

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Differences over decree's inclusion in agenda within Senators; Hizb-e-Islami want space in peace talks; Non-Pashtoons inducted into Taliban Leadership Council; Iran keen to participate in quadrilateral meeting on Afghan peace talks; Pakistan interference the main cause of issues in Afghanistan; Requests US Congress help in equipping AAF; Won't beg for peace, says Afghan Premier; President Ghani condemns cross border terrorist attack in Pathankot.**

Meshrano Jirga or Senate members on January 3 differed over whether to include or not in the upper house's agenda a presidential legislative decree regarding elections under Article 109th of the Constitution proposals for amendments to the electoral law cannot be included in the working agenda of the assembly during the last year of the legislative period, Senate's legislative commission head Maulvi Mahiuddin Musif, said preparing voter list before elections, invalidating pervious voter cards, issuing new cards and the allocation of a seat for Hindus and Sikhs in the Wolesi Jirga were issues mentioned in the presidential decree Senator Rahmatullah Achakzai from southern Kandahar province "the legislative decree regarding elections should be included in the agenda of the Meshrano Jirga because elections to the Wolesi Jirga" and the district councils are vital for sustanbility of the system.¹

Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) which is one of the largest groups fighting the government has announced support to the peace process but says talks should take place inside Afghanistan. "Hizb-e-Islami favours Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks as we have always argued that war is no solution to the problem," said Ghairat Baheer who heads the political commission of Hizb-e-Islamic under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In an interview with Pakistan based daily, Baheer has warned that no group should be left out of the peace process. "We have already floated comprehensive proposals for ending the conflict. We want all-inclusive talks to be held in Afghanistan to make them Afghan-owned in real sense of the word," said Baheer whose party was left out of the first round of talks. Baheer added that HIA chief Engineer Gulbudin Hikmatyar has always backed 'meaningful negotiations' and expressed willingness to join an intra-Afghan dialogue. "We want the agenda for the dialogue process should be transparent. Talks should be based on ground realities and without any intervention." When asked when Hikmatyar would make a public appearance, Baheer chose to avoid a direct reply. "Hikmatyar will play an active part in politics if the situation becomes suitable," he said. "Hikmatyar is ready and determined to join politics." Hikmatyar has not been publically seen following the collapse of Taliban government in 2001. He has been releasing video and audio statements and conveying his messages to media through Baheer.²

¹ "Senators Differ Over Decree's Inclusion in Agenda", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 4, 2016, at <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2004,%202015/Front%20Page.pdf>

² "Hizb-e-Islami Favours Peace Talks Inside Afghanistan", *Khaama Press*, January 5, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/hizb-e-islami-favours-peace-talks-inside-afghanistan-4457>

Leadership council of Taliban, which is also known as Quetta Shura, was reportedly comprised of Pashtoons only but the group has now included members of Tajik, Uzbek and Turkmen tribes into it. According to media reports, a news source of Taliban, the new leader of Taliban Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour has almost completed re-organisation of the Taliban movement after the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar and at least three non-Pashtoons have been inducted into the leadership council to quash the impression that the Taliban only represent ethnic Pashtoons. The report which is published today states that Maulvi Abdul Rehman, an ethnic Uzbek, and Sheikh Sharif, an ethnic Tajik, have been inducted into the council. A Turkmen has also been given a berth in the new council, it adds. It cites unnamed Taliban as saying that this is the first time non-Pashtoon have been given a place in the council. The report further states that Mullah Omar's son Mullah Yaqoob is also inducted into the new leadership council and Mullah Omar's brother, Mullah Abdul Manan into the political commission. The two had previously opposed Mullah Akhtar but later pledged allegiance to him. The media outlet citing a top Taliban official as saying those two members of the leadership council 'Quetta Shura' have been expelled from the council for refusing to accept Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour as their leader. It states that Mullah Abdul Razzaq and Mullah Hasan Rehmani who were also involved in peace talks are no more members of Taliban leadership council.³

Iran is keen to participate in a quadrilateral meeting on peace talks on Afghan peace process which will likely kick off in Islamabad city of Pakistan next week. Javid Faisal, spokesman to chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Abdullah, told *Radio Free Europe (RFE)* the demand by Iran to sit in quadrilateral meeting was made during CEO Abdullah's visit to Tehran. He admitted that Tehran could play an effective role in Afghan peace process; however he said the government of Afghanistan has not decided regarding Iran's demand so far. The first quadrilateral meeting between the representatives of China, United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan will kick off in Islamabad next week. CEO Abdullah appeared in a press briefing upon his return from Iran on January 6 and confirmed that the follow up meeting will take place next week in Islamabad. "Islamabad will be hosting a follow up meeting next week where we will have talks for peace talks with the Taliban," Abdullah told reporters. Abdullah further added that Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai will present Afghanistan during the follow up talks. The Afghan and Pakistani leaders agreed to revive the stalled Afghan peace talks during a meeting on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia conference in Islamabad last year.⁴

A group of the Taliban leaders who recently pledged allegiance to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Rasool have blamed Taliban interference for the ongoing issues in Afghanistan. The Taliban leaders have conveyed their concerns during a gathering somewhere in the western Farah province of Afghanistan. According to *Radio Free Europe (RFE)* which obtained a copy of the video of the gathering, the Taliban leaders who have pledged allegiance Mullah Mohammad Rasool, have recently abandoned Pakistan due to the inappropriate behaviour by the country. The latest video shows persistent differences in the Taliban leadership despite optimism that unity among the top Taliban leader could help revive the Afghan peace process. The eleven Taliban commanders who have pledged allegiance to Mullah Rasool were previously serving with the group's newly appointed supreme leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor. They have also criticized the

³ "Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen Inducted Into Taliban Leadership Council", *Khaama Press*, January 7, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-bring-tajik-uzbek-turkmen-into-leadership-council-4471>

⁴ "Iran keen to Participate In Quadrilateral Meeting On Afghan Peace Talks", *Khaama Press*, January 7, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/iran-keen-to-participate-in-quadrilateral-meeting-on-afghan-peace-talks-1939>

appointment of Mullah Mansoor as the new Taliban supreme leader, calling it against the current principles and conditions. One of the Taliban commanders says the leadership of Mullah Mansoor is obsolete and his Emirate is against the principles of Islam as a Fatwa has been issued by them and has been endorsed by 150 religious scholars. Another Taliban commander says the ongoing interference of Pakistan in internal affairs of Afghanistan is the main cause of issues in the country and urged the Taliban leaders to free themselves from the monopoly of Pakistan, accusing it of deception.⁵

The Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has called on US Congress to help Afghanistan in building an efficient air force as the Afghan national security forces are critical need of air support. During a meeting with the US Congress delegation led by Senator Bob Corker, President Ghani said Afghanistan needs to complete the inventory of its Air Force by acquiring aircraft and helicopters, urging the US Congress delegation to assist Afghanistan in this process. Calling terrorism a regional and global threat, President Ghani further added that Afghanistan is in the front line of facing threats from terrorism, insisting that fight against terrorism requires strategic regional and international cooperation. President Ghani also added that the bilateral relations between Kabul and Washington are based on mutual interests and threats the two nations are facing. Meanwhile, Senator Corker hailed the Afghan government in maintaining peace and stability, economic development and reforms in the government sector. He reaffirmed the commitment by United States and in particular the US Congress to support Afghanistan in maintaining peace and stability in the country. This comes as the Afghan national security forces expects to start 2016 with more capabilities as compared to the previous years in suppressing the anti-government armed militants with recent major steps taken by the international allies of Afghanistan, particularly United States and India, in boosting the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force.⁶

President of Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said that Afghanistan has a specific stance for peace and no deal would be made on its independence and constitution. While talking to a gathering of local government officials and representatives of the eastern region on January 9, he said first round of discussions for peace talks is going to be held tomorrow and that the nation would be kept informed on developments. During his speech in Jalalabad, President Ghani also said that Afghanistan's constitution has obvious limits and there won't be any changes to it unless the amendments are in accordance to its principles. Pointing towards Afghanistan's representative scheduled to attend the conference in Islamabad, President Ghani said, "We won't go anywhere to beg for peace." The preparatory or quadrilateral would explore ways to create a consensus for talks between the Taliban and government delegations to end the bloodshed. Afghanistan would be represented by its Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai and Pakistan by its Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry. The U.S. and China would be reportedly represented by their special envoys for Afghanistan and Pakistan region. Reports suggest that Pakistan will present a list of the Taliban at the conference who are willing to join the peace process. The quadrilateral meeting comes after the visit of Pakistan's Chief of Army Chief (COAS) General Raheel Sharif to Kabul

⁵ "Pakistan Interference the Main Cause of Issues in Afghanistan: Taliban Leaders", *Khaama Press*, January 8, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-interferencs-the-main-cause-of-issues-in-afghanistan-taliban-leaders-0094>

⁶ "Ghani Requests US Congress Help in Equipping the AAF", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 9, 2016, at <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2009,%202016/Front%20Page.pdf>

where he said that Islamabad would join Kabul in action against militant groups not willing to join the peace and reconciliation process.⁷

The President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani made a telephone call to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He strongly condemned the cross border terrorist attack in Pathankot and extended condolences at the loss of lives in the attack. President Ghani also briefed Prime Minister Modi about the terrorist attack in Mazar-e-Sharif and expressed support at the loss of lives and property in the earthquake in India.⁸

Pakistan

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Lowest bidder not considered for two CPEC highway projects; Three commanders among 42 held over IS links; Sharif, Sri Lankan president agree to boost defence ties; Pakistan expels Bangladeshi diplomat as spy row worsens; Land acquisition for Bhasha dam may be completed before June; Prime Minister Sharif assures his government would take prompt and decisive action against the terrorists.**

Two of the four highway projects in Balochistan recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have been awarded to the second lowest bidders instead of the lowest ones, causing a loss of over Rs 650 million to the exchequer. Interestingly enough, the prime minister inaugurated the western route projects on December 30 even though no formal letter of acceptance (LoA) had been issued (for formal award of contracts) to the successful bidders/construction firms. According to the National Highway Authority (NHA), four contracts – two for N-50 and two for N-70 – were awarded to two separate joint ventures (JVs) and a single firm. The lowest bidder was not considered in two of the contracts and the second lowest firms have not been asked to match the lowest bids. But an NHA official claimed that the authority had awarded the contracts in accordance with the criteria set by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which is funding the projects. For N-50, two projects called Package-I and II have been awarded. According to the NHA document, under Package-I, a 41km road from Zhob to Killi Khudae Nazar will be reconstructed by Limak-ZKB JV at a cost Rs 4.8 billion. Under Package-II, a 40 km road will be reconstructed from Killi Khudae Nazar to Mughalkot by Maqbool-Zarghon JV at a cost of Rs 4bn. Similarly, two separate projects have been awarded for N-70. The road under Package-I will be constructed by firm Umar Jan from Qilla Saifullah to Loralai at a cost Rs4.50bn. Under Package-II, construction of the road from Loralai to Waigum Rud has been awarded to Maqbool-Zarghon JV with an estimated cost of Rs3.02bn.⁹

Officials arrested 42 suspected militants with alleged links to the militant Islamic State (IS) group, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanallah said on January 4, "The arrests were the result of raids in four Punjab cities over the weekend," the minister said. Those arrested had been tasked with setting up sleeper cells for the IS, he said, and added that those arrested include the purported IS Islamabad chief Amir Mansoor, his deputy Abdullah Mansoori and the group's chief for Sindh

⁷ "Won't Beg for Peace, Says President of Afghanistan", *Khaama Press*, January 10, 2015, at <http://www.khaama.com/wont-beg-for-peace-says-president-of-afghanistan-4479>

⁸ "President Ashraf Ghani calls PM and Condemns Cross Border Terrorist Attack in Pathankot", *PIB*, January 4, 2016, Release ID :134152 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

⁹ "Lowest Bidder Not Considered for Two CPEC Highway Projects", *Dawn*, January 4, 2016, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1230586/lowest-bidder-not-considered-for-two-cpec-highway-projects>

province, Umer Kathio. The minister said the raids also yielded IS literature and weapons. Sanaullah said the operation against alleged IS militants was launched after a raid last week in Daska district, when 13 other IS suspects were arrested. Sanaullah said that less than 100 Pakistanis had left the country to join the militant group in Iraq and Syria. "Hundreds of people from different countries have fled to Iraq and Syria to join IS. However, only a very few Pakistanis have left the country in hopes of joining the militant organisation," he said. The minister's statement comes nearly a week after the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed busting an IS terror cell in Sialkot. The CTD said it arrested eight suspects and seized weapons, explosives and laptops, as well as a large number of compact discs containing publicity material, during the raid. An 'IS recruiter' was also arrested in Karachi earlier this week. In December 2015, four well-educated men held on terrorism charges were arrested in Karachi for their involvement in the Safoora attacks, while their wives and their accomplices were accused of brainwashing educated and rich women through sermons and videos about the IS and other terrorist outfits. An investigation report into the Safoora attackers in August alleged that the suspects were affiliated with al Qaeda and IS.¹⁰

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena agreed on January 5 on reinvigorating bilateral ties with focus on enhanced cooperation in trade, defence production, science and technology, and tourism. In an interaction with media after delegation-level talks and signing of bilateral accords at the President's Secretariat, the two leaders stressed the need for fully exploiting their friendship for the development and prosperity of their peoples. Mr Sharif mentioned the commonalities of views shared during the talks as the two sides agreed on pursuing multi-faceted interaction. He said Sri Lanka had been a strong and steadfast friend of Pakistan which had stood by it in difficult moments and added "we remain eternally grateful to the people and government of this beautiful island state". He said Sri Lanka enjoyed exceptional position for being the first country with which Pakistan entered into a Free Trade Agreement. The PM said the present volume of bilateral trade (\$325 million) did not reflect the true potential existing between the two countries and called for steps to achieve the target of \$1 billion by the end of 2016. He reiterated Pakistan's offer to set up cement and sugar plants in Sri Lanka. He expressed satisfaction over the meeting of the Second Working Group and the sixth technical-level meeting of Pakistan-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission, being held in Colombo.¹¹

