were signs of slow progress. Yemen is struggling after Saudi Arabia dropped its aid to the government over the Al Houthis' takeover of Sana'a.⁶²

The Houthi movement's Shia fighters took "full control of the district of Arhab after raiding 20 of its areas and clearing them from Takfiri groups," said leading Houthi member, Mohamed al-Bakhiti, according to *Presstv*. The fighters blew up seven buildings belonging to al-Qaeda militants in Arhab, taking full control of the district and restoring security after several days of fighting.⁶³

The European Union has banned Libya's seven airlines from operating in European skies, citing safety concerns linked to the ongoing fighting there. The EU ban, effective immediately, covers Afriqiyah Airways, Air Libya, Buraq Air, Ghadames Air Transport, Global Aviation and Services, Libyan Airlines and Petro Air.⁶⁴

D. The United States of America

National

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Senate report faults C.I.A. over brutality and deceit in terrorism interrogations; President Obama condemns the harsh interrogation techniques described in the Senate report; warmth towards US at the global climate change negotiations in Lima, Peru; John Kerry makes plea for climate deal in Lima; congressional staffers protest US police shootings; DoD threat**

⁶² "Half of Yemen's Population Needs Aid", *Gulfnews*, December 12, 2014 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/yemen/half-of-yemen-s-population-needs-aid-1.1425827>

⁶³ "Yemen's Houthi Fighters Push Al-Qaeda Out Of Key District", *Presstv*, December 14, 2014 at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/12/14/390258/yemen-houthis-seize-key-district/>

⁶⁴ "Libya's Airlines Banned From EU Skies", *ABC news*, December 11, 2014 at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/libyas-airlines-banned-eu-skies-27531160>

⁶⁵ Mazzetti, Mark, "Panel Faults C.I.A. Over Brutality and Deceit in Terrorism Interrogations", *The New York Times*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/senate-intelligence-committee-cia-torture-report.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

reduction agency builds anti-ebola capacity; US Congress approves \$585 billion defence bill; US Congress passes \$1.1 trillion budget for 2015.

The Senate Intelligence Committee on December 9 issued a sweeping indictment of the Central Intelligence Agency's programme to detain and interrogate terrorism suspects in the years after the September 11 attacks, drawing on millions of internal C.I.A. documents to illuminate practices that it said were more brutal — and far less effective — than the agency acknowledged either to Bush administration officials or to the public. The long-delayed report delivers a withering judgment on one of the most controversial tactics of a twilight war waged over a dozen years. The Senate committee's investigation, born of what its chairwoman, Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, said was a need to reckon with the excesses of this war, found that C.I.A. officials routinely misled the White House and Congress about the information it obtained, and failed to provide basic oversight of the secret prisons it established around the world.⁶⁵ Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Feinstein's unveiling of the report left lawmakers on Capitol Hill sharply divided on December 9, with some praising the release and others warning that it could endanger American lives.⁶⁶

President Obama criticized the harsh interrogation techniques described in the Senate report on December 9, saying they undercut both American values and the global fight against terrorism. "These techniques did significant damage to America's standing in the world and made it harder to pursue our interests with allies and partners," Obama said in a written statement. "That is why I will continue to use my authority as President to make sure we never resort to those methods again."⁶⁷

When it comes to global warming, the United States has long been viewed as one of the world's worst actors. However, at the global climate change negotiations in Lima, Peru, American negotiators are being met with something wildly unfamiliar: cheers, applause, thanks and praise. It is an incongruous moment, arriving at a time when so many aspects of American foreign policy are under fire. But the enthusiastic reception on climate issues comes a month after a historic announcement by the United States and China, the world's two largest polluters, that they would jointly commit to cut their emissions. Many international negotiators say the deal is the catalyst that could lead to a new global climate change accord that would, for the first time, commit every nation in the world to cutting its own planet-warming emissions.⁶⁸

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made an impassioned plea on December 11 for all nations to work for an ambitious U.N. deal next year to fight climate change, saying time was running out to reverse a course "leading to tragedy". He also took aim at domestic U.S. critics of President Barack

⁶⁶ Sullivan, Sean and O'Keefe, Ed, "CIA Interrogation Report Sparks Deep Divide on Capitol Hill", *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/12/09/feinstein-defends-release-of-cia-interrogation-report/>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

⁶⁷ Jackson, David, "Obama Condemns Past Interrogation Techniques", *Military Times*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2014/12/09/obama-condemns-past-interrogation-techniques/20146229/>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

⁶⁸ Davenport, Coral, "Strange Climate Event: Warmth Toward U.S.", *The New York Times*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/world/strange-climate-event-warmth-toward-the-us.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

Obama who question whether climate change is mainly man-made. Kerry said scientific findings were overwhelming and “screaming at us, warning us”. Kerry said the Obama administration ranked the fight against climate change as a top priority along with terrorism, poverty and nuclear proliferation. China, the United States, the European Union and India are the top emitters.⁶⁹

The protest against grand jury decisions not to indict white police officers for killing unarmed black men came to the steps of the U.S. Capitol on December 11. More than 100 congressional staff members of all races, and several lawmakers, walked off their jobs and held their hands in the air in a gesture of surrender. Senate chaplain Barry Black called the group a “voice for the voiceless.” This was the latest in a series of protests in cities across the U.S. against several highly publicized incidents in which unarmed black males died at the hands of white policemen.⁷⁰

