

Bangladesh

Are the January 2014 Parliamentary Elections Legitimate?



<u>Country Round up</u>	
Bangladesh	8
India	10
Maldives	12
Nepal	13
Pakistan	14
Sri Lanka	16

The *South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM)* aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The *South Asia Conflict Monitor* is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources

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Bangladesh: Are the January 2014 Parliamentary Elections Legitimate?

The political crisis in Bangladesh had deepened further with the BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance's call for "March for Democracy" rally on December 29. More than seven hundred opposition party supporters were detained and many more were arrested at different entry points to Dhaka since December 26. One person died during a clash between opposition party activists and security forces in Dhaka on December 29. Earlier, in an effort to prevent the rally, the government had deployed security forces, including the Army, in the city and virtually kept the opposition leader Khaleda Zia under house arrest. Media reports indicated that heavy security was deployed around the residence of opposition leaders. Apart from surrounding Zia's home and BNP headquarters in Dhaka, police had sprayed water cannons at lawyers supporting the BNP at the Supreme Court premises and prevented them from leaving the premises to join the rally.

Anticipating violence during the rally and after, shopkeepers and transport owners stopped business a day before the rally. More than 270 people had been killed and many more were injured since the declaration of November 29, announcing elections in January, and also the start of the war crime trials in the beginning of this year. An unspecified amount of public and private property was damaged.

There was a perception among common people that there might not be any respite from hartals and violence despite the elections in January. The Awami League (AL) might lose its support base as common people are badly affected by the frequent strikes, and as the ruling party it may face the brunt of the public ire. People are also not happy with the violent activities of the opposition parties. People criticize the BNP for setting up the tradition of conducting one-sided elections in 1996 and 2007. The common people are the losers in the 'tit for tat' tactics of the two main political parties. There is a feeling that if the political parties do not have faith on the role of democratic institutions during the elections then they should conduct the elections under a neutral caretaker government as has happened in the past. They (the two leaders) should not let the people suffer just to satisfy their egos.

Further, in a major blow to the AL's decision to holding the 10th parliamentary elections on January 05, 2014, the civil society groups in Bangladesh on December 28 appealed to the government to defer these elections. The appeal came just one day before the BNP called the "March for Democracy" rally. The civil society groups believe that the election has lost its

legitimacy due to non-participation of opposition parties. Most importantly, the elections are being conducted without declaration of the party manifestos in advance and the transfer of key government officials, who may influence the electoral process. Out of 300 parliamentary seats, the AL has been declared winner in 154 unopposed and decided to hold the elections for rest of the seats on January 05. People have expressed concern over them not being allowed to exercise their franchise in the already declared 154 seats and the lack of alternatives to choose their representatives in the absence of opposition parties. All those who have filed nominations for the January elections surprisingly belong to the AL alliance.

Interestingly, the Jatiyo Party (JP), the third largest political party in Parliament and an alliance partner of the AL, had opposed the latter's decision of holding elections under the amended law and supported the BNP-led resistance for the January elections. The JP formally dissociated itself from the January elections on December 3, 2013 by declaring "there exists no proper environment for polls." Although the JP did not join the BNP alliance, it boycotted the January election by not filing nominations.

Earlier, the US, the UK and the Commonwealth had decided not to send their observers to the January elections. The international community has been impartial to the political developments in Bangladesh. It has repeatedly advised both the party leaders to resolve the political stalemate by dialogue. The international community also asked the AL government to annul the death penalty against those who were convicted in the 1971 war crime trials. The European Union, the UN Human Rights Commission and the Australian government had opposed the execution of convicted war criminals in December.

The frequent hartals and blockades since November this year have adversely affected the economy and exports and imports. The rural poor and small traders are the worst affected. The situation worsened while the security forces imposed an undeclared blockade one day before the scheduled rally and the BNP extended the same while its leader Khaleda Zia failed to address the rally. The city was virtually cut off from the rest of the country.

Quoting the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the media reports indicated that the economy has suffered a massive loss (approximately 120 million USD) in the year 2013 because of frequent strikes, blockades, and overall political crisis. Domestic investments have dropped drastically with bank loan defaults piling up. Moreover, 21 commercial banks and 31 non-banking financial institutions have also incurred losses during

January-December. In fact, other business chambers also expressed apprehension about the negative impact of strikes in future. One media report said the ADB has projected slow GDP growth rate at 5.8 per cent due to lingering political tensions. The agricultural sector is equally affected. The farmers are worried about non-availability of fertiliser in the middle of the Boro paddy cultivation season. Around 11.95 lakh tonnes of fertiliser is stuck at the Chittagong port due to strikes. The export of garments has also come down due to poor demand from international buyers. The exporters also do not accept heavy international orders anticipating more political turmoil in future.

Periodic elections with the participation of political parties are an indicator of a healthy democracy. The BNP-led 18-party alliance's decision not to take part in the elections certainly derails the electoral process. When a large number of political parties have been demanding elections under a caretaker government, the ruling party should consider that demand. The opposition parties' lack of trust for the ruling party in this regard, reflects that democracy in Bangladesh is still nascent and needs time to mature. Till then, the parties should conduct elections under a neutral caretaker government to avoid a political crisis. In Bhutan for example, there is a special provision in the 2008 Constitution for holding elections under an interim government. Recently, Nepal successfully held its second Constituency Assembly elections under an executive council led by the Chief Justice. Moreover, the existing democratic institutions in Bangladesh will be affected if the political crisis aggravates due to frequent strikes and violence which in turn will lead to a constitutional crisis in the absence of an elected government. In that case, the Army may have a role in the politics of the country.



SACM BRIEF- I

Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bangladesh: Transnational Islamist Movement

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) is a transnational Islamic religious-political organization that has a presence in over 20 countries across the world. HT was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani. HT believes in the Ummatic concept. Its website openly declares that: "It aims to revive the Islamic Ummah from the severe decline that it had reached



and to liberate it from the thoughts, systems and laws of Kufr, as well as the domination and influence of the Kufr states. It also aims to restore the Islamic Khilafah State so that the ruling by what ‘Allah revealed returns.’

The Bangladesh chapter of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT-B) came into existence sometime in the year 2000 and got noticed following the American response to the 9/11 (September 2001) terrorist attacks. Its objectives have been to establish the Caliphate as part of the “Khilafah Islamiyah”. It also wants the Judiciary to be controlled by Islamic Sharia laws. The organisation began its activities inside Bangladesh with support from UK-based HT. The HT-B has been trying to capture political power by influencing and infiltrating the Bangladesh Army. Despite remaining as a proscribed organisation, the group continues its anti-state and anti-government campaigning. For example, in December 2013, HT-B organised talks in nine mosques across the country and appealed the Army to overthrow the AL and BNP regime. The HT-B brand these parties are agents of Western and Indian governments. It criticizes democracy as a government of devils.

The Bangladesh government has imposed a ban on the Hizbut-Tahrir’s country chapter on October 22, 2009, for its 'anti-state', 'anti-government', 'anti-people' and 'anti-democratic' activities in the country. The government, however, ruled out the possibility of charging Hizb ut-Tahrir- Bangladesh (HT-B) activists for their past offences in the country but warned them of grim