Pakistan has asked Bangladesh to withdraw one of its diplomats from Islamabad, in an apparent retaliation after the expulsion of a Pakistani envoy from Dhaka who allegedly funded a suspected extremist on trial for espionage. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said Islamabad had on January 6 asked Dhaka to recall senior diplomat Moushumi Rahman from its high commission in Islamabad within 48 hours. "The political counsellor and head of chancery in Islamabad has been given till January 7 to leave the country," Haque said. The Bangladesh foreign secretary did not offer any reason for Pakistan's decision to expel Moushumi Rahman. Diplomatic sources in Islamabad said that Rahman indulged in 'anti-state activities in Pakistan' and that concerned security agencies continued to monitor her. This is the first time that Pakistan has expelled a Bangladeshi diplomat. On December 23, Islamabad had recalled one of its diplomats – Farina Arshad – from Bangladesh at Dhaka's request, after she was alleged to have financed a

¹⁰ "Three Commanders Among 42 Held Over IS Links", *Daily Times*, January 5, 2016, at, <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-01-05/page-1/detail-3>

¹¹ "Sharif, Sri Lankan President Agree To Boost Defence Ties", *Dawn*, January 6, 2015, at, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1231126/sharif-sri-lankan-president-agree-to-boost-defence-ties>

suspected extremist accused of spying for Pakistan. A formal statement from Islamabad dismissed the charges as 'baseless', adding, "an incessant and orchestrated media campaign was launched against her on spurious charges". Pakistan and Bangladesh have had a rocky bilateral relationship in recent months. Bilateral relations soured when Bangladesh executed senior Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Jamaat-i-Islami's secretary general Ali Ahsan Mujahid in November. The two had been convicted of genocide and rape by a domestic 'war crimes tribunal' called International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), which had been set up under a 1973 legislation that was amended in 2009 to resume the trials.¹²

The government is expecting to complete acquisition of land for the multi-billion-dollar Diamer-Bhasha dam before June this year. A senior official told *Dawn* that Rs10 billion had been allocated under the current fiscal year's Public Sector Development Programme and the amount had been released to the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) to complete the process of land acquisition for the storage-cum-power generation project. He said Wapda had transferred Rs10bn to the deputy commissioners of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to be paid to the people who would be displaced from the required land. The official said that most of the land needed for the project had already been acquired and land titles transferred/registered. The remaining work is expected to be taken over in two to three months. He said land acquisition was the first requirement for raising local and international financing for the \$14bn project. About 37,500 acres has to be acquired, including about 18,500 acres of private land. All paper work has been completed to formally seek financing from international agencies and bilateral lenders.¹³

China on January 9 took serious notice of the recent divide among different political parties in Pakistan over China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), urging them to address their difference in order to create favourable conditions for the completion of the project. "We hope that relevant parties could strengthen communication and coordination and solve differences properly so as to create favourable conditions for the CPEC," a statement issued by the Chinese embassy in Islamabad said. "We are ready to work with Pakistani side to actively promote construction of CPEC projects, and bring tangible benefits to the people of the two countries," the statement said. The spokesman further said that the multi-billion dollar project is the result of a consensus reached between China and Pakistan, and has won popular support from the people of the two countries. "CPEC benefits Pakistan as a whole and will bring development and benefits to the people of the country," he maintained. On January 8 an all-parties conference called by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) decided to approach Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to convey their reservations on the CPEC. The conference, attended by ruling *PTI*, JUI-F, PkMAP, QWP, ANP and PML-Q, maintained that the western route of CPEC was not according to the declaration at the APC convened by the prime minister on May 28 last year. It urged the federal government to provide details about the timeline and locations of the economic or industrial zones that would be constructed under the CPEC. "We are not against CPEC. All political parties of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will support the federal government on the project provided that KP gets its due right."¹⁴

¹² "Pakistan Expels Bangladeshi Diplomat as Spy Row Worsens", *Daily Times*, January 7, 2016, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/07-Jan-2016/pakistan-expels-bangladeshi-diplomat-as-spy-row-worsens>

¹³ "Land Acquisition for Bhasha Dam May be Completed Before June", *Dawn*, January 8, 2016, at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1231506/land-acquisition-for-bhasha-dam-may-be-completed-before-june>

¹⁴ "China Tells Pakistan to Resolve Internal Differences on CPEC", *Daily Times*, January 10, 2016, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-01-10/page-1/detail-2>

On January 5, Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a call from Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif regarding the terrorist attack on the Pathankot airbase. Prime Minister Modi strongly emphasized the need for Pakistan to take firm and immediate action against the organizations and individuals responsible for and linked to the Pathankot terrorist attack. Specific and actionable information in this regard has been provided to Pakistan. Prime Minister Sharif assured Prime Minister Modi that his government would take prompt and decisive action against the terrorists.¹⁵

Bangladesh

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Rally organised by both the AL and the BNP on the Second anniversary of January 5 general elections; Pakistan asks Bangladesh to recall diplomat; Tripura opens new land customs station along Bangladesh border; Bangladesh voices 'concern' over North Korea's nuclear test; Foreign Minister visits Saudi Arabia; Border Haats for promoting the well-being of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders; Guidelines for developing a speedy, responsive, coordinated and effective HADR for IONS members.**

Addressing a massive rally on the occasion of the second anniversary of January 5 general election, which Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) marks as "death of democracy day", the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia demanded discussions with the government for the sake of democracy. She demanded the authorities to immediately arrange a parliamentary election under a nonpartisan government. The BNP chief demanded resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed. The rally was the first public rally for Khaleda Zia in over a year. The BNP chief last addressed a public rally on December 13, 2014 at Kanchpur in Narayanganj as part of her party's move to force the government for holding the last national election under a non-party administration. Awami League on the other hand organised a rally marking the "victory day for democracy" on the second anniversary of January 5 elections.¹⁶

Pakistan has asked Bangladesh to withdraw its senior diplomat Moushumi Rahman from the country in 48 hours, without citing any reason. The move appears to be a counter-action from Islamabad following the withdrawal of its diplomat Farina Arshad from Dhaka on December 23, 2015 after she was accused of terror financing. On January 5, 2016, the Pakistan foreign ministry summoned Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Suhrab Hossain and conveyed the message. Moushumi is the counsellor (political) and head of Chancery at the Bangladesh mission in Islamabad. Dhaka, however, will not bring her back and instead will send her to its diplomatic mission in another country.¹⁷

A new land customs station has been opened in Tripura along Bangladesh-India border to facilitate two-way trade. Indian Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman along with Chief Minister of Tripura Manik Sarkar inaugurated the station on January 6 at Srimantapur. This station is located at Sonamura in Sepahijala district of Tripura. The corresponding station on the Bangladesh side is Bibirbazar, Chittagong Commissionerate.

¹⁵ "PM Receives Telephone Call From Pak PM", *PIB*, January 5, 2016, Release ID :134181, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

¹⁶ "Remove Khaleda from Leadership: Hanif", *The Daily Star*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/politics/al-men-throng-rallies-197302>.

¹⁷ "Pakistan Asks Bangladesh to Recall Diplomat", *The Daily Star*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/pakistan-asks-bangladesh-recall-diplomat-197716>.

Srimantapur is the second land customs station developed by Tripura government along Bangladesh border.¹⁸

Bangladesh has expressed its concern over a nuclear test carried out by North Korea. Dhaka in a statement reminded Pyongyang that the nuclear test was in contravention to the UN Security Council Resolutions Nos 1718, 1874, 2087 and 2094 and the non-proliferation regime. It also urged North Korea to refrain from activities that could potentially escalate tension, and to reaffirm its commitment to the maintenance of peace and stability of the region and beyond. Bangladesh was committed to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as a signatory of international treaties, the statement said.¹⁹

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali paid a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia from January 5-7. During the visit, AH Mahmood Ali, met his Saudi counterpart Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir in Riyadh on January 6. Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have expressed their firm resolve to cooperate in the fight against terrorism and extremism through meaningful cooperation, during the meeting. However, neither of the governments released any details on how they would cooperate to combat terrorism. The press release said the two foreign ministers reviewed “the whole gamut of bilateral relations between the two countries as well as exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, including mutual cooperation at the UN and other international fora, including the OIC”. It said both the ministers “agreed to work on a number of instruments for cooperation on investment, culture and education, agriculture etc.” ahead of the probable visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina so that “those could be signed during the visit”. The two ministers also agreed to sign an MOU on Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) between the two countries during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to the Kingdom sometime between March and May. Saudi deputy foreign ministers of different divisions were present at the bilateral meeting. From the Bangladesh side Ambassador Golam Moshi, Deputy Chief of Mission Nazrul Islam, Consul General of the Bangladesh consulate in Jeddah Shahidul Karim, and Director of the Foreign Minister's Office Asif Rahman were present.²⁰ Foreign minister AH Mahmood Ali also met with Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) secretary general Iyad Ameen Madani on January 7 in Jeddah. During the meeting, Bangladesh offered its readiness to extend full support to the cause of Muslim Ummah where OIC has been engaged. In reply, the secretary general reaffirmed the OIC's interest to continue its engagement with Bangladesh to enhance peace and development as well as political stability across the Muslim world. During the meeting, they also discussed issues of common interest of the member states of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation with special focus on the issue of plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.²¹

The Indian cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh for (i) MoU and Mode of Operation of Border Haats signed on 23.10.2010 with Bangladesh for setting up Border Haats on India-Bangladesh Border, (ii) addendum to the MoU signed on 15.5.2012; (iii) to establish new Border Haats after identification of suitable locations in

¹⁸ “Tripura Opens New Land Customs Station along Bangladesh Border”, *bdnews24.com*, January 7, 2016 at <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2016/01/07/tripura-opens-new-land-customs-station-along-bangladesh-border>.

¹⁹ “Bangladesh Voices ‘Concern’ Over North Korea's Nuclear Test”, *bdnews24.com*, January 7, 2016, at <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2016/01/07/bangladesh-voices-concern-over-north-koreas-nuclear-test>.

²⁰ “Dhaka, Riyadh to Cooperate in Fighting Terror”, *The Daily Star*, January 8, 2016, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/dhaka-riyadh-cooperate-fighting-terror-198733>.

²¹ “Dhaka To Work for Muslim Ummah Under OIC: FM”, *New Age*, January 9, 2016, at <http://newagebd.net/191730/dhaka-to-work-for-muslim-ummah-under-oic-fm/>

consultation with Government of Bangladesh and concerned State Governments and (iv) to modify/revise the terms and condition of the above MoU/Addendum in consultation with relevant State Governments/Central Government agencies and Government of Bangladesh. The Border Haats aim at promoting the well-being of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries, by establishing traditional system of marketing the local produce thorough local markets in local currency and/or barter basis. Though not significant as a percentage of bilateral trade, these measures help to improve economic well-being of marginalised sections of society.²²

Admiral RK Dhowan, the Chief of the Naval Staff is on an official visit to Bangladesh from January 10 to 14 to attend the 5th Edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). During the Symposium, Indian Navy would be presenting a guideline document on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The aim of the document is to provide guidelines for developing a speedy, responsive, coordinated and effective HADR for IONS members, as and when required. During the visit, the CNS would also be calling on political and military counterparts from Bangladesh and IONS members/observers to further cement bilateral relations. IONS was launched in February 2008 to capitalise upon regional strengths of IOR littorals and was 21st Century's first significant international maritime-security initiative.²³

Sri Lanka

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visits Sri Lanka; Norwegian Foreign Minister visits Sri Lanka; Sri Lankan PM presents resolution to make parliament a constitutional assembly; Chinese delegation meets Deputy Minister of National Policy and Economic Affairs of Sri Lanka; UN Chief congratulates President Sirisena on the first anniversary of Sri Lanka's political transition; Sri Lanka condemns the attack on Indian air base in Pathankot; Sri Lanka security forces on alert on ISIS threat – Ministry.**

Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif made a three –day official visit to Sri Lanka on January 4, 2016 at the invitation of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena. Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe received Prime Minister Sharif, accompanied by his wife, on his arrival at the Bandaranaike International Airport. The official welcome ceremony presided by President Maithripala Sirisena was held at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo on January 5, 2016. The two countries signed a number of Agreements and MoUs in the fields Trade promotion, Culture, Health, Gem and Jewelry, Science & Technology and Combating Money Laundering and Terror Financing.²⁴

²² "Memorandum of Understanding between India and Bangladesh and Mode of Operation of Border Haats for setting up of Border Haats of India-Bangladesh Border and Addendum To the MoU Signed Earlier", *PIB*, January 6, 2016, Release ID :134202, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

²³ "Indian Navy to Present a Guideline Document on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) during Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Bangladesh", *PIB*, January 10, 2016, Release ID :134337, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

²⁴ "Pakistani PM Arrives in Sri Lanka on a Three-Day Official Visit", *ColomboPage*, January 4, 2017 at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_15B/Jan04_1451917172CH.php. "Nawaz Sharif Thanks Sri Lanka, Invites Maithripala", *Colombo Gazette*, January 5, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/01/05/nawaz-sharif-thanks-sri-lanka-invites-maithripala/>. "Sri Lanka Has Been a Strong and Steadfast Friend of Pakistan - Prime Minister Sharif", *ColomboPage*, January 5, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan05_1452007940CH.php.