The Defence Department agency whose mission is to reduce biological, chemical and other threats to troops worldwide began ramping up its response early in the Ebola outbreak and now, with many partners, is steadily building capabilities in Liberia as it extends capacity into Sierra Leone and Mali. The Defence Threat Reduction Agency, known as DTRA, protects the United States and its allies from chemical, biological, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The fast-moving nature of West Africa’s Ebola crisis, which so far accounts for 17,145 cases of Ebola virus disease and at least 6,070 deaths, according to the World Health Organization and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, has driven the need for constant, close collaboration within DTRA itself and among U.S. agencies, entities such as U.S. Africa Command, international organizations and private companies.⁷¹ Since 2003, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has invested more than \$300 million to develop medical countermeasures against hemorrhagic fever viruses, and those efforts are paying off today in potential new ways to fight Ebola virus disease.⁷²

The U.S. Congress has approved a gigantic defence policy bill. The \$585 billion National Defence Authorization Act was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate on December 12, a week after passing in the House of Representatives. It now awaits President Barack Obama’s signature. The measure authorizes federal military spending for fiscal year 2015, which began on October 1. It includes emergency funding requested by the president for military operations against Islamic jihadists in Iraq and Syria. The measure also authorizes funds for training moderate Syrian rebels and Iraqi Kurdish forces for two years. The bill includes money for basic U.S. military operations, ranging from a one percent pay raise for the troops to the purchase of ships, aircraft and other war-fighting equipment.⁷³

⁶⁹ “John Kerry Makes Plea For Climate Deal in Lima”, *Newsweek*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.newsweek.com/john-kerry-makes-plea-climate-deal-lima-291270>. Accessed on December 13, 2014

⁷⁰ “Congressional Staffers Protest US Police Shootings”, *VOA News*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/congressional-staffers-protest-police-shooting/2556634.html>. Accessed on December 14, 2014

⁷¹ Pellerin, Cheryl, “DoD Threat Reduction Agency Builds Anti-Ebola Capacity”, *DoD News*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123795>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

⁷² Pellerin, Cheryl, “DTRA Medical Countermeasures Help West African Ebola Crisis”, *DoD News*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123822>. Accessed on December 14, 2014

⁷³ “US Congress Approves \$585 Billion Defence Bill”, *VOA News*, December 13, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-congress-approves-defense-budget/2557635.html>. Accessed on December 14, 2014

The U.S. Congress has given its final approval for a massive \$1.1 trillion government spending plan for most of 2015, ending a threat that the federal government could shut down again if the legislation was not passed. The measure, approved on December 13 in the Senate by 56-40 vote, funds the government through the current budget year ending next September. The bill now heads to the White House where President Barack Obama has said he will sign it into law.⁷⁴ Earlier the House narrowly passed the spending package on December 11 after a rancorous debate that reflected the new power held by Republicans and the disarray among Democrats in the aftermath of the midterm elections. The accord was reached just hours before the midnight deadline, in a 219-206 vote, amid the last-minute brinkmanship and bickering that has come to mark one of Congress's most polarized — and least productive — eras.⁷⁵

International

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **ISAF Joint Command in Afghanistan formally ceases operations; Defence Secretary Hagel explains differences between Afghanistan, Iraq draw-downs; Gen Campbell says Afghans on right track for security; deteriorating Afghanistan needs a revised timetable on U.S. troops; Resolute Support will cement Afghan gains, official says; Russian arms control violation prompts Joint Staff Assessment; Russia criticizes legislation passed by the U.S. Congress authorizing \$350 million in military aid to Ukraine.**

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command, which has handled day-to-day operations in Afghanistan for five years, formally cased its colours during a ceremony on December 8 at the command's headquarters at Kabul International Airport. The ceremony symbolizes the end of the ISAF Joint Command mission. Working in full partnership with Afghan national security forces and NATO partner nations, ISAF Joint Command's mission was to conduct population-centric comprehensive operations to neutralize the insurgency and support improved governance and development to protect the Afghan people and provide a secure environment for sustainable peace. The ISAF is transitioning to the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, which begins January 1. Resolute Support will focus on training, advising and assisting Afghan security institutions and Afghan national security forces at the ministerial, institutional and operational levels.⁷⁶

The Afghanistan drawdown and the situation in Iraq when U.S. troops left that country in 2011 are poles apart, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel said on December 8. "We left Iraq under totally

⁷⁴ "US Congress Passes \$1.1 Trillion Budget for 2015", *VOA News*, December 14, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/congress-averts-government-shutdown-passes-short-term-spending-bill/2556093.html>. Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁷⁵ Parker, Ashley and Peardec, Robert, "House Narrowly Passes Bill to Avoid Shutdown; \$1.1 Trillion in Spending", *The New York Times*, December 11, 2014 at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/us/congress-spending-bill.html?_r=0. Accessed on December 14, 2014

⁷⁶ "ISAF Joint Command in Afghanistan Formally Ceases Operations", From an International Security Assistance Force News Release, *DoD News*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123787>. Accessed on 9 December 2014

different circumstances,” the secretary told reporters during a visit to Forward Operating Base Gamberi in Afghanistan’s Laghman province. The current transition in Afghanistan is taking place with the agreement and the invitation of the Afghan people and the Afghan government, Hagel said. “This is a transition with our closest 50 partners over the next two years after we continue to help the Afghans build their capacity, build out that capability, build their institutions, train, assist and advise,” he added. “That’s totally different than how we left Iraq.” During 2016 — the second year of the transition in Afghanistan — the role of coalition troops will be to work themselves out of a job, Hagel said.⁷⁷

Afghans look at what is happening in Iraq and are working to ensure their country does not go down that path, the commander of the ISAF Gen. John F. Campbell said at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Army Gen. Campbell also said the leaders of the new Afghan unity government have been working together well as they navigate the road ahead. Campbell said the atmosphere with President Ashraf Ghani and Afghan Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah is constructive in working with the Americans and also in supporting the Afghan national security forces.⁷⁸

The Washington Post reported that much attention was not paid in Washington to the formal end of U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan. The 13-year-old war is something most Americans, led by their president, are eager to put behind them. That’s unfortunate, because far from fading away, the fighting in Afghanistan is intensifying — and so is the threat it poses to everything that the U.S.-led coalition accomplished. Over several months, attacks by the Taliban have steadily escalated, including in the once-relatively secure capital. International aid groups are pulling their staff out of Kabul after a wave of bombings and assaults on foreigners’ compounds, while many educated and affluent Afghans who returned from exile to invest in the country are leaving again. The new government under President Ashraf Ghani promises an improvement on the corruption-plagued and ineffective administration of Hamid Karzai, but it is struggling to overcome its internal divisions and appoint a cabinet.⁷⁹

The Operation Resolute Support mission that formally begins on January 1 provides the chance to cement in place all of the security gains made in Afghanistan, Army Maj. Gen. John M. Murray, deputy commander for support at U.S. Forces Afghanistan said at Bagram, Afghanistan on December 9. As the ISAF mission winds down and transitions to Resolute Support, coalition personnel will assist Afghans to develop a new set of capabilities that will sustain the national security forces, Gen. Murray said. “We’ve done a lot of great work at the kandak, or battalion, and brigade levels, and the Afghans really proved themselves during the course of last year’s fighting season,” Murray said.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Roulo, Claudette, “Hagel Explains Differences Between Afghanistan, Iraq Drawdowns”, *DoD News*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123791>

⁷⁸ Garamone, Jim “Campbell Says Afghans on Right Track for Security”, *DoD News*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123802>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

⁷⁹ Editorial Board, “A Deteriorating Afghanistan Needs A Revised Timetable on U.S. Troops”, *The Washington Post*, December 10 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-deteriorating-afghanistan-needs-a-revised-timetable-on-troops/2014/12/10/25eb0d96-7fd1-11e4-81fd-8c4814dfa9d7_story.html. Accessed on 11 December 2014

⁸⁰ Garamone, Jim, “Resolute Support Will Cement Afghan Gains, Official Says”, *DoD News*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123805>. Accessed on December 13, 2014

Russian violation of an arms control agreement poses a threat to U.S. and its allies' security interests, leading the Joint Staff to conduct a military assessment of its threat, Brian P. McKeon, principal deputy undersecretary of defence for policy said in Washington on December 10. McKeon testified alongside Rose Gottemoeller, undersecretary of state for international security, in a joint hearing before the House Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on strategic forces, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee's subcommittee on terrorism, non-proliferation and trade regarding Russian noncompliance with the Intermediate Nuclear-Range Forces (INF) treaty. In the course of "closely" monitoring compliance of arms control treaties, McKeon said, it was determined that Russia was in violation of the INF treaty.⁸¹

Russia is criticizing legislation passed by the U.S. Congress authorizing \$350 million in military aid to Ukraine and new sanctions against key state-controlled Russian companies. If President Barack Obama signs into law the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, the United States will provide Ukraine with anti-tank and armor-piercing weapons, counter artillery radars, tactical troop-operated surveillance drones, communications equipment and ammunition. The bill, which was passed unanimously on December 11 by both houses of Congress, also authorizes the Obama administration to impose new sanctions on Russia's state arms exporter Rosobornexport and state-controlled natural gas producer Gazprom.⁸²

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Military air strikes continue against ISIL in Syria, Iraq; Senate panel approves limited fight against ISIS, reopening war powers debate; Hagel talks regional issues with Israeli minister; Malaysia summons US Ambassador over comments on Sedition Act; North Korea, China criticize US over CIA Torture report; US marines, Japanese students share culture; US citizen enters North Korea, slams US Government.**

U.S. and partner-nation military forces have continued to attack ISIL terrorists over the last four days, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported. Fighter and bomber aircraft have conducted 15 air strikes in Syria since December 5, officials said. Separately, they added, U.S. and partner-nation military forces conducted 31 air strikes over the same period in Iraq, using fighter, bomber, attack, and remotely piloted aircraft. 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, the region and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the terrorist group's ability to project terror and conduct operations, officials said.⁸³

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted on December 11 to authorize the military campaign against the Islamic State (IS), a party-line decision that raises difficult questions for Republicans

⁸¹ Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., "Russian Arms Control Violation Prompts Joint Staff Assessment", *DoD News*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123813>

⁸² "Russia Protests US Aid for Ukraine Military", *VOA News*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/russia-protests-passage-of-pro-ukraine-bill-by-us-congress/2557035.html>. Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁸³ "Military Airstrikes Continue Against ISIL in Syria, Iraq", From a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News Release, *DOD News*, December 8, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123794>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

and intensifies a debate over war powers that has split President Obama from many in his own party. All Democrats voted in favour of the measure that would authorize Mr. Obama's war against the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, but greatly restrict the use of ground forces and limit the operation to three years before Congress has to revisit it. Opposed were all the Republicans, seven of whom warned of binding the hands of the commander in chief.⁸⁴

Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel spoke with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon on December 12 about coalition efforts to counter the ISIL, according to Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby. In a statement summarizing the conversation, Kirby said the two discussed a range of regional issues and reaffirmed the strength of the U.S.-Israel security relationship.⁸⁵

Malaysia has summoned the U.S. ambassador Joseph Yun after he questioned a government decision to strengthen a law against sedition, which critics say has been used to crack down on government detractors, despite an earlier promise to scrap it. Joseph Yun was called in on December 10 to explain the U.S. position following his comments in an interview with an online news portal, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. The ministry called for the United States to respect Malaysia's internal affairs and allow it "the space... to ensure continued peace, security and stability."⁸⁶

The United States frequently voices concerns about human rights abuses in China and North Korea. But now, both nations are taking Washington to task after a U.S. Senate report said the CIA tortured suspected terrorists. On December 9, in apparent anticipation of the report's release and World Human Rights Day, China's state-run *Xinhua news* agency argued that racial tensions and protests over police killings and the U.S. Senate report were signs that the United States needs to clean up its own human rights problems. "America is neither a suitable role model nor a qualified judge on human rights issues in other countries," it said. North Korea also went on the offensive, releasing its own commentary before the Senate report was published. The North's KCNA quoted a foreign ministry spokesman as calling the CIA's practices "inhuman" and accused the United Nations of ignoring the report and what it called "American policemen's brutalities," while seeking to discuss its human rights situation.⁸⁷

U.S. Marines participating in exercise Forest Light 15-1 visited with high school students in Japan's Kumamoto prefecture December 5. A group of 11 Marines took time out of their bilateral training to speak with students at Kumamoto's Kaishin and Chinzei high schools. The school visits centered on the sharing of cultures. U.S. and Japan forces have a long history of training together, and they value all opportunities to learn from one another's culture, said Burkhardt, a rifleman with 2nd

⁸⁴ Peters, Jeremy W., "Senate Panel Approves Limited Fight Against ISIS, Reopening War Powers Debate", *The New York Times*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/us/politics/senate-panel-approves-limited-fight-against-isis-reopening-war-powers-debate.html>. Accessed on December 13, 2014

⁸⁵ "Hagel Talks Regional Issues with Israeli Minister", *DoD News*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123827>. Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁸⁶ "Malaysia Summons US Ambassador Over Comments on Sedition Act", *Reuters*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-malaysia-summons-us-ambassador-comments-on-sedition-act/2554623.html>. Accessed on December 13, 2014

⁸⁷ Ide, William, "N. Korea, China Criticize US Over CIA Torture Report", *VOA News*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/north-korea-china-criticize-us-over-cia-torture-report/2552998.html>. Accessed on December 11, 2014

Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, currently assigned to 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, under the unit deployment programme.⁸⁸

An American citizen has appeared at a news conference in North Korea to denounce U.S. domestic and foreign policy and its human rights record. Twenty-nine-year-old Arturo Pierre Martinez from El Paso, Texas, told reporters in Pyongyang he entered North Korea illegally and wants to seek asylum in Venezuela. The U.S. State Department says it is aware that an American has crossed into North Korea and stands ready to provide consular assistance.⁸⁹

India-US Relations

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **U.S. Senate confirmed President Barack Obama's nominee Richard Rahul Verma as U.S. ambassador to India; Richard Verma to act as 'superb bridge' between India and US, Albright says; India questioned over Crimean leader's visited India; US rules out China-like climate deal with India in near future; 2-day meet on challenges in energy security to India; PM Modi invites US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard to bolster Indo-US ties.**

The U.S. Senate confirmed President Barack Obama's nominees to be the next American ambassadors to India and Afghanistan on December 9, filling two of the country's most important diplomatic posts days before leaving Washington for the year. By unanimous voice votes, the Senate approved former State Department official Richard Rahul Verma as U.S. ambassador to India and Peter Michael McKinley to be the ambassador in Kabul. Verma, who is Indian-American, will replace Nancy Powell, who resigned in March 2014 after a damaging dispute over the treatment of a junior Indian diplomat in the United States. He served as assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs at the State Department in the Obama administration from 2009 to 2011. The United States sees India as a natural ally on a range of issues and a potential counterbalance to an increasingly assertive China in Asia and is eager to expand relations across the board, particularly in the security sphere.⁹⁰

US Ambassador to India-designate Richard Verma would act as a "super bridge" between the two countries, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in a statement. "As our two countries broaden and strengthen their strategic partnership, the United States could have no better representative in India than Rich Verma," said Albright, who is chair of the Albright Stonebridge Group, where Verma till recently worked as a Senior Counsellor.⁹¹

⁸⁸ "Face of Defence: Marines, Japanese Students Share Culture", by Marine Corps Cpl. Drew Tech, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, *DoD News*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123798>. Accessed on December 11, 2014

⁸⁹ "US Citizen Enters N. Korea, Slams US Government", *VOA News*, December 14, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-citizen-enters-north-korea-slams-us-government/2558225.html>. Accessed on December 15, 2014

⁹⁰ "U.S. Senate Confirms Ambassadors To Afghanistan, India", *Reuters*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/10/us-usa-congress-ambassadors-idUSKBN0JO01O20141210>. Accessed on December 11, 2014