Norwegian Foreign Minister, Børge Brende made a visit to Sri Lanka on January 7. Brende's visit is the first by a Norwegian foreign minister to Sri Lanka since 2005, when Sri Lanka was holding on to a fragile ceasefire brokered by Norway. Welcoming his Norwegian counterpart, Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister Mangala Samaraweera said he had "very productive" meeting with the visiting Minister. During the meeting, Minister Brende and his Sri Lankan counterpart discussed expanding Norwegian development assistance, especially technical assistance for the fisheries sector and solar power generation. In addition, they explored the possibility of expanding Norwegian investment in Sri Lanka, both through portfolio and foreign direct investment.²⁵

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe presented a Resolution for the appointment of the Constitutional Assembly for the purpose of formulating a new Constitution for Sri Lanka in Parliament on January 9, 2016. The Resolution, proposes establishing a Committee of Parliament referred to as the 'Constitutional Assembly' which shall consist of all Members of Parliament, for the purpose of deliberating, and seeking the views and advice of the People, on a new Constitution for Sri Lanka, and preparing a draft of a Constitution Bill for the consideration of Parliament in the exercise of its powers under Article 75 of the Constitution.²⁶

The Chinese delegation led by Yang Weiqun, director of the department of Asian affairs at the Chinese Commerce Ministry, made an official visit to Sri Lanka. The visiting Chinese delegation met the Deputy Minister of National Policy and Economic Affairs Niroshan Perera on January 6, 2016 and discussed the Colombo port city project and other Chinese funded projects in Sri Lanka.²⁷

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has congratulated Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, and the Government and the people of Sri Lanka on the first year of the country's political transition. In a statement issued in New York on January 7, the UN Chief said he is encouraged by the Government's commitment to a broad reform agenda that aims to realize durable peace, stability and prosperity for the Sri Lankan people. He commended Sri Lanka's leadership in working to transform the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals into reality on the ground.²⁸

Sri Lanka strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot near the Pakistan border on January 2. Issuing a statement the Foreign Affairs Ministry said the Government and people of Sri Lanka extend condolences to the victims and their families.²⁹

Defence Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi recently said that Sri Lanka security officials have received information that 36 Sri Lankan citizens have entered Syria secretly and some of them have joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence assured that

²⁵ "Sri Lanka Strengthens Political Ties with Norway", *ColomboPage*, January 7, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan07_1452178523CH.php.

²⁶ "Sri Lankan PM Presents Resolution to Make Parliament a Constitutional Assembly", *ColomboPage*, January 9, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan09_1452323841CH.php.

²⁷ "China and Sri Lanka Discuss Port City Project", *Colombo Gazette*, January 6, 2016, at <http://colombogazette.com/2016/01/06/china-and-sri-lanka-discuss-port-city-project/>.

²⁸ "UN Chief Congratulates President Sirisena on the First Anniversary of Sri Lanka's Political Transition", *Colombo Page*, January 8, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan08_1452225856CH.php.

²⁹ "Sri Lanka Condemns the Attack On Indian Air Base in Pathankot", *ColomboPage*, January 7, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan07_1452106437CH.php.

the security forces and all intelligence agencies were on full alert on the possibility of any groups having links with the ISIS making their appearance in the country.³⁰

Maldives

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Saudi Arabia's Shura Council Speaker donates \$100,000 to Islamic University; President Yameen meets with Thai Prime Minister; President Yameen sends message of sympathy to Indian Prime Minister; Maldives condemns the terrorist attack on the Indian airbase.**

Speaker of Saudi Arabia's Shura Council, Dr. Abdulla bin Mohamed bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, has donated \$100,000 to the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM). This was announced on *Twitter* by Vice Chancellor of IUM, Dr. Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed. Dr. Shaheem said that the donation was made during a meeting at the university on January 4, between Dr. Abdulla and the Chancellor and senior officials of the IUM. Dr. Abdulla came to Maldives on January 3 on the invitation of Speaker of Parliament of Maldives, Abdulla Maseeh. As part of his visit, Dr. Abdulla also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Dunya Maumoon and visited the ministry of Islamic affairs.³¹

President of Maldives Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom met with Prime Minister of Thailand General Chan-ocha. President's Office said that during the meeting, the President and the Prime Minister highlighted areas to be further addressed in order to enhance the good working relationship between the Maldives and Thailand, and discussed supporting each other within the international arena. President Yameen reiterated the Maldives' interest in easing travel to Thailand by signing a visa waiver agreement between the two countries, as a measure of further strengthening people-to-people contact, trade, and economic relations. The President was accompanied at the meeting by Under Secretary (Foreign Relations) at the President's Office Mohamed Naseer, Spokesperson at the President's Office Ibrahim Muaz Ali, and Honorary Consul of Maldives in Thailand Sanam Angubolkul.³²

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has sent a message of sympathy to Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, following the earthquake that occurred in northeast India.³³

The Maldives has condemned attack on the Indian air force base in Pathankot, Punjab. In a statement issued by the Maldivian Foreign Ministry on January 6, the Maldivian Government strongly condemned the attack saying that terrorism is threat to peace and humanity. "The cowardly attack that took place in Pathankot will only strengthen our resolve to remain steadfast in our collective efforts to bring an end to this global scourge forever", the statement said.³⁴

³⁰ "Sri Lanka Security Forces on Alert on ISIS Threat – Ministry", *ColomboPage*, January 6, 2016, at http://www.colombopage.com/archive_16A/Jan06_1452097616CH.php.

³¹ "Saudi Arabia's Shura Council Speaker Donates \$100,000 to Islamic University", *SunOnline*, January 4, 2016 at <http://english.sun.mv/35594>.

³² "President Yameen Meets with Thai Prime Minister", *SunOnline*, January 4, 2016 at <http://english.sun.mv/35581>.

³³ "President Yameen Sends Message of Sympathy to Indian Prime Minister", *SunOnline*, January 4, 2016 at <http://english.sun.mv/35593>.

³⁴ "Maldives Condemns the Terrorist Attack on the Indian Airbase", *SunOnline*, January 7, 2016, at <http://english.sun.mv/35637>.

B. East Asia

China

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Beijing to shut 2500 small firms by 2016 to fight pollution; Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang attend the opening of AIIB; Li calls for full implementation of two-child policy; Xi Jinping visits Chongqing; China condemns attack on Pathankot air base.**

The Chinese government has announced that Beijing is planning to shut down around 2500 small and polluting firms in 2016. This is in order to reduce the pollution. Even though there has been major adjustments made to reduce pollution small polluting sources like garages, hotels etc. are increasing, according to an official. It is also announced that Beijing is attempting to eliminate coal use in six downtown districts in the next two years.³⁵

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, “Xi will attend and address the inaugurating ceremony in the morning of January 16 while Li will address the founding conference of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) council in the afternoon”. These opening activities are scheduled from January 16 to January 18, 2016. AIIB has 57 members.³⁶

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has asserted that the two child policy will be gaining full support in education, health and other areas for successful implementation. While describing the two child policy Li said that, “a good deed that benefits people's livelihoods and the future”.³⁷

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Foreign Secretary of Britain Philip Hammond. During the meeting Li said that, “We encourage mass entrepreneurship and innovation and put more emphasis on developing the emerging service industry on the basis of continuing lifting the traditional manufacturing industry, which will provide great opportunities for China-Britain cooperation”. They also discussed ways to improve the existing bilateral relationship.³⁸

The Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Chongqing for the first time on January 4 after he took office as the President of China. As per the *Xinhua News Agency*, “Connectivity and cutting-edge technology were the focus of Xi's visit to the city, the starting point of the trans-Eurasia Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe international railway route”.³⁹

³⁵ “Beijing to Shut 2,500 Small, Polluting Firms This Year”, *China Daily*, January 9, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/09/content_23008075.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

³⁶ “Chinese Top Leaders to Attend AIIB Opening Activities”, *China Daily*, January 8, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/08/content_22999619.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

³⁷ “Li Keqiang Urges Sound Implementation of Two-Child Policy”, *China Daily*, January 7, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/07/content_22985554.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

³⁸ “Li Keqiang Meets British Foreign Secretary”, *China Daily*, January 7, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/07/content_22964577.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

³⁹ “Chongqing 'Full of Promise,' Xi Says”, By Tan Yingzi in Chongqing and Zhang Yunbi, *China Daily*, January 6, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/06/content_22947716.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

On January 4, China also condemned the attack on the Indian air force base and also asserted that India and Pakistan should improve relationship. According to Hua Chunying, “The improvement of ties between Pakistan and India is important to regional peace, stability and development”.⁴⁰

Japan

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemns North Korean nuclear test; Japan and UK strengthen ties within the 2+2 framework; Japan to keep a close eye on comfort women white paper; Comfort women talks with Taiwan unlikely.**

On January 6, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemned North Korean nuclear test and reiterated Japan’s demand for Pyongyang to immediately and fully implement the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. He argued that despite the call from international community to suspend conducting further provocation, including nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, North Korea’s behaviour is deplorable. The latest development, Abe said, is a serious threat to Japan’s security and seriously undermines the peace and security of Northeast Asia. The nuclear test is in violation of pertinent UNSCRs, including 2094; Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration; and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks.⁴¹ There is a possibility of renewal of a travel ban from North Korea following the nuclear test.⁴² Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President Barack Obama stated their intention to coordinate their response to Pyongyang’s nuclear test.⁴³

On January 8, Tokyo hosted the Second Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers’ Meeting. Japanese foreign minister Fumio Kishida, Minister and Japanese defence minister Gen Nakatani, met with their counterparts Philip Hammond and Michael Fallon to discuss wide ranging bilateral security and defence cooperation and critical regional affairs. Several regional issues including the North Korean nuclear test were discussed and they agreed to work together for a new UNSC resolution containing strong contents. Besides, other issues like the North Korean human rights problems, the abductions issue, South China Sea and East China Sea developments were discussed. Both countries stressed the importance of the rule-based international system and resolution of dispute in accordance with international law. They emphasized the significance of concluding the Japan-UK Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) soon. Moreover, Japan and UK agreed to cooperate on defence equipment and technology in addition to capacity-building support, maritime security, cybersecurity, HADR for Southeast Asian nations.⁴⁴

Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga stated that Japan will closely watch the developments related to the South Korean the Comfort Women White Paper by the Gender Equality and Family Ministry. Earlier in December South Korea and Japan made an agreement to resolve the decades-

⁴⁰ “China Condemns Attack on Indian Air Force Base”, *China Daily*, January 4, 2016 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/04/content_22928934.htm, accessed on January 11, 2016

⁴¹ “Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the Nuclear Test by North Korea”, *Kantei*, January 6, 2016 at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201601/statement.html

⁴² “North Koreans Face Renewed Ban On Travel As Japan Considers Penalties”, *Jiji*, January 8, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/08/national/politics-diplomacy/north-koreans-face-renewed-ban-travel-japan-considers-penalties/#.Vrhh6hh961t>

⁴³ “Abe calls Obama, Leaders Pledge Unified Response over N. Korea Nuclear Test”, *Kyodo*, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/07/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-calls-obama-leaders-pledge-unified-response-north-korea-h-bomb-test/#.Vrhe3hh961t>

⁴⁴ “Second Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministers’ Meeting (“2+2”)”, *MOFA Japan*, January 8, 2016 at http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001000.html

long dispute the foreign ministry argued that while Japan cannot stop the publication of the white paper but Japan will communicate its position to South Korea in case the content in the white paper is problematic.⁴⁵

Japan-Taiwan talks on comfort women issue on the lines of Tokyo's agreement with Seoul are unlikely. Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga stressed that the government has no intention of launching new negotiations on comfort women issue with other nations. He said that till now, Japan has dealt sincerely with each country over the comfort women issue bearing in mind each circumstance. He further stressed that the situation is different with regard to South Korea.⁴⁶

The Korean Peninsula

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **North Korean tests hydrogen bomb; South Korean and the US strengthen defence readiness; National Assembly of South Korea passed the One-Shot Act.**

On January 6, North Korean state television *KCNA* announced that it successfully tested a hydrogen bomb at 10:00 am Pyongyang Time. Artificial tremor with 5.1-magnitude was noticed close to the nuclear test site near Punggye-ri.⁴⁷ The epicentre of the earthquake, according to the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre, the U.S. Geological Survey and China's state seismic centre, was in Yangang Province.⁴⁸ *KCNA* reported Ho Chun Gum, the chairwoman of the management board of the Kumdae Cooperative Farm in Rangnang District, saying that following this success, the U.S. and some other antagonistic powers will become desperate in their attempts to control DPRK and overthrow the communist regime.⁴⁹ South Korea registered a strong objection. During a National Security Council (NSC) meeting at Cheong Wa Dae, President Park Geun-hye argued that Seoul will cooperate with the international community and ensure that North Korea pays the price for conducting a new nuclear weapons test.⁵⁰

South Korean Defence Ministry confirmed that South Korea and the United States strengthened joint defence readiness including increased surveillance following North Korea successful hydrogen bomb test. A teleconference of commanders was held where information was shared on the ongoing situation. Both nations increased vigilance against North Korea. Reports suggest that a joint counter-crisis team with the Joint Chiefs of Staff is formed. WC-135 aircraft was sent by the U.S. Air Force from Kadena Air Base to identify any residual radioactivity over the Korean

⁴⁵ "Tokyo Alarmed By Seoul's Plan To Press Ahead With 'Comfort Women' White Paper", *Kyodo, Jiji*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/06/national/politics-diplomacy/tokyo-keep-close-tabs-seoul-ministry-planned-comfort-women-white-paper/#.VrhcMxh961t>

⁴⁶ Aoki, Mizuho, "Suga Rules Out Taiwan talks, Says Japan's 'Comfort Women' Deal Applies only to South Korea", *The Japan Times*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/05/national/politics-diplomacy/japans-ccmfort-women-deal-applies-south-korea-suga-says-official-rules-taiwan-talks/#.VrheyRh961t>

⁴⁷ "N. Korea Says It Has Conducted Hydrogen Bomb Test," *Yonhap*, January 6, 2016 at <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2016/01/06/59/0401000000AEN20160106004351315F.html>

⁴⁸ "N.K. Tests Hydrogen Bomb", *The Korea Herald*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160106000718>

⁴⁹ "Successful H-bomb Test, Historic Event of Korean Nation", *KCNA*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.kcna.kp/kcna.user.article.retrieveNewsViewInfoList.kcmsf#this>

⁵⁰ "Pyongyang to Pay Price For Nuclear Test: President, Cheong Wa Dae", January 6, 2016 at http://english1.president.go.kr/activity/headlines.php?srh%5Bdate%5D=2016-01&srh%5Btype%5D=2&srh%5Bpage%5D=1&srh%5Bview_mode%5D=detail&srh%5Bseq%5D=13912#sthash.hKGZh1vw.dpuf

Peninsula.⁵¹ In addition, on January 8 the South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi discussed their assessments of the North Korea situation and deliberated ways to react to the test, together with adoption of a new UN Security Council resolution.⁵²

South Korean National Assembly passed the economic regulation planned to boost corporate restructuring to improve competitiveness. The One-Shot Act was supported by 174 lawmakers and will come into effect from August.⁵³

C. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Philippines urge ASEAN pressure on China for rules on disputed sea; Philippines follow Vietnam in opposing China's runway test; Vietnam protests China's second test flight in South China Sea; Vietnam protests China's second test flight in South China Sea; Indonesia, South Korea sign \$1.3 billion fighter jet development deal; Myanmar army clashes with ethnic Rakhine rebels.**

Philippine President Benigno Aquino on January 8 urged Southeast Asian neighbours to put pressure on China to agree on a binding code of conduct to ease tension in South China Sea following Chinese test flights to an island it has built. Since 2010, China and the 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have been discussing a set of rules for rival claimants in the South China Sea aimed at avoiding conflict. "Can we put a little more pressure on China to sit down and agree on a binding code of conduct?" Aquino said referring to ASEAN. China claims almost the whole of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of world trade passes every year, and has been increasingly assertive in staking its claim. Aquino said that the Philippines had done everything it could to push forward discussions on the code - a set of rules setting out how claimant states should behave, and imposing sanctions on countries that violate it, aimed at preventing provocative action, the raising of tension and conflict.⁵⁴

The Philippine government said on January 4 that like Vietnam, it opposed China's recent test of a newly completed runway on one of seven islands Beijing has constructed in the disputed South China Sea. Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose said that the government was considering protesting China's action, as Vietnam did, adding that the test at Fiery Cross Reef "adds to tension and uncertainties in the region." Vietnam last week protested the test, saying it violated Hanoi's sovereignty, and demanded that China stop such actions. China rejected Hanoi's protest and will likely dismiss Manila's concerns as well. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that China deployed a "civil aircraft" on the island, which it calls Yongshu Jiao, to determine whether the new airfield in what she said was Chinese territory conformed to

⁵¹ "Kim Hyo-ji, Korea, US Beef Up Defence Readiness", *The Korea Times*, January 6, 2016 at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/02/205_194844.html

⁵² "Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se Speaks by Phone with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi," *MOFA*, January 8, 2016 at http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/pressreleases/index.jsp?menu=m_10_20

⁵³ "One-Shot Act Passed by the National Assembly", *Korea JoongAng daily*, February 5, 2016 at <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3014844>

⁵⁴ "Philippines Urges ASEAN Pressure on China For Rules on Disputed Sea", *Reuters*, January 8, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-idUSKBN0UM14F20160108>

civil aviation standards. Tensions have risen in the last two years after China transformed disputed reefs in the Spratly Islands into islands that rival claimants fear Beijing could use to project its military might far from the Chinese mainland and threaten their territories.⁵⁵

Laos and China reached an agreement on the interest rate for a US \$480 million loan to build the high-speed Lao-China railway, according to the Lao government official in charge of the multibillion-dollar project, although the figure was not publicly disclosed. "The Chinese offered us a loan with a three-percent interest rate, but we proposed that they reduce it," said Somsavat Lengsavad, the country's deputy prime minister who oversees the Lao-China railway project. Lao government officials previously expressed concern about the interest rate on the loan being too high compared to the rates of other loans that China has issued to Laos. China has offered other loans to developing countries in the region with a two-percent interest rate for railway, civil engineering and infrastructure projects. The railway forms part of a larger 3,000-kilometer regional rail link that will run from Kunming in southern China's Yunnan province through Laos, Thailand and Malaysia to Singapore. The rail line will transport both goods and passengers through the region and is expected to give the underdeveloped, landlocked nation a much-needed economic boost.⁵⁶

Vietnam on January 7 accused China of violating its sovereignty by landing two more test flights on an island in the busy South China Sea waterway, four days after China landed a plane on the same runway in the disputed territory. The runway on Fiery Cross Reef is one of three China has been building for more than a year by dredging sand up onto reefs and atolls in the Spratly Islands. Vietnam's claim to the area overlaps that of China, which claims almost the whole of the South China Sea. Vietnam said that two large Chinese civil aircraft landed on January 6 on an airfield that China "illegally" built on the reef. "This is a serious violation of Vietnam's sovereignty, threatening peace and regional stability, threatening security, safety and freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea," foreign ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said, using the name by which Vietnam refers to the South China Sea. "Vietnam resolutely requests China to immediately end similar acts and have no further violating acts". Vietnam would defend its sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the area through peaceful measures, in line with international law and the United Nations charter, he added. On January 2, China landed a civilian plane on the same 3,000-metre runway in its first test in the Spratlys, which was also the first time it had used a runway in the area. The United States, which criticized China's construction of islands in the South China Sea, said after the first landing it was concerned that the flight had exacerbated tension.⁵⁷

Indonesia signed a \$1.3 billion deal with South Korea on January 7 to jointly develop Seoul's next-generation fighter jets. Under the deal signed with Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI), Indonesia's Defence Ministry will invest about US \$1.3 billion in the Korean Fighter Experimental (KF-X) programme. The programme is aimed at producing new, home-grown fighter jets to replace the

⁵⁵ "Philippines Follows Vietnam in Opposing China's Runway Test", *The Hindu*, January 4, 2016, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/philippines-follows-vietnam-in-opposing-chinas-runway-test/article8064303.ece>

⁵⁶ "Laos and China Come to Terms on Loan Interest Rate For Railway Project", *Radio Free Asia*, January 4, 2016, at <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-china-come-to-terms-on-loan-interest-rate-for-railway-project-01042016163552.html>

⁵⁷ "Vietnam Protests China's Second Test Flight in South China Sea", *The Globe and Mail*, January 7, 2016, at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/vietnam-protests-chinas-second-test-flight-in-south-china-sea/article28047750/>

South's aged fleet of F-4 and F-5 fighters imported from the US. The investment from Indonesia will account for about one fifth of the total cost of the project, with up to 100 Indonesian workers taking part in development and production. Indonesia will be given one prototype plane and gain access to some technical data and information involving the project.⁵⁸

Myanmar's army said that it had fought skirmishes against a Buddhist insurgent group in impoverished Rakhine state, losing several soldiers to sniper attacks. The military, known as the Tatmadaw, had clashed 15 times with Buddhist Arakan Army (AA) rebels since December 28, when it cleared the area, acting on intelligence that AA insurgents were preparing to invade. The Arakan Army was founded in 2009 like many other insurgent groups among Myanmar's complex ethnic divide. It claims to be fighting for self-determination. It is closely allied with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of the largest ethnic militant groups. In October, the Myanmar government signed a ceasefire agreement with eight guerrilla groups to end more than five decades of conflict. However, seven insurgent forces including the AA were left out.⁵⁹

Oceania

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **PNG Defence Force soldiers charged for mutiny**

Eleven Papua New Guinea Defence Force soldiers were charged with mutiny for allegedly refusing a directive from the military headquarters in Port Moresby. The soldiers had been deployed to Tari in Hela about 17 months ago and were supposed to have returned to Port Moresby earlier. They were charged with mutiny on January 7 and appeared in the National Court in Waigani on the January 7 - 8.⁶⁰

India and Southeast Asia

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **India to set up ground satellite station in Vietnam; China takes umbrage at plan for ISRO station in Vietnam; Tripura to be India's gateway with South-East Asia: Sitharaman; Indian Coast Guard chief on visit to Myanmar to boost maritime ties; Thailand Culture Minister meets Indian counterpart; MoU between India and Singapore in the field of Civil Aviation.**

As the Indian media reported that New Delhi would soon activate a ground satellite station in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment said that this was a project for "establishing stations for probe, satellite data collection and remote sensing data processing facility for ASEAN," based in Vietnam, in the framework of cooperation between ASEAN and India. The construction of the satellite station will enable Vietnam to learn the techniques and experience of remote sensing from India. Vietnam will also have more data sources, strengthen close cooperation with other countries in the region, and have access to training for its human resources in this field. The project was approved with a total budget of

⁵⁸ "Indonesia, S. Korea Sign \$1.3B Fighter Jet Development Deal", *Defence News*, January 7, 2016, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/air-space/air-force/2016/01/07/indonesia-s-korea-sign-13bn-fighter-jet-development-deal/78402174/>

⁵⁹ Holmes, Oliver, "Myanmar Army Clashes With Ethnic Rakhine Rebels", *The Guardian*, January 8, 2016, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/08/myanmar-army-clashes-ethnic-rakhine-rebels-killed>

⁶⁰ "PNG Defence Force Soldiers Charged For Mutiny", *Papua New Guinea Today*, January 3, 2016, at <http://news.pngfacts.com/2016/01/png-defence-force-soldiers-charged-for.html>

US\$23 million taken from the ASEAN - India Cooperation Fund, including the following key objectives: to promote cooperation in the field of space science and technology between ASEAN and India; set up stations for probe, data acquisition, and remote sensing data processing; and provide remote sensing data from the available and future remote sensing satellites of India.

Construction of facilities and equipment installation will be carried out in 24 months. India will provide the cost of construction and operation in the first five years of the centre for data acquisition and processing. India's remote sensing products will be provided for free to the ASEAN countries in five years. India has two stations in Indonesia and Brunei and one more in Vietnam in the coming time. These stations will facilitate the exploration, collection of data and monitoring of environmental resources in the region.⁶¹

India's plan to activate a new data reception and tracking station in Vietnam was criticised by a Chinese think-tank, terming it an attempt by India to "stir up trouble" in the disputed South China Sea region to serve its own ends. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) set up a Data Reception and Tracking and Telemetry Station in Ho Chi Minh City, which will be activated soon and linked with another station in Biakin, Indonesia. India also has a satellite tracking station in Brunei. Reacting to the report, Gu Xiaosong, a researcher of the Southeast Asian studies at the Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences said "India has no territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. It wants to stir up trouble in the region to serve its own ends, which is to counterbalance China's influence."⁶²

Union Minister of State for Industries and Commerce Nirmala Sitharaman said on January 6 that with construction of bridge over river Feni and opening up of the Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, Tripura would not only be India's gateway to South-East Asia but also corridor for the Northeast India. She said this after inaugurating multi-facility 'Integrated Development Complex (IDC)' in Srimantapur, about 65 km from Tripura capital Agartala, to facilitate smooth passage of citizens of India and Bangladesh and improve border trade with the neighbouring nation. "After constructing the bridge over river Feni our connectivity with Chittagong will be established and it works then freight for all the state of the Northeast can be sent there and through Tripura supplied to all states. For Northeast, Tripura will be the gateway...If Tripura becomes the gateway for the north-eastern state then it will not be far that for the 12 Southeast Asian nations - Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos and till far up to Cambodia, to develop economic relation further through the Chittagong port and via Tripura for the Northeaster state to establish business connectivity." The Union Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had accorded the highest importance to improve relations with the neighbouring countries and this IDC was constructed with an eye to improve relations with neighbouring Bangladesh. The IDC was built at a cost of Rs. 16 crore on 2.83 acres of land bordering Comilla District of the Bangladesh, which having facilities like weigh bridge, warehouse, computerized immigration system, bank with

⁶¹ "India To Set Up Ground Satellite Station in Vietnam", *Vietnamnet Bridge*, January 7, 2016, at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/society/149670/india-to-set-up-ground-satellite-station-in-vietnam.html>

⁶² "China Takes Umbrage at Plan for ISRO Station in Vietnam", *The Hindu*, January 6, 2016, at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-takes-umbrage-at-plan-for-isro-station-in-vietnam/article8073184.ece>

currency exchange facility is almost like an integrated check-post. The IDC is expected to improve legal trade between Tripura and Bangladesh.⁶³

Seeking to enhance maritime co-operation with Myanmar, especially in the Bay of Bengal region, the Indian Coast Guard chief embarked on a four-day visit to the Southeast Asian nation. Coast Guard's Director General Vice Admiral H C S Bisht's visit commenced on January 6 and lasted till January 9. He met with Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice Admiral Tin Aung San. His visit coincided with the arrival of an Indian Coast Guard ship 'Varad' at Yangon port on January 7 which will be there until January 11.⁶⁴ Myanmar shares land and sea border with India and is also an Indian Ocean littoral state.⁶⁵

Thailand Culture Minister Vira Rajpoj Chanarat, along with a delegation, called on his Indian counterpart Mahesh Sharma on January 7 and discussed the issues of mutual cooperation in the field of culture and tourism. Sharma assured the visiting minister that the culture relations between India and Thailand "will be strengthened". "They discussed the issues of mutual cooperation in the field of culture and tourism," an official release said. Sharma also said that the year 2017 was being celebrated to mark the 70th Anniversary of India-Thailand Friendship.⁶⁶

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given approval for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was signed in November, 2015 between Airports Authority of India (On behalf of Government of India) and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (On behalf of Government of Singapore) in Civil Aviation during Prime Minister's visit to Singapore. The objective of this MoU is to establish mutual cooperation in the field of civil aviation, which will cover, to begin with, the airports of Jaipur and Ahmedabad. This cooperation will be extended to other airports with mutual consent.⁶⁷

D. Russia

Russia

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Putin approves Russia's updated national security strategy; Gazprom cancels tender for construction of a pipeline stretch of the Nord Stream-2 project; Three-year moratorium on inspection of small business comes into force in Russia; Gazprom refuses to buy natural gas from Turkmenistan; Russia's oil output touches record high in 2015; Russia to start production of advanced Mi-38 helicopter in 2016; Russia plans 16 launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2016.**