⁹¹ "Richard Verma to Act As 'Superb Bridge' Between India and US: Albright", *The Economic Times*, December 11, 2014 at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-11/news/56955121_1_rich-verma-indian-american-richard-verma-sampat-shivangi. Accessed on December 11, 2014

India faced criticism and questions a day after the leader of Crimea, the Ukrainian territory annexed by Russia, visited the South Asian country. Sergey Aksyonov arrived with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was in the Indian capital on December 11 for a one-day summit. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko slammed India, saying the country was placing more importance on money than values by welcoming the Crimean leader and was not standing with “civilization” against Russian aggression. Poroshenko was addressing the Lowy Institute think tank in Sydney. An Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman has said that New Delhi was not officially aware of Aksyonov’s visit and that he was not a part of Putin’s delegation. In Washington, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, “We are troubled by reports that the delegation accompanying Putin may have included Sergey Aksyonov.” As India and Russia signed numerous defence and energy deals, Psaki also said, “It is not time for business as usual with Russia.” However, they dismissed concerns that the controversy could cast a shadow on the forthcoming visit of President Barack Obama, who is due to attend India’s Republic Day celebrations in late January.⁹²

A day before meeting Indian environment minister Prakash Javadekar for yet another round of bilateral meeting on sideline of the climate conference, the US special envoy for climate change Todd Stern on December 10 ruled out the possibility of a wide-ranging deal to cut greenhouse gas emission with India on the line of the recent US-China deal. Responding to a specific question on the possibility of such deal during the US president Barack Obama’s visit to New Delhi in January next year, Stern said, “We don’t have that kind of process going on with India”. Under the US-China bilateral deal that was signed in Beijing last month, the US will reduce emissions by 26-28 per cent below the 2005 levels by 2025 while China intends to achieve the peaking of carbon emissions around 2030. Under the deal, Beijing also intends to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 per cent by 2030.⁹³

The US Consulate General Chennai in association with the Centre for Public Policy Research, Kochi, will conduct a two-day international conference on ‘Energy Security Challenges in India’ at Riviera Suites in Kochi on December 12-13. The Struggle for Power will also be released during the conference. Since 2009, the US-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy has mobilised nearly \$2.4 billion in public and private clean energy finance to support India’s clean energy goals and \$125 million for research on solar, biofuels, and energy efficient buildings through the US-India Clean Energy Research and Development Centre.⁹⁴

United States Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard will travel to India from December 15 to January 3, 2015, following an official invite from the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During her three week stay in the country, Congresswoman Gabbard will engage with several senior government and industry representatives, to discuss advancing common global interests, including counter

⁹² Pasricha, Anjana, “India Questioned Over Crimean Leader’s Visit”, *VOA News*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/india-questioned-over-crimean-leader-visit/2556236.html>. Accessed on December 14, 2014

⁹³ Mohan, Vishwa, “US Rules Out China-Like Climate Deal With India In Near Future”, *The Times of India*, December 11, 2014, at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/US-rules-out-China-like-climate-deal-with-India-in-near-future/articleshow/45472132.cms>. Accessed on December 13, 2014

⁹⁴ “2-day Meet on Challenges in Energy Security”, *The New Indian Express*, December 11, 2014 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2-day-Meet-on-Challenges-in-Energy-Security/2014/12/11/article2565567.ece>. Accessed on December 12, 2014

terrorism and military cooperation, harnessing the potential of India's high skilled work force via H-1B visas and the promotion of tourism. On her visit, Tulsi Gabbard, Congresswoman said, "The potential for my country, the US and India is extremely bright and I wish to enhance this potential through my visit to India... I look forward to investing in efforts that can strengthen the relationship of the world's largest democracies."⁹⁵

II. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu and Kashmir

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **58 per cent turnout in the third phase of the assembly polls; joint operation recovers a huge cache of arms and ammunition; Around 437 polling stations in the Jammu district declared sensitive ahead of Fifth phase of assembly elections; Tight security in border areas for the final phase of polling; Votes were cast for 4th phase of the Assembly elections; Post Militancy, Srinagar records highest voters turn out.**

Unfazed by the recent militant attacks, a 58 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the third phase of the assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir on December 9 that involved 16 seats—all in the valley—as they continued to ignore boycott calls. The turnout in the third-phase elections was, however less as compared to the first two phases which recorded 72 per cent polling, though it was 9 per cent higher than that recorded in 2008 assembly polls. A 49 per cent polling was recorded for the same segments in the previous polls. Barring a petrol bomb attack by some unidentified persons at a polling station in Gulmarg, the polling was by and large peaceful in all the constituencies in Baramulla, Pulwama and Budgam districts of north, south and central Kashmir. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and three of his cabinet colleagues are among 144 candidates whose fate will be decided in the third phase of polling. Giving the break-up of voting at the end of the polling, chief electoral officer Umang Narula said Charar-e-Sharief in Budgam district recorded the highest 82.74 per cent against 74.58 in 2008. Sopore constituency—the home town of hard-line Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani who spearheaded the boycott campaign—saw the lowest 30 per cent polling but it was higher compared to 19.95 per cent recorded in 2008. Narula said 79 per cent polling was registered in Baramulla district's Uri segment which witnessed the deadly attack on an army camp on December 9 leaving 11 security force personnel and six militants dead. In the last assembly polls, the constituency recorded 81.73 per cent voting. Beerwah constituency in Budgam district from where Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is locked in a multi-cornered contest, recorded an increase of nearly 17 per cent in the polling compared to last assembly elections. The constituency recorded 74.14 per cent as against 57.17 per cent in 2008.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Panwar, Preeti, "PM Narendra Modi Invites Tulsi Gabbard to Bolster Indo-US Ties", December 14, 2014 at <http://www.oneindia.com/international/pm-narendra-modi-invites-tulsi-gabbard-to-bolster-indo-us-ties-1592031.html>. Accessed on December 14, 2014

⁹⁶ "J & K Assembly Elections: 58% Voter Turnout In 3rd Phase", *Livemint*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/riXs1XfvkYH8gx24t4F1bK/Jammu-and-Kashmir-Voting-begins-for-3rd-phase-of-assembly-p.html>

In a joint operation, troops of Dharmund based Army's Delta Force and Jammu and Kashmir Police on December 9, busted a militant hideout in dense forests of Bharat region of Doda district and recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition and war like stores. The busting of a well concealed hideout resulted in recovery of one rifle .303, two Chinese Pistols, one sniper rifle .315, one country made pistol, two rifle 12 bore along with two magazines of AK-47, three magazines of Chinese pistol, 324 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, nine sniper rounds, five hand grenades, four grenades RPG, 15 grenade UBGL and several other logistic stores. The area is rugged, forested and contains number of potential hiding places and hideouts.⁹⁷

Around 437 polling stations in the Jammu district were declared as "sensitive" and "hyper-sensitive" ahead of the fifth and final phase of Assembly elections on December 20. Ajeet Kumar Sahu, District Electoral Officer, Jammu said on December 10 that as many as 354 polling stations are sensitive while 83 are hyper-sensitive in the Jammu district. Eleven Assembly constituencies of Jammu along with 9 others will go to polls in 11 segments later this month. The district with 7 out of the 11 Assembly segments along the border line with Pakistan, has the most sensitive polling stations. Jammu, a border district had faced the brunt of cross-border shelling and firing in August and October this year, that left 15 people killed and over 100 injured.⁹⁸ In the wake of threat of infiltration by militants in the sensitive border areas, around 20,000 security personnel (about 180 companies of central armed forces and 2,448 state police force personnel) will be deployed in Jammu for the final phase of polling on December 20.⁹⁹

Ignoring the boycott call given by separatists and braving cold weather, 49 per cent of the 14.73 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the penultimate phase of Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir on December 14. Barring minor clashes between supporters of rival parties at a dozen places, polling in all the 18 constituencies spread over four districts of Srinagar, Shopian, Anantnag and Samba, was by and large peaceful.¹⁰⁰ Addressing a press conference at Srinagar on December 14, Chief Election Commissioner J & K Polls Umang Narula said that the voter turnout in the fourth phase is 4 per cent higher than that of 2008 polls. The polling per cent in the same areas which went to polls on December 14 was 45 per cent in 2008 and it remained at 29 per cent in last held Lok Sabha elections in May this year. Srinagar district, which was the main focus during the fourth phase of Assembly elections, witnessed a slight increase of around 7 per cent as compared to 2008 poll mark and remained at 28 per cent this election. All the eight assembly constituencies in Srinagar crossed their 2008 poll mark. In South Kashmir, Islamabad district recorded 61 per cent turnout, dropping 2 per cent than its 2008 record of 63 per cent. Shopian district remained at 50 per cent equal to that of 2008 polls. In Jammu, district Samba recorded highest turnout of 81 per

⁹⁷ "Hideout Busted In Doda, Arms Recovered", *Kashmir Times*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.kashmirtimes.in/newsdet.aspx?q=39259>

⁹⁸ "437 Polling Stations In Jammu Declared Sensitive", *Rising Kashmir*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.risingkashmir.com/437-polling-stations-in-jammu-declared-sensitive/>

⁹⁹ "Tight Security In Border Areas For December 20 Polling", *Rising Kashmir*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.risingkashmir.com/tight-security-in-border-areas-for-december-20-polling/>

¹⁰⁰ "49% Turnout In Fourth Phase Of Jammu And Kashmir Polls", *The Hindu*, December 14, 2014 at <http://www.thehindu.com/elections/assembly2014/jammu-and-kashmir-assembly-elections-fourth-phase/article6690600.ece>

cent with Samba constituency polling 77 per cent and Vijaypur recording 81.31 per cent respectively.¹⁰¹

Northeast India

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Stakeholders meet on LSHEP convened where representatives agree to set up eight-member expert committee to look into their concerns; outlawed ULFA (I) warn of an “armed protest” if the Centre decides to go ahead with the construction of the Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Project; Assam Rifles busted NSCN (IM) Detention Camp; ULFA (I) desperate to make its presence felt; ULFA (Paresh Barua faction) camps in Myanmar.**