⁶³ "Tripura to be India's Gateway with South-East Asia: Sitharaman", *ANI News*, January 6, 2015, at <http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail2/story247226/tripura-to-be-india-039-s-gateway-with-south-east-asia-sitharaman.html>

⁶⁴ "Indian Coast Guard Chief On Visit To Myanmar To Boost Maritime Ties", *The Economic Times*, January 7, 2016, at <http://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/news/indian-coast-guard-chief-visits-talks>

⁶⁵ "Indian Coast Guard Chief Visits For Talks On New Ties", *Frontier Myanmar*, January 12, 2016, at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-coast-guard-chief-on-visit-to-myanmar-to-boost-maritime-ties/articleshow/50487354.cms>

⁶⁶ "Thailand Culture Minister Meets Mahesh Sharma", *The Economic Times*, January 7, 2016, at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-01-07/news/69589978_1_mutual-cooperation-mahesh-sharma-culture-and-tourism

⁶⁷ "Signing of MoU between India and Singapore in the Field of Civil Aviation", *PIB*, January 6, 2016, Release ID :134212, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has on December 31 approved the new national security strategy of the Russian Federation. The strategy lists Russia's national priority in terms of consolidation of its position as one of the leading world powers whose actions are aimed at ensuring strategic stability and mutually beneficial partnerships in the context of a multi-polar world. It highlights the expansion of NATO and its approach to Russia's borders as a threat to its national security. It adds that Russia's independent policy-making 'causes counteraction on the part of the US and their allies'.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the Strategy also seeks to strengthen cooperation within BRICS, SCO, APEC and G20 formats while prioritising ties with China, India, CIS countries, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In particular, the document states that 'Russia will promote the idea of transforming the CSTO into a universal international organization able to withstand the regional challenges and threats of military-political and military-strategic nature including international terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal migration'. The strategy also views cooperation with China as a key factor in maintaining regional and international stability and has called for the establishment of reliable non-bloc mechanisms for regional stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Gazprom has, on December 30, cancelled a tender worth 2.879 billion roubles (US\$39 million) for the construction of a 90 km stretch of pipeline which is crucial for the Nord Stream-2 project. The construction of the Ukhta-Torzhok pipeline is needed for the expansion of a unified system of gas supply for the Nord Stream-2 project. However, Gazprom has not cancelled other tenders of the project. In September 2015, Gazprom, E.ON, ENGIE, OMV and Shell had signed a shareholder agreement on the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline project with a capacity of 55 billion cubic meters from Russia to Germany across the Baltic Sea.⁶⁹

The law on a 3-year moratorium on inspection of small business has come into force in Russia from January 1, 2016. It concerns individual entrepreneurs and legal entities that come under the purview of small business. The law aims at easing operating conditions for small business and 'partially becoming a supportive measure' amid a challenging economic environment. However, the moratorium will not cover small business operating in the field of medical care, education, social sphere, heat supply, electricity, energy preservation and energy efficiency improvement.⁷⁰

Gazprom has, on January 4, notified Turkmenistan's Turkmengaz national gas company of its decision to terminate purchase of Turkmen natural gas. It cited current trends on the global gas markets, as well as "a number of financial and economic issues" as reason for the termination.⁷¹

Russia's oil production reached a record 534.081 million metric tons in 2015 which is 40 per cent higher than in 2014. As such, Rosneft remains the country's largest oil company - it produced more

⁶⁸ "Putin Approves Russia's Updated National Security Strategy", *Itar-Tass*, December 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/848108>

⁶⁹ "Gazprom Cancels Tender For Construction of Pipeline Stretch Crucial for Nord Stream-2", *Itar-Tass*, December 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/847999>

⁷⁰ "Three-Year Moratorium On Inspections of Small Business Comes Into Force in Russia", *Itar-Tass*, January 3, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/848213>

⁷¹ "Russia's Gazprom Refuses to Buy Natural Gas from Turkmenistan – Turkmengaz", *Sputnik International*, January 4, 2016 at <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160104/1032662283/russia-gazprom-turkmenistan-gas.html#ixzz3wveQ48j>

than 189 million metric tons of oil followed by Lukoil and Surgutneftegas at 85 million and 61 million metric tons respectively.⁷²

Russia has successfully completed the test flights of the newest multi-purpose Mi-38 helicopters with production expected to commence in 2016. The helicopter has been touted as the only one capable of its kind to reach heights that were previously accessed by aircrafts. While originally developed as a civilian helicopter, the Mi-38 can also be modified to be used by the Aerospace Forces of Russia.⁷³

The Russian Strategic Missile Troops have planned 16 test launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2016. It also plans to conduct more than 100 command and staff tactical and special exercises.⁷⁴

Russia: International

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Russia insists that Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar ash-Sham must be on list of terrorist groups in Syria; Russia calls Saudi embassy attacks in Iran illegal and urges Saudi-Iran restraint; Russian Foreign Ministry says Moscow and Beijing are ready for joint anti-terror measures; Russia bans import of farm produce and raw foods from Ukraine; Russia expresses concern over North Korea's testing of hydrogen bomb; Putin and Italian Prime Minister discuss bilateral cooperation; Finland extradites Russian computer fraud suspect to the U.S.; Japanese Prime Minister calls for continuation of dialogue with Russia at the 'top level'.**

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Syromolotov has said, on December 31, that Jaysh al-Islam and Ahrar ash-Sham must be on the list of terrorist groups in Syria and these organisations should be liquidated. He added that a significant number of militants from the Jabhat al-Nusra group are enlisted to the ranks of Jaysh al-Islam.⁷⁵

Russian Foreign Ministry has, on January 5, said that attacks on diplomatic missions can never be a legal means of protest after Iranian demonstrators stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran in protest against Riyadh's execution of a senior Shi'ite cleric. The Ministry also expressed "serious concern" about the worsening situation in the region and called on the two countries and others "to show restraint and avoid any steps that would complicate the situation and lead to a rise in tensions."⁷⁶

Russian Foreign Ministry has, on December 31, welcomed the adoption of the law 'on combating terrorism' by the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress. It also expressed confidence that the law will strengthen Russia-China counter-terrorism cooperation within the framework of their privileged strategic partnership. The Ministry stated 'Moscow and Beijing

⁷² "Russia Oil Output Rises to New Record High in 2015", *Sputnik International*, January 3, 2016 at <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160103/1032624912/oil-production-russia-record.html#ixzz3wvfHjCpY>

⁷³ "Brand New: Russia's Advanced Mi-38 Helicopter to Hit Production in 2016", *Sputnik International*, January 3, 2016 at <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151231/1032560574/russia-military-helicopter-mi38-production.html>

⁷⁴ "Russia Plans 16 Launches of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles in 2016", *Itar-Tass*, January 10, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/defense/848617>

⁷⁵ "Moscow Insists Jaysh Al-Islam, Ahrar Ash-Sham Must Be On List of Terrorist Groups in Syria", *Itar-Tass*, December 30, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/848093>

⁷⁶ "Russia Calls Embassy Attacks Illegal, Urges Saudi-Iran Restraint", *The Moscow Times*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-calls-embassy-attacks-illegal-urges-saudi-iran-restraint/554819.html>

together stand for the preservation of the central coordinating role of the United Nations in global anti-terrorism efforts, which should be free from politicization and preconditions, for the creation of a broad antiterrorist coalition against the Islamic State terrorist organization, for the adoption of comprehensive measures to counteract the phenomenon of foreign terrorists-militants, including in the context of reduction of risks for the Central Asian region'. The Russian-Chinese Counter-Terrorism Working Group meets on a regular basis. In October 2015, consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers in charge of cooperation in the fight against international terrorism were held in Beijing.⁷⁷

Russia has imposed a ban on the import of agricultural produce, raw food and foodstuffs from Ukraine from January 1, 2016. This is in response to the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) that is being implemented from January 1. The Russia-Ukraine free trade zone has also been suspended and Ukraine is now subjected to import fees for supplying its produce to the territory of the Eurasian Economic Union. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said that the ban was necessary to protect the internal market and Russian producers. Meanwhile, Ukraine has also imposed counter-sanctions on Russia by banning the import of Russian bread and baked products, cookies, chocolates, cattle meat, fish, roasted coffee, black tea, foodstuffs, cigarettes with filter, beer, vodka, and some other commodities.⁷⁸

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said on January 6 that Russia is 'extremely concerned' over allegations that North Korea has tested a hydrogen bomb. He added that 'President Vladimir Putin has given instructions to carefully study the data of all measurement stations, including seismological stations, and to analyse the situation if information on the tests are confirmed'.⁷⁹

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi have telephonically discussed the Russian-Italian cooperation, including trade and economic ties. The Russian Press Service stated that the 'sides reaffirmed the importance of continuing joint work for the benefit of the implementation of mutually advantageous energy projects'. They also focused on the prospects of resolving the conflict in Syria and calming the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The two sides highlighted the importance of close coordination in combating international terrorism. The conversation took place on January 8.⁸⁰

Finland has said, on January 8, that it will extradite Russian citizen Maxim Senakh to the United States for standing trial in a computer fraud and abuse case. Helsinki had detained Senakh in August at the request of U.S. federal authorities - a move described as illegal by Russia. Senakh has been accused of infecting computer servers with malware in the state of Minnesota which resulted in criminal gains worth millions of dollars.⁸¹

⁷⁷ "Russia, China Ready For Joint Anti-Terror Measures — Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, December 31, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/848064>

⁷⁸ "Russia Bans Imports Of Farm Produce, Raw Foods from Ukraine", *Itar-Tass*, January 2, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/848186>

⁷⁹ "Moscow 'Extremely Concerned' Over Reports N Korea Tested Hydrogen Bomb", *Sputnik International*, January 6, 2016 at <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160106/1032748091/nuclear-test-comment-moscow.html>

⁸⁰ "Putin, Renzi Discuss Issues of Russian-Italian Cooperation – Kremlin", *Itar-Tass*, January 8, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/politics/848532>

⁸¹ "Finland Extradites Russian Computer Fraud Suspect to U.S.", *The Moscow Times*, January 8, 2016 at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/finland-extradites-russian-computer-fraud-suspect-to-us/555106.html>

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said, on January 4, that dialogue at the top level with Russia needs to be continued in order to solve bilateral problems. He stated 'without dialogue at the top level, it's impossible to solve the problem of the Northern Territories'. On the possibility of Russian President Putin's visit to Japan, Abe said it "should take place at a proper time."⁸²

E. West Asia

Iran

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Iran plans to report details of a Saudi air attack near Iran's embassy in Sana'a to the United Nations; Afghanistan is keen to expand its gas oil imports from Iran to 1.2 million tons; Chinese President Xi Jinping would visit Iran by next month to discuss bilateral economic ties.**

A top Foreign Ministry official said that Iran plans to report details of a Saudi air attack near Iran's embassy in Sana'a to the United Nations. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari also issued a statement saying "Saudi Arabia is responsible for this action, as well as for compensating Iran for injuries to the embassy personnel and the damages to the embassy building." "Iran reserves the right to (legally) pursue this matter," Jaber Ansari said.⁸³

Afghanistan is keen to expand its gas oil imports from Iran to 1.2 million tons, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said after his meeting with Afghan Minister of Commerce and Industries Homayoun Rasa in Tehran on January 5. Zanganeh said the two sides are still in talks over the details and Iran has not yet offered a price, *IRNA news* agency reported. Currently, he said, Afghanistan's annual gas oil import from Iran stands at 200,000 tons. According to Iranian oil minister, Afghanistan has also expressed interest to import liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from Iran, but, he said, the two countries are still negotiating.⁸⁴

Chinese President Xi Jinping would visit Iran by next month to discuss bilateral economic ties, said Majid-Reza Hariri, the deputy head of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce. During his visit, the two country are planning to sign memorandums of understanding in infrastructural development projects specially construction and development of ports and railway in addition to free trade zones, *ISNA* reported. Iran and China are also moving toward a crucial currency swap mechanism which is expected to help ease their mutual trade activities. The mechanism envisages payments in yuan to suppliers of commodities and services to Iran in return for the oil that Beijing purchases from Tehran.⁸⁵

⁸² "Japanese PM Speaks For Continuation of Dialogue with Russia at Top Level", *Itar-Tass*, January 4, 2016 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/848252>

⁸³ "Iran to Take Saudi Raid on Embassy in Yemen to UN", *Tehran Times*, January 9, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252073. Accessed on 1 February 2016

⁸⁴ "Afghanistan Willing To Boost Gas Oil Imports from Iran: Zanganeh", *Tehran Times*, January 7, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252062. Accessed on 1 February 2016

⁸⁵ "Iran, China to Develop Trade, Transport Ties", *Tehran Times*, January 5, 2016 at http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=252007. Accessed on February 1, 2016

Iraq and Syria

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Washington approves sale of 5,000 Hellfire missiles to Iraq; 800 Yazidi children are training in ISIS camps, says Qaiada; President al-Assad issues new procedure ordinance law; Iran, Switzerland and Syria coordinate on humanitarian aid for the Syrian people.**

The US Department of Defence announced the approval on the sale of five thousand “Hellfire” rockets worth 800 million dollars to Iraq, while pointed out that the deal will enhance the ability of Iraqi forces in fighting ISIS. The Defence Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees the sale of foreign arms deals, said in a statement followed by *IraqiNews.com*: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the sale of five thousand Hellfire missiles worth 800 million dollars to Iraq,” pointing out that “The Iraqi government requested the purchase of five thousand Hellfire missiles, in addition to requesting ten training missiles.”⁸⁶

An official in the Abducted Yazidis Bureau, Hussein Qaiada, announced that more than 800 children held by ISIS are training in camps belonging to the ISIS organization, noting that the total number of Yazidi detainees held by ISIS amounts to three thousand detainees. Qaiada said in a statement obtained by *IraqiNews.com*, “More than three thousand Yazidis are still being held by the ISIS,” noting that, “During last year, 2331 people were freed from the grip of ISIS with the help of the Kurdistan Regional Government, including 316 men, 867 women and 1148 children.”⁸⁷

The new law specifies the new rules and regulations that govern procedure ordinance in trials in Syria, including the jurisdiction and powers vested in tribunals and courts, the type of lawsuits they are authorized to resolve, the circumstances in which Syrian courts may tackle lawsuits involving non-Syrians, the conditions for accepting pleas and motions, scheduling and notification procedures, conditions for annulment of procedures, regulations for court reporters, the paperwork for lawsuits and proceedings, and the fields and domains of specialty for each specific type of court or tribunal, among other things.⁸⁸

A meeting was held in Tehran between Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister Hussein Amir Abdullahian, Syrian Assistant Foreign and Expatriates Minister Ahmad Arnous, and Vice-Director and delegate for humanitarian aid at Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Manuel Bessler, in which they discussed the latest developments in Syria and means to deliver humanitarian aid to Syrian people, in addition to discussing inter-Syrian dialogue and developments in the region, *SANA* reported. In a relevant context, Abdullahian said Saudi Arabia’s decision to sever relations with Iran will affect inter-Syria talks, but Tehran is committed to these talks and will spare no efforts to go ahead with negotiations with UN officials and the Syrian government and hopes that the Saudi government

⁸⁶ “Washington Approves Sale of 5,000 Hellfire Missiles to Iraq”, *Iraqi News*, January 8, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/washington-approves-sale-5000-hellfire-missiles-iraq/>. Accessed on February 1, 2016

⁸⁷ “800 Yazidi Children Are Training in ISIS Camps, Says Qaiada”, *Iraqi News*, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/146850/>. Accessed on February 1, 2016

⁸⁸ “President al-Assad issues New Procedure Ordinance Law”, *Syria Times*, January 4, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/21523-president-al-assad-issues-new-procedure-ordinance-law>. Accessed on February 1, 2016

will learn required lesson from history, describing the Saudi decision as an “irrational and unwise decision.”⁸⁹

Israel and Palestine

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Livni demands urgent meeting to address fear of PA collapse; Hezbollah bombs army vehicles on northern border, none hurt; and Palestine after Abbas: The Future of a People at Stake.**

Opposition leader MK Tzipi Livni called for an urgent meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee to review predictions that the Palestinian Authority is on the verge of collapse. Livni, in a letter to committee chairman MK Tzachi Hanegbi (Likud), claimed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s political manoeuvrings have left him hamstrung in dealing with the looming threat of a disintegration of the West Bank’s Palestinian leadership.⁹⁰

An improvised explosive device detonated near an Israeli army bulldozer and another vehicle near the border with Lebanon, the military said. No soldiers were hurt in the attack, according to initial reports, which came amid sky-high tensions with Lebanese terror group Hezbollah over the alleged Israeli assassination of a top operative, a known terrorist, last month. Hezbollah took responsibility for the attack, which it said was carried out by a cell named for Samir Kuntar, killed in an airstrike in Damascus on December 20.⁹¹

Although intended to inspire his Fatah Party followers, a televised speech by Mahmoud Abbas on the 51st Anniversary of the group’s launch highlighted, instead, the unprecedented crisis that continues to wreak havoc on the Palestinian people. Not only did Abbas sound defensive and lacking in any serious or new initiatives, but his ultimate intention appeared as if it was about his political survival, and nothing else. In his speech on December 31, he tossed in many of the old clichés, chastising Israel at times, although in carefully-worded language, and insisted that any vital decisions concerned with “the future of the land, people and national rights” would be “subject to general elections and (voted on by the Palestine) National Council (PNC), because our people made heavy sacrifices and they are the source of all authorities.” Ironically, Abbas presides over the Palestinian Authority (PA) with a mandate that expired in January 2009 and his party, Fatah, which refused to accept the results of democratic elections in the Occupied Territories in 2006, continues to behave as the ‘ruling party’ with no mandate, aside from the political validation it receives from Israel, the US and their allies.⁹²

⁸⁹ “Iran, Switzerland and Syria Coordinate on Humanitarian Aid for the Syrian People”, *Syria Times*, January 6, 2016 at <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/21558-iran-switzerland-and-syria-coordinate-on-humanitarian-aid-for-the-syrian-people>. Accessed on February 1, 2016

⁹⁰ “Livni Demands Urgent Meeting To Address Fear of PA Collapse”, *Times of Israel*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/livni-demands-urgent-meeting-to-address-fear-of-pa-collapse/>. Accessed on February 2, 2016

⁹¹ “Hezbollah Bombs Army Vehicles on Northern Border, None Hurt”, *The Times of Israel*, January 4, 2016 at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/bomb-explodes-near-army-patrol-on-northern-border-none-hurt/>. Accessed on February 2, 2016

⁹² “Palestine after Abbas: the Future of a People at Stake”, *The Palestine Chronicles*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/palestine-after-abbas-the-future-of-a-people-at-stake/>. Accessed on February 2, 2016

The Gulf

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Saudi Foreign Minister in Islamabad; Five GCC states recalled their Ambassadors from Tehran.**

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al Jubair arrived in Islamabad on January 7, 2016. Al Jubair was received by Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz at Noor Khan Airbase, Rawalpindi. The Saudi minister was to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Army chief General Raheel Sharif during his stay. Saudi minister would share details with Pakistani authorities regarding Riyadh tension with Tehran and the newly-formed alliance of Islamic countries against terrorism and extremism, sources said. Officially, Pakistan voiced deep concerns over the Saudi-Iran row and warned that dark forces of extremism and terrorism could take advantage of this division between the Muslim countries.⁹³

In the aftermath of the attack on an attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran has led to five GCC states recalling their Ambassadors from Tehran – Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman and UAE. The GCC has condemned Iran's blatant interference in the domestic affairs of Gulf and Arab countries. UAE has additionally decided to downgrade the level of its diplomatic representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran to that of a charge d' affaires and to require a reduction in the number of Iranian diplomats stationed in the UAE.⁹⁴

India and West Asia

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **The Saudi-Iran crisis is sending oil prices higher hampering manufacturing activities in India.**

Manufacturing activity in India, which the International Energy Agency believes will lead growth in oil demand this year, contracted for the first time in two years as oil prices rose after a breakdown in diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Speculations had been made that this could result in supply restrictions, although gains were tempered by data showing some of Asia's largest economies are struggling. According to Energy Aspects analyst Richard Mallinson, "The two questions the market is grappling with are – where next in the Saudi Arabia/Iran stand-off? I think President [Hassan] Rouhani on the Iranian side would like to calm things down and push for no further escalation." He also said that, "the second question for the market is, is there any uncertainty over the exact timing and volume of the return of Iranian barrels?"⁹⁵

⁹³ "Saudi Foreign Minister in Islamabad", *Gulf News*, January 7, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-foreign-minister-in-islamabad-1.1649972>. Accessed on 3 February 2016

⁹⁴ "Kuwait Recalls Ambassador in Iran", *Gulf News*, January 5, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-recalls-ambassador-in-iran-1.1648552>. Accessed on February 3, 2016; and "Arab Governments Make Iran Pay For Saudi Embassy Attack", *Gulf News*, January 5, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/arab-governments-make-iran-pay-for-saudi-embassy-attack-1.1648260>; "Qatar Recalls Ambassador to Iran", *Gulf News*, January 6, 2016 at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-recalls-ambassador-to-iran-1.1649619>. Accessed on February 3, 2016

⁹⁵ "The Saudi- Iran Crisis is Sending Oil Prices Higher", *Fortune*, January 4, 2016 at <http://fortune.com/2016/01/04/oil-prices-saudi-arabia-iran/>. Accessed on February 3, 2016

F. The United State of America

National

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Obama announces “common-sense” measures to reduce gun violence; Gun sales continued to surge in the U.S. in the 12 months before Obama announcement; State Department revamping counter-violent-extremist communications efforts; January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month; U.S. economy had a net gain of 292,000 jobs in December; Obama vetoed legislation that would repeal major portions of his Affordable Care Act; Trump threatens to cancel over 700 million pounds (\$1 billion) of planned investments in UK; Protesters repeatedly disrupt Trump’s rally.**

President Barack Obama announced a series of new “common-sense” measures meant to reduce gun violence, bypassing Congress on the controversial issue. Obama rolled out the new policies during a White House address, where he chided lawmakers for failing to enact tighter gun control measures despite a wave of recent mass shootings and called on them and the American people to “find the courage to do more.” “We are the only advanced country on Earth that sees this kind of mass violence erupt with this kind of frequency,” said Obama, who was surrounded by victims of recent gun attacks. “It doesn’t happen in other advanced countries. It’s not even close.”⁹⁶

Some of the measures to curb gun violence, first announced by the White House on January 4, include expanded background checks, more effective enforcement of gun laws, increased mental health treatment and reporting to the national background check system, and more research into gun safety technology. Obama presented the recommendations discussed during a White House meeting on January 4 with top officials including U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch and FBI Director James Comey.⁹⁷

Gun sales continued to surge in the U.S. in the 12 months before President Barack Obama announced his plan to reduce gun violence. According to the FBI, 2015 saw more Americans buying guns than ever before, with background checks surging 10 percent to 23.1 million. It was the largest number since the bureau began keeping statistics in 1998. The trend has been going on for some time.⁹⁸

The State Department is revamping its counter-violent-extremist communications efforts through a new Global Engagement Centre. This centre will more effectively coordinate, integrate and synchronize messaging to foreign audiences that undermines the disinformation espoused by violent extremist groups, including ISIL and al-Qaeda, and that offers positive alternatives. The centre will focus more on empowering and enabling partners, governmental and non-governmental, who are able to speak out against these groups and provide an alternative to ISIL’s nihilistic vision. To that end, the centre will offer services ranging from planning thematic social

⁹⁶ Gallo, William and Saine, Cindy, “Obama Rolls Out ‘Common-sense’ Gun Control Actions”, *VOA News*, January 05, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-to-roll-out-commonsense-gun-control-actions/3131766.html>

⁹⁷ Salinas, Mary Alice, “Obama Issues Executive Actions on Curbing Gun Violence”, *VOA News*, January 05, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-issues-executive-orders-on-curbing-gun-violence/3131496.html>

⁹⁸ “US Gun Sales Surge in 2015”, *VOA News*, January 05, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/mht-us-gun-sales-surge-in-2015-nra/3132022.html>; and, Nordwall, Smita, “US Gun Debate Explained”, *VOA News*, January 07, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/gun-ownership-rate-high-growing-united-states/3133019.html>

media campaigns to providing factual information that counters-disinformation to building capacity for third parties to effectively utilize social media to research and evaluation. Michael D. Lumpkin will lead this new effort as the Director of the new Global Engagement Centre.⁹⁹

President Barack Obama has proclaimed January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. On January 5, top U.S. officials renewed pledges to combat human trafficking through interagency efforts and public-private partnerships. Calling human trafficking a "multi-billion-dollar criminal enterprise," Secretary of State John Kerry pointed out that fighting this problem is both a moral obligation and a national security issue. Kerry added that more than 20 million people are enslaved every year, but only 1 percent are identified.¹⁰⁰

The U.S. economy had a net gain of 292,000 jobs in December, a sign that the world's largest economy is growing at a solid pace in spite of recent global stock market turmoil and other headwinds. January 8, 2016 report from the Labour Department says the unemployment rate was five percent, where it has been for the past three months, and the lowest rate in more than seven years. The job gains are far larger than most economists expected, with business services, construction, health care, and restaurants adding tens of thousands of workers. The mining sector, which includes the oil industry, continued to shed jobs due to low oil prices.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, President Obama has vetoed legislation that would repeal major portions of his signature domestic achievement: the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. The bill would also defund the reproductive health organization Planned Parenthood. Obama said in a veto statement that "Because of the harm this bill would cause to the health and financial security of millions of Americans, it has earned my veto". The statement continued: "The Affordable Care Act includes a set of fairer rules and strong consumer protections that have made healthcare more affordable."¹⁰²

U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has threatened to cancel over 700 million pounds (\$1 billion) of planned investments in golf courses in Scotland if Britain slaps him with a travel ban. The threat from Trump, owner of two golf courses in his mother's homeland of Scotland, comes as British lawmakers prepare to hold a debate on a petition signed by over half a million people calling for him to be barred from the country after his proposal to stop Muslims entering the United States.¹⁰³

Protesters repeatedly disrupted a rally for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in Vermont on January 7 evening, despite attempts by Trump's staff to screen the crowd. Rally-goers with tickets in hand were asked as they entered whether they supported Trump. Those who said they didn't were promptly escorted out of the building.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ "A New Centre for Global Engagement", Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, January 8, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251066.htm>

¹⁰⁰ Ching, Nike, "US Steps Up Fight to End Modern Slavery", *VOA News*, January 05, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-steps-up-fight-to-end-slavery/3132983.html>

¹⁰¹ Randle, Jim, "US Economy Gains 292,000 Jobs in December", *VOA News*, January 08, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-economy-gains-292-thousand-jobs-in-december/3136619.html>

¹⁰² Scott, Amanda, "Obama Vetoes Bill to Repeal Key Healthcare Law", *VOA News*, January 08, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-vetoes-bill-to-repeal-key-healthcare-law/3137235.html>

¹⁰³ "Trump Threatens to Pull \$1B Investment if Banned from UK", *Reuters*, January 07, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-threatens-to-pull-1-bln-investment-if-banned-from-uk/3135140.html>

¹⁰⁴ "Trump Rally in Vermont Disrupted Repeatedly by Protesters", *Associated Press*, January 08, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/trump-rally-in-vermont-disrupted-repeatedly-by-protesters/3136661.html>

A Muslim woman, Rose Hamid, 56, wearing a hijab was forced to leave a Donald Trump presidential campaign rally on January 8 after she staged a silent protest against the Republican front-runner, who in December called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.¹⁰⁵