The logjam over the mega 2000-MW Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Power Project (LSHEP) that has been stalled for the last three years, inched towards resolution, with all the parties to the dispute agreeing to set up an eight-member expert committee to look into the concerns. The consultation meeting, convened by the Union Power Minister Piyush Goel on December 11 in Delhi, was attended by representatives of 29 organisations including All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), besides 23 ethnic groups. The meeting was also attended by top officials of the Power Ministry, Additional Chief Secretary (Power) VB Pyrelal, senior officials of the Central Water Commission (CWC), NHPC, besides the Ministry of Environment and Forest among others. Technical experts drawn from NHPC and CWC also made presentations at the meeting. The meeting that lasted for over five hours, was described as positive and barring Akhil Gogoi-led KMSS, which expressed serious reservations over the agreement, the other organisations were more or less satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. Later briefing newsmen, Sonowal announced that an expert committee comprising eight members, four each representing the State and Centre, would be constituted to study the project. The suggestions made by the various organisations would be the terms of reference of the Committee, which would submit its report within three months. He said an eight-member expert panel would study the report of the Assam's technical experts, study the Thatte and Reddy Committee's report and study the cumulative downstream impact. The technical team would also consult experts from within and outside the country before submitting its reports. The AASU advisor further stressed that they want a study of the cumulative downstream impact of all proposed dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the outlawed ULFA (I) (Paresh Baruah faction) has warned of an “armed protest” if the Centre decides to go ahead with the construction of the Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Project in Assam's Dhemaji district while the Akhil Gogoi led Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) also said that it would continue to oppose the scheme. ULFA (I) said that the proposed 186 big dams in Arunachal Pradesh would not help in the development of Assam. The outfit said that

¹⁰¹ Khaliq, Riyaz UI, “Kashmir Elections: Post Militancy, Srinagar Records Highest Turn Out”, *Kashmir Life*, December 14th, 2014 at <http://www.kashmirilife.net/kashmir-elections-post-militancy-srinagar-records-highest-turn-out-69944/>

¹⁰² Barooah, Kalyan, “ 8-Member Expert Panel To Be Formed”, *The Assam Tribune*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1214/at050>

they would support hydropower projects in the region provided they follow certain criteria based on reports of expert committees constituted with members who “love Assam” and “do not compromise”. The criteria included change in the geographical location of the Lower Subansiri site, as it is on sedimentary rock, downsizing the project, ensuring every household in Assam gets electricity, increasing earthquake resistance capability of dams, written promise from the Centre to give adequate compensation to affected families and a cumulative downstream impact study.¹⁰³

A detention camp of the NSCN-IM in Jalukie town in Nagaland was busted by the Assam Rifles. According to PRO-IGAR (North), information was received on December 7 about illegal detention of five civilians at the “Detention Centre” run by NSCN (IM) in Jalukie town of Peren district of Nagaland. Based on the information, troops of 18 Assam Rifles carried out a search of the premises. During the search, five abducted persons were found in the custody of NSCN (IM) cadres, the PRO-IGAR (North) said. The detainees were being confined in inhuman and despicable conditions, in gross violation of human rights and United Nations Charter. The eleven NSCN (IM) Cadres who were running the Detention Centre were also taken into custody. Among them was a 15 year-old boy which shows that the NSCN (IM) is resorting to the use of child soldiers which is in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the IGAR (North) alleged.¹⁰⁴

According to reports, the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) is facing severe financial crunch, which has made the outfit desperate to indulge in acts of violence to make its presence felt. The militant outfit is finding it difficult even to run its camps in Myanmar due to paucity of funds. In the face of threats of rebellion from the cadres, the leaders of the ULFA (I) are desperate to boost its coffers and there have been attempts by them to launch an extortion drive. Sources pointed out that there was a time when most people, particularly businessmen, took serious note of the demand notes of the ULFA (I). But the situation has now totally changed and there have been instances of people simply ignoring the demand notes. The ULFA (I) leaders, facing a desperate situation, sometimes hold talks with those served with demand notes and very often they have to settle for much lower amounts. A few senior leaders of the outfit are camping in Mon district of Nagaland and from there they are contacting businessmen in upper Assam district in their bid to collect funds.¹⁰⁵

Raktim Moran, a self-styled lance corporal of the ULFA (I), who surrendered before the SP, Dibrugarh on December 11, disclosed to media persons that the Paresch Baruah faction of the ULFA (Independent) is operating in at least four camps in Myanmar with enrolment of as many as 250 cadres who are undergoing rigorous arms training. Raktim, alias Swadhin Asom of Mudoigaon village under the Chabua Police Station, who stayed in the camp for more than three years surrendered with an AK-81 rifle, three magazines, 79 rounds of ammunition and a Chinese grenade. Reportedly, he also told the police that the camps of the NSCN (K) are adjacent to the

¹⁰³ “Ulfa Sounds Dam Warning. Kmss To Continue Opposing Projects”, *The Telegraph*, December 13, 2014 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141213/jsp/frontpage/story_3491.jsp#.VJMX5sAA

¹⁰⁴ “5 Persons Rescued From NSCN-IM Detention Camp”, *The Assam Tribune*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1214/oth054>

¹⁰⁵ “ULFA (I) Desperate To Make Presence Felt”, *The Assam Tribune*, December 12, 2014 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1214/at057>

ULFA camps in Myanmar. Raktim and 15 other cadres had shifted to the Everest camp along the Myanmar-Nagaland border a month ago. This is another ULFA camp near the Mon district of Nagaland. There are about 50 ULFA cadres in this camp, said the surrendered cadre.¹⁰⁶

Left-wing Extremism

(December 8-14, 2014)

- **Centre to fast-track its' new anti-Naxal policy; Increased Naxal activities in Kerala and the situation could become more serious; 18 counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism schools have been sanctioned for the LWE-hit states; Maoist splinter-TPC organises a Janadalat in Latehar and distributes compensation to villagers.**

Days after 14 CRPF personnel were killed in a Naxal ambush in Chhattisgarh, the Union home ministry has decided to fast-track the implementation of the NDA government's new anti-Naxal policy which calls upon state police forces to take the lead in anti-Naxal operations on the lines of counter-insurgency campaigns in states like Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura. As top officials of 10 Naxal-affected states met the home ministry top brass on December 9 to discuss the new anti-Naxal action plan, the Chhattisgarh government asked the Centre to devise a strategy to tackle front organisations of the Maoists and make it a part of the Centre's new anti-Naxal policy. Chhattisgarh along with some other states also raised the demand for increased air support to security forces involved in the anti-Naxal operations. The logistical support provided to ferry security personnel and aid in the evacuation operations for the injured personnel was termed as critical to the overall efforts of the security forces to tackle the Naxal menace.¹⁰⁷ Reportedly, the states also asked the MHA to incorporate their concerns in the new anti-Naxal policy. It was also pointed out by officials of the central forces that the CRPF is undertaking the operations with minimal support from the local police forces in many states. The new anti-Naxal policy is expected to be finalised by the MHA shortly following which it may be taken to the Union Cabinet for final approval.¹⁰⁸

According to a note prepared by the Home Ministry, activities of the Naxals in Kerala have increased manifold and situation in the state has the potential of becoming more serious if immediate preventive measures are not taken. In the 17-page note on CPI (Maoist), the Ministry said in recent times, the outfit is focusing on a southern theatre in the tri-junction of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The CPI (Maoist), in a change of strategy for the present, seems to be intent on consolidating its strength in select swathes of the country where, in their parlance, they were in a position of 'strategic offensive' against the state until recently. The note said the core of Maoist insurgency lies in 23 districts of India which reported 80 per cent of the total violent incidents

¹⁰⁶ "Surrendered Ultra Spills Beans Myanmar Camps", *The Assam Tribune*, December 13, 2014 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=dec1314/state050>

¹⁰⁷ "Ministry of Home Affairs Wants To Fast Track Maoist Plan", *Deccan Chronicle*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/141210/nation-current-affairs/article/ministry-home-affairs-wants-fast-track-maoist-plan>

¹⁰⁸ "Centre to Fast-Track New Anti-Naxal Policy", *The Asian Age*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.asianage.com/india/centre-fast-track-new-anti-naxal-policy-161>

in 2013. The districts are: Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Muzaffarpur (Bihar), Bijapur, Bastar, Dantewada, Kanker, Kondagaon, Narayanpur, Sukma (Chhattisgarh) Chatra, Giridhi, Gumla, Khunti, Latehar, Palamu, Simdega, West Singhbhum (Jharkhand), Gadchiroli (Maharashtra), Koraput and Malkangiri (Odisha).

It also noted that in the Northeast, some elements of CPI (Maoist) exist in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. In all, the underground cadres of CPI (Maoist) exist in 15 states. However, the front organisations of the CPI (Maoist) exist in 21 states and carry out over ground agitational activities in an attempt to enlarge the mass-base of the party and prepare the state for armed insurrection.¹⁰⁹ The MHA note also dealt in detail with the measures that the Centre has been planning under the draft national policy to tackle the Naxal issues. According to it, the MHA consultation with all the stakeholders would devise a comprehensive plan on various modifications required in the security-related expenditure, which would then be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

In order to improve the effectiveness of the state forces, 18 counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism schools have been sanctioned for the LWE-hit states, of which 16 have become operational. The MHA has also advised the states to set up crack teams modelled on the lines of the Special Intelligence Branch set up by Andhra Pradesh to deal with the Naxal menace. It also noted that the home ministry would earmark 10 per cent of police modernisation funds to the intelligence department of the states concerned to meet their financial requirements for the next three fiscal years.¹¹⁰

Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC), a breakaway faction of CPI (Maoist), managed to hold a jan adalat in Latehar, 100Kms from the state capital of Jharkhand, to distribute compensation to villagers. Claimed to enjoy covert police support, the armed rebel group distributed Rs. 50, 000 in cash to villagers who had been victim of the August 16 encounter between the TPC and Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad (JJMP) in Churia village under Latehar police station. During the encounter, three cattles were shot dead while two were injured by bullets. Farming equipment of one of the farmers in the village was also damaged in the standoff. Though the idea of winning villagers' confidence by distributing sops is not new among the anti-Maoist armed groups, however, organising jan adalat in a big way, that too at a place where the Maoists dominated at one point is a new initiative.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ "Naxal Activities In Kerala Have Increased Maniford: Government", *The New Indian Express*, December 9, 2014 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/Naxal-Activities-in-Kerala-Have-Increased-Manifold-Government/2014/12/09/article2563292.ece>

¹¹⁰ Yadav, Yatish, "Maoist Threat In Kerala May Take Serious Turn", *The New India Express*, December 10, 2014 at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Maoist-Threat-in-Kerala-may-Take-Serious-Turn/2014/12/10/article2564332.ece>

¹¹¹ Jaideep Deogharia, "Maoist Splinter-TPC Distributes Compensation To Villagers in a Jan-Adalat", *The Times of India*, Dec 14, 2014 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/Maoist-splinter-TPC-distributes-compensation-to-villagers-in-a-Jan-Adalat/articleshow/45513039.cms>