International: Asia

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **U.S. federal court charges Muhanad Mahmoud al-Farekh with conspiring to set off a truck bomb; Kerry says implementation of the Iran nuclear deal could be just 'days away'; Iraqi forces have momentum against the ISIL; Dunford; U.S. and coalition military forces continue to attack ISIL; US condemns bombing at a security training centre in Zliten, Libya; US and nations around the world have unequivocally condemned North Korea's latest nuclear test; U.S. B-52 bomber conducts a low-level flight in response to NK's nuclear test; US and Japan to discuss NK's nuclear test; US reiterates the steadfast commitment to the security of the R.O.K.; North Korea and the South China Sea are biggest challenges to the US; US and China discuss highly provocative nature of North Korea's actions.**

On January 6, a U.S. federal court in New York charged Muhanad Mahmoud al-Farekh with conspiring to set off a truck bomb outside a U.S. military base in Afghanistan in 2009. Farekh could spend the rest of his life in prison if convicted. U.S. Attorney Robert L. Capers said that "Farekh, a citizen of the United States, allegedly turned his back on our country and tried to kill U.S. soldiers in the course of executing their sworn duty to keep us safe". According to the indictment, two co-conspirators drove two separate truck bombs outside the military base in January 2009. One bomb exploded while the second one did not go off. Investigators found Farekh's fingerprints on packing tape inside the truck that did not explode.¹⁰⁶

Secretary of State John Kerry says implementation of the Iran nuclear deal could be just "days away," if "all goes well." He commented in a briefing on January 7 in which he highlighted U.S. foreign policy progress over the past year and urged U.S. lawmakers to confirm key diplomatic nominations that have languished in the Senate. Kerry said he spoke to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who assured him that Iran intended to complete its obligations "as rapidly as possible."¹⁰⁷

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on January 9 that Iraqi forces have momentum against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Dunford spoke to reporters following a two-day visit to Iraq. During the visit he met with U.S. and Iraqi leaders including Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones and Army Gen. Sean McFarland, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve. He also met U.S., coalition and Iraqi troops in Baghdad, Asad and Irbil. He last visited the country in October, just after taking over as chairman. Dunford said that the big takeaway from the trip is the psychology of the Iraqis. The general met with senior Iraqi leaders, but he also met

¹⁰⁵ "Muslim Woman Ejected From Trump Rally", *VOA News*, January 09, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/muslim-woman-ejected-from-trump-rally/3138318.html>

¹⁰⁶ "US Court Charges American in Afghan Truck Bombing", *VOA News*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-citizen-charged-in-afghanistan-truck-bombing/3134035.html>

¹⁰⁷ Dockins, Pamela, "Kerry: Iran Nuclear Deal Nears; N. Korea Not 'Unattended'", *VOA News*, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-foreign-policy-briefing/3135621.html>

with Iraqi special operators, soldiers in training, and wounded warriors. The mood is more upbeat across the board.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Fighter, attack, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 11 strikes in Syria. Coalition forces used rocket artillery, fighter, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft to conduct 15 strikes in Iraq, coordinated with and in support of the Iraqi government.¹⁰⁹

In a statement, John Kirby, spokesperson, Bureau of Public Affairs, said that the United States strongly condemns the January 7 bombing at a security training centre in Zliten, Libya, as well as the attacks since January 4 on the oil terminals in Es Sidra and Ras Lanouf. Today's attack - which targeted young people attending a graduation ceremony- reportedly killed as many as 65 people and injured many others. Kirby said, "We extend our condolences to the families of those killed and injured. Violent extremists including ISIL-affiliated groups threaten all Libyans throughout the country. With their attacks on oil fields, they are threatening resources that belong to the Libyan people and that all Libyans must strive to protect for future generations."¹¹⁰

US Secretary of State John Kerry in a statement on January 6 said that the United States and nations around the world have unequivocally condemned North Korea's latest nuclear test. This highly provocative act poses a grave threat to international peace and security and blatantly violates multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. Secretary Kerry said, "the U.S. is committed to defending the American people and honouring our security commitments to our allies in the region. We do not and will not accept North Korea as a nuclear armed state, and actions such as this latest test only strengthen our resolve. We will continue to work closely with our partners on the U.N. Security Council and in the Six-Party Talks to take appropriate action."¹¹¹

According to a U.S. Pacific Command news release issued on January 9, a U.S. B-52 bomber from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, conducted a low-level flight in the vicinity of Osan, South Korea, in response to a recent nuclear test by North Korea. The release said that the B-52 was joined by South Korean F-15 fighter aircraft and U.S. F-16 fighter aircraft. It further said, the bilateral flight mission demonstrates the strength of the alliance between the United States and South Korea and the resolve of both nations to maintain stability and security on the Korean Peninsula.¹¹²

According to a statement provided by Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook, Defence Secretary Ash Carter on January 8 called Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani to discuss the recent North Korean nuclear test. Carter and Nakatani agreed that the nuclear test by North Korea is an unacceptable and irresponsible act that undermines regional security and stability, he said.

¹⁰⁸ Garamone, Jim, "Iraqi Forces Building Momentum Against ISIL, Dunford Says", *DoD News*, January 9, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/642112/iraqi-forces-building-momentum-against-isil-dunford-says>

¹⁰⁹ "Coalition Continues Strikes Against ISIL in Syria, Iraq", *DoD News*, January 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/642132/coalition-continues-strikes-against-isil-in-syria-iraq>

¹¹⁰ "Condemning Recent Terrorist Bombings in Libya", Press Statement by John Kirby, Spokesperson, Bureau of Public Affairs, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251030.htm>

¹¹¹ "On the North Korean Nuclear Test", Press Statement by John Kerry, Secretary of State, *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/01/250994.htm>

¹¹² "U.S. Conducts B-52 Bomber Overflight in South Korea", *DoD News*, January 10, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/642131/us-conducts-b-52-bomber-overflight-in-south-korea>

Nakatani stated that the test was a clear violation of the United Nation's Security Council resolutions and condemned the act. Carter agreed with this view, Cook said, noting the secretary commended the high level of coordination between the United States and Japan after the test.¹¹³

On January 6, Secretary Kerry spoke via phone with Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) Foreign Minister Yun regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear test. The Secretary reiterated the steadfast commitment of the United States to the security of the R.O.K. and emphasized the need for a unified international response to the D.P.R.K.'s provocative actions. He also emphasized the importance of continued close bilateral cooperation with the R.O.K. and trilateral coordination with Japan.¹¹⁴

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Joseph Aucoin talked to reporters on January 8 about two of the biggest challenges the U.S. military faces in Asia: North Korea and the South China Sea (SCS). It was his first such meeting with the media since assuming command of the Navy's 7th Fleet last September. He spoke aboard the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier. The 20,000-sailor strong 7th Fleet, based in Yokosuka, Japan, covers a region from India to the international dateline in the Pacific Ocean.¹¹⁵

On January 7, Secretary Kerry also spoke via phone with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear test. They discussed the highly provocative nature of North Korea's actions, and its grave threat to international peace and security and blatant violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. The Secretary and Foreign Minister Wang agreed that the United States and China would continue to coordinate closely in the U.N. Security Council and with partners within the Six-Party Talks framework to take appropriate action.¹¹⁶

India-US Relations

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **US under-secretary for International Affairs, Nathan Sheets, will hold discussions; Admiral Scott Swift visit aims to consolidate the growing defence relations; US has alerted India on Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists sneaking into Pathankot.**

The US Department of Treasury in a statement announced on January 6 that under-secretary for International Affairs, Nathan Sheets, will hold discussions with economists and Finance Ministry counterparts on bilateral financial relations and global economic developments in New Delhi and Mumbai. Sheets will hold meetings with his counterparts tomorrow at the Ministry of Finance in

¹¹³ "Carter, Japanese Official Discuss North Korean Nuke Test", *DoD News*, January 8, 2016 at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/642041/carter-japanese-official-discuss-north-korean-nuke-test>

¹¹⁴ "Secretary Kerry's Phone Call With Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Yun", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251010.htm>

¹¹⁵ "US Navy Admiral: North Korea Biggest Worry in Volatile Asia", *Associated Press*, January 08, 2016 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-us-navy-commander-north-korea-biggest-worry-volatile-asia/3136874.html>

¹¹⁶ "Secretary Kerry's Phone Call With Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi", *US Department of State*, Washington, DC, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251034.htm>

New Delhi to discuss the state of the global economy and economic developments in the two countries.¹¹⁷

Admiral Scott Swift, Commander, Pacific Fleet is visiting New Delhi from January 7-9. His visit is intended to consolidate the growing defence relations between India and US and also to explore new avenues for naval cooperation. Admiral Scott Swift held bilateral discussions with Admiral RK Dhowan, Chief of the Naval Staff today. He also interacted with the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff and members of the Naval Maritime Foundation. The Admiral has earlier visited India in 2012 and 2013 in various capacities. The Indian and the US Navies cooperate with each other in terms of technical training, anti-piracy patrols, Navy to Navy staff talks, bilateral exercises such as MALABAR, as well as interact at various multilateral forums like RIMPAC. Warships from both navies call at each other's ports, which provides excellent opportunity for professional interaction and building 'Bridges of Friendship'. With the ongoing construction of Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC 1), carrier construction cooperation has emerged as one of the major areas for cooperation between the two navies. Major issues that were discussed during the visit included enhancement of scope and complexity of exercises, training exchanges, improving MDA by sharing of white shipping information and participation of USN in the prestigious International Fleet Review being organised by Indian Navy off Visakhapatnam in February 16.¹¹⁸

According to media reports, it was the United States that alerted India through intelligence channels on Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists sneaking into Pathankot. And that was possible because foreign agencies had Qasim Jaan, one of the three Pak-based handlers of Jaish-e-Mohammed, under its surveillance. JeM is among the few groups that had developed links with the Al Qaida and Taliban close to a decade ago and since then, has been on US radar for its activities in Afghanistan and later even in Pakistan. Lashkar-e-Toiba, on the other hand, is largely seen as India-centric terror group though the Headley case and the 26/11 attacks have completely transformed its status as among the most potent terror outfits. In the instant case, "chatter" was picked at Qasim's end on a possible terror attack in India. This information was immediately passed on to India, prompting the government to issue an alert just after the PM's December 25 visit to Lahore.¹¹⁹

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation successfully conducts test firing of new tank ammunition for Arjun Tank; Indigenously developed INS Kadmatt commissioned into the Indian Navy.**

¹¹⁷ "US Official Nathan Sheets to Hold Talks With India On Financial Relations", *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, January 7, 2016 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/us-official-to-hold-talks-with-india-on-financial-relations-116010700082_1.html

¹¹⁸ "ADM Scott Swift, Commander US Pacific Fleet Visits India", *PIB*, January 8, 2016, Release ID :134299, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

¹¹⁹ "Pathankot Terror Attack: US Alerted India On Infiltration", *The Economic Times*, January 9, 2016 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pathankot-terror-attack-us-alerted-india-on-infiltration/articleshow/50505309.cms>

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted test firing of new tank ammunition Penetration-Cum Blast (PCB) and Thermobaric (TB) Ammunition. The ammunitions are specially designed for Arjun Tank. The trials were found to be effective as the firing of ammunition successfully destroyed the target tank and severely damaged its turret, barrel, tracks, ammunition bin, various sights, antennas etc. The ammunitions have been developed by Pune based DRDO laboratories Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL). Significantly, this is for the first time such evaluation is carried out in India which will give a quantum jump in the fire-power of Arjun tanks.¹²⁰

INS Kadmatt, second ship of Project 28 (P28) class Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Corvettes, has been commissioned into the Indian Navy on January 07, 2016. This is the induction of the second of the four ASW Corvettes into the Indian Navy. The ship is indigenously designed by the Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design and constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited, Kolkata. INS Kadmatt is named after one of the large islands amongst the Lakshadweep group of Islands off the west coast of India. INS Kadmatt is one of the most potent warships to have been constructed in India. The unique feature of this ship is the high level of indigenisation incorporated in the production, accentuating our national objective of Make in India. About 90 per cent of the ship is indigenous and the ship is equipped to fight in Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions. The commissioning of INS Kadmatt marks yet another milestone in India's journey towards self-reliance and Make-in-India campaign.¹²¹

International

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Nigeria to become first JF-17 importer country; Lockheed Martin receives a US Department of Defence contract for C-130J Hercules aircraft worth USD5.3 billion.**

Reports say that Nigeria plans to acquire three CAC/PAC JF-17 Thunder multirole fighters in 2016. The JF-17 is currently only in service with Pakistan. It is jointly developed by the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and Chengdu Aircraft Corporation (CAC), a Chinese aerospace conglomerate. Nigeria has allocated USD25 million for the acquisition of the three JF-17s.¹²²

Meanwhile, according to reports, Lockheed Martin has received a US Department of Defence (DoD) contract for C-130J Hercules aircraft worth USD5.3 billion. In December 2015 the company had signed a USD1 billion deal for the first 32 aircraft of the multiyear contract. The second part of the agreement puts the total at 78 aircraft. The break up is like this- 30 MC-130Js, 13 HC-130Js, and 29 C-130J-30s for the US Air Force (USAF) and another six KC-130Js for the US Marine Corps (USMC). The contract also includes an option for five HC-130Js for the US Coast Guard (USCG). The delivery of the aircrafts is expected by April 2020.¹²³

¹²⁰ "Test Firing of New Tank Ammunition for Arjun MBT," *PIB* January 09, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=134324>

¹²¹ "Commissioning of INS Kadmatt Marks yet another Milestone in our Journey towards 'Self-Reliance' and 'Make-In-India' – ADM RK Dhowan," *PIB* January 07, 2016, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=134269>

¹²² "Nigeria to Become First JF-17 Export Operator," *IHS Jane's*, January 07, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/57080/nigeria-to-become-first-jf-17-export-operator>

¹²³ "United States to Get 78 C-130Js by 2020," *IHS Jane's*, January 05, 2016, at <http://www.janes.com/article/56991/united-states-to-get-78-c-130js-by-2020>

III. INTERNAL SECURITY REVIEWS

Jammu & Kashmir

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **CM Mufti Mohammad Sayeed dies at 79; Hizb operative arrested for killing ex-militant, his son Burhan in Sopore; Jammu and Kashmir comes under Governor's rule.**

J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who redrew the contours of politics in the state by deftly bringing into its mainstream voices and ideas that were considered separatist, died in New Delhi on January 7. Sayeed, who was 79, passed away at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi after battling a respiratory infection for two weeks. Daughter Mehbooba Mufti, his political heir and chief of the PDP, is set to become the first woman chief minister of the state. The J&K government has announced seven days of state mourning.¹²⁴

Five months after the killing of a three-year-old boy Burhan and his father in north Kashmir's Sopore area, police have arrested the mastermind allegedly responsible for the killings. Sources said Towheed Bashir Mir, the accused affiliated with Hizbul Mujahideen, was tracked through mobile surveillance and was arrested near Zaloor village in Baramulla district of J&K. The killing of Burhan (3) had evoked resentment, with even separatist organisations condemning the killing.¹²⁵

Governor's rule was imposed in J&K on January 9 as the process of new government formation following the death of chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed will take some time. The President of India cleared the recommendation of the Union home ministry for imposing governor's rule on the basis of a recommendation from J-K governor N N Vohra. Governor's rule had to be imposed in view of the reluctance of Mufti's daughter Mehbooba to take oath during the mourning period though her party has already conveyed to the governor that 28 MLAs of the PDP legislature party backed her for the chief minister's post.¹²⁶

Northeast India

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Suspected ultras killed in Manipur; Three NSLA militants arrested in Assam; Anup Chetia will lead ULFA in peace talks; Meghalaya: Blast at William Nagar market injures nine; Role of state and civil society with regard to conflict prevention in the region.**

Assam Rifles troops launched an operation in Grihang and Kamjong in Manipur's Ukhrul district and "neutralised" two underground cadres of an unknown group on January 5," a press release said. "There were three armed cadres who were seen moving towards Kamjong. Immediately

¹²⁴ "Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Who Prised Open Valley Politics, No More", *The Indian Express*, January 8, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/mufti-mohammad-sayeed-dies-jammu-and-kashmir/>

¹²⁵ Ehsan, Mir, "J&K: Hizb Operative Held For Killing Ex-Militant, His 3-Yr-Old Son", *The Indian Express*, January 7, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jk-police-arrest-mastermind-behind-father-and-son-murder/>

¹²⁶ Governor's Rule Imposed in Jammu and Kashmir, *The Times of India*, January 10, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Governors-rule-imposed-in-Jammu-and-Kashmir/articleshow/50515916.cms>

Assam Rifles personnel challenged them but they opened fire on the troops and started running," PRO Assam Rifles (South) said in a release on January 7. "In the ensuing encounter, two undergrounds were killed on the spot while the third managed to flee taking advantage of darkness." One AK-56 rifle along with magazine, twelve live rounds of 7.62 mm and five fired cases of 7.62 mm have been recovered from the spot, it added.¹²⁷

In a joint operation conducted by Army and police in Kokrajhar district of Assam, three National Santhal Liberation Army (anti-talk) militants were arrested from Barabil village on January 8. The arrested NSLA cadres were involved in extortion of money and other illegal activities, Defence officials said. Two pistols and a revolver with three live rounds were recovered from them, they said.¹²⁸

ULFA general secretary Anup Chetia has been given the responsibility of leading the pro-talks faction to carry forward the peace parleys with the Government of India. The decision to this effect was formally taken in a central committee meeting held among the leaders of the pro-talks faction at Jagiroad in Morigaon district of Assam on January 9.¹²⁹

Williamnagar town in East Garo Hills district of Meghalaya was rocked by a powerful IED blast on January 9 injuring nine people, three of them critically. The target of the blast was a wine store which was badly damaged in the blast. Police suspect the hand of outlawed Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) and its area commander Ajan Momin alias Jimmy. However, the Achik Matgrik Army (AMA) has claimed responsibility for the blast. In a post on social media site *Facebook*, the AMA Ampati area commander John Lesly Sangma stated that the blast was against sale of liquor and cigarettes to minors.¹³⁰

On January 6, the Vice President of India, M. Hamid Ansari, has said there is a need to take a serious look at the politico-administrative arrangements, including the role of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils in the North Eastern Region (NER). Addressing the gathering after releasing the book 'State, Policy and Conflicts in Northeast India', written by Dr. K.S. Subramanian, Vice President Ansari said "we have to see if such arrangements have provided for a genuine empowerment and democratization of the communities in the region or have merely created multiple power centres. There is also a need to support, facilitate and contribute to civil society engagement, participation and intervention in the region with regard to conflict prevention for facilitating intermediation between the various stakeholders, he added."¹³¹

Left-wing Extremism

(January 4-10, 2016)

- **Maoists release kidnapped Maharashtra students; Jharkhand Police claims to have killed two 'armed extremists'; Two Maoists killed, two held in Bastar; Centre allocates Rs 1000**

¹²⁷ "2 Suspected Ultras Killed in Manipur", *The Assam Tribune*, January 7, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0716/oth052>

¹²⁸ "3 NSLA Militants Arrested", *PTI*, January 8, 2016 at http://www.ptinews.com/news/6949545_3-NSLA-militants-arrested.html

¹²⁹ Sarma, Utpal, "Anup Chetia To Lead ULFA in Peace Talks", *The Assam Tribune*, January 10, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan1016/at052>

¹³⁰ Dey, Biplab Kr, "9 Injured in IED blast in Williamnagar", *The Assam Tribune*, January 10, 2016 at <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan1016/oth051>

¹³¹ "Remarks by Vice President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, at the Release of the Book 'State, Policy and Conflicts in Northeast India'", *PIB*, January 6, 2016, Release ID :134252, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

crore to LWE affected states; Maoists kill TDP leader in Visakha Agency; Chhattisgarh: Five Naxals surrender; two others arrested in Bijapur district; Two BSF men killed in IED blast in Odisha; Five Maoists shot dead in Aurangabad, Bihar.

The three students from Maharashtra, who were abducted by Maoists on December 29 from Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, were released on January 3. "The three boys reached Chintalnagar CRPF camp in Sukma district at 12 am on January 3," Dinesh Pratap Upadhyay, Deputy Inspector General of CRPF, Dantewada range, told *The Hindu*. The release came after Bastar police head S R P. Kalluri suspended all operations in south Bastar to facilitate entry into the forests to secure the release of the students.¹³²

Jharkhand police, on January 4, killed two 'extremists' including 'one top commander' of People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) - a breakaway faction of CPI (Maoist) - in a secret operation they mounted at Mahabuang in Simdega district, around 100 km south-west from Ranchi. The police claimed possession of the extremists' bodies. "They are yet to be identified. An AK-47 and one .315 rifle were recovered from them," DIG South Chhotanagpur zone Arun Kumar Singh told *The Times of India*.¹³³

Two Maoists were killed and one was arrested during an encounter with the police in restive Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh on January 5, the police said. "The Maoists' Kudhur Local Operating Squad (LOS) commander and one LOS members were killed in a fierce encounter between Kondagaon District Reserve Guard (DRG) and the Maoists on January 5," informed S.R.P. Kalluri, the Inspector-General of Police, Bastar range. One Maoist, identified as Kudhur LOS member Jai Singh, was also arrested by the force from a nearby village. Three country-made guns were also recovered by the force from the spot of the encounter.¹³⁴

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh has approved the State wise allocation of Additional Central Assistance (ACA) of Rs.1000 crores to 35 worst LWE affected districts in seven states. Out of these 35 districts, there are 16 affected districts in Jharkhand, 8 in Chhattisgarh, 6 in Bihar, 2 in Odisha and one each in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The Ministry of Home Affairs has allocated fund @ Rs.28.57 crores per district.¹³⁵

A Telugu Desam leader and former Sarpanch of Jerrela, Sagina Venkataramana, was killed by Maoists in Visakha Agency on January 6. Jerrela is the area that has received clearance for bauxite mining through a State government GO No. 97 two months ago. This was in spite of strong opposition from the Girijans and environmentalists over bauxite mining in the entire Agency area spread over Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts. This is the second murder committed by the Maoists in the last two days. On January 5, a native of Boosiputtu in Munchingput mandal,

¹³² Dahat, Pavan, "Maoists Release Kidnapped Maharashtra Students", *The Hindu*, January 4, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/maoists-release-kidnapped-maharashtra-students/article8062548.ece>

¹³³ Mishra, Alok K N, "2 'Armed Extremists' Killed in Maoist Hunt", *The Times of India*, January 4, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/2-armed-extremists-killed-in-Maoist-hunt/articleshow/50441823.cms>

¹³⁴ Dahat, Pavan, "Two Maoists Killed, Two Held in Bastar", *The Hindu*, January 5, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/naxals-gunned-down-in-chhattisgarhs-kondagaon-district/article8068849.ece>

¹³⁵ "Rs.1000 Crores Allocated to LWE Affected States", *PIB*, Release ID: 134240, January 6, 2016 at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

Pangi Sivayya, was killed near Sariapalli. Venkataramana's murder has shaken the Agency as he supported bauxite mining.¹³⁶

Five Naxals, including three carrying cash rewards on their heads, surrendered before police, while two others were arrested in insurgency-hit Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on January 7, police said. "The five cadres surrendered before senior police officials in Bijapur district headquarters citing ill-treatment by senior cadres and disappointment with ideology of the outlawed Naxal movement," Bijapur Additional Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela told *PTI*. In another incident, two Naxals Renga Shankraiyya (30) and Sukman Kursam (27) were arrested from Awapalli police station area in Bijapur district, Elesela said. According to the official, they were involved in incidents of loot and arson in the region.¹³⁷

A BSF officer and a jawan were killed in a landmine blast triggered by Naxalites when they were out on a bike patrol in the jungles of Koraput district of Odisha on January 8. The incident occurred around 1pm when a team of about twenty Border Security Force personnel were returning from an operational task in Dandabari village of the said district on ten motorcycles and the first carrying the team commander and his jawan got trapped into the blast carried out by using a hidden bomb on the dirt track. The jawan driving the bike, constable S P Panda, was killed on the spot while pillion rider and commander of the squad Deputy Commandant Sunil Kumar Behra succumbed to his injuries later.¹³⁸

Five Maoists were killed in an encounter with a joint team of police, CRPF, Special Auxiliary Police and Bihar Military Police in Aurangabad district of Bihar on January 8. A CRPF personnel was injured in the encounter. Police said the clash took place around 6 pm after a combing operation was launched in Bangariya jungles of Dhibra under Deb, Aurangabad. The team recovered five bodies of Maoists, an automatic rifle, a police rifle and a country-made weapon after the encounter.¹³⁹

IV. UNITED NATIONS REVIEWS

India and the UN

(December 28-January 10, 2016)

- **SSB to be deployed in UNPKOs; Terror against India condemned by SG; India's peacekeepers win laurels; Sikh terror suspect case at UNHRC.**

For the first time since its creation in 1952, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) will be deployed in UN peacekeeping in Africa. The 140-strong contingent of the Formed Police Unit (FPU) will be deployed in Liberia by late 2016. Thus far, only the CRPFs male FPU and a women contingent had

¹³⁶ Rao, G Narasimha, "Maoists Kill TDP Leader", *The Hindu*, January 6, 2016 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/maoists-kill-tdp-leader/article8072287.ece>

¹³⁷ "Five Naxals Surrender; 2 Others Arrested in C'garh", *Business Standard*, January 7, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/five-naxals-surrender-2-others-arrested-in-c-garh-116010701109_1.html

¹³⁸ "Odisha: BSF Officer, Jawan Killed in Naxalite IED Blast Attack", *The Times of India*, January 8, 2016 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Odisha-BSF-officer-jawan-killed-in-Naxalite-IED-blast-attack/articleshow/50499019.cms>

¹³⁹ "5 Maoists Shot Dead in Aurangabad", *The Indian Express*, January 9, 2016 at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bihar-five-naxals-killed-arms-recovered-in-aurangabad/>

been deployed as part of UNIMIL. The contingent will be given training in international policing and be positioned there for one year, after which it will be replaced by another SSB contingent.¹⁴⁰

Twice in the span of the week, India became a victim of terrorism. The Indian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif was attacked on the night of January 3. All the attackers were killed in the 25-hour altercation outside the consulate. Earlier, on January 2, in the state of Punjab, the Pathankot air base was infiltrated. Both these attacks were condemned by the UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon.¹⁴¹

Bidding a farewell to the 125-strong Indian Formed Police Unit along with 12 Indian personnel of the UN Police serving in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Special Representative for Liberia presented awards to the contingent and appreciated their role in Liberia when it was afflicted by unrest and disease. Also, the holding of a veterinary camp in Melut by the Indian Battalion (INDBATT) operating in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) came in for appreciation by the County Commissioner of Melut.¹⁴²

Paramjeet Singh Saini, a suspected Babbar Khalsa International terrorist arrested in Portugal and being sought to be extradited to India, has found support of the Sikh Federation that has called for the intervention of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva to secure his return to the UK.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ "India to Depute over 100 Fresh Troops under United Nations flag in Africa", *DNA News*, December 28, 2015, at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-to-depute-over-100-fresh-troops-under-united-nations-flag-in-africa-2160234>

¹⁴¹ "Ban Ki-moon Condemns Terror Attack on Indian Consulate in Afghanistan", *NDTV News*, January 5, 2016, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/ban-ki-moon-condemns-terror-attack-on-indian-consulate-in-afghanistan-1262198>. Also see, "UN Chief Condemns Pathankot Terror Attack", *NDTV News*, January 6, 2016, at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/un-chief-condemns-pathankot-terror-attack-1262574>

¹⁴² "Indian Peacekeepers Awarded Medals for Courage", *Zee News*, January 6, 2016, at http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/indian-peacekeepers-awarded-medals-for-courage_1842153.html

¹⁴³ Sikh Terror Suspect Case Goes to United Nations, January 7, 2016, at <http://www.expressandstar.com/news/2016/01/07/sikh-terror-suspect-case-goes-to-united-nations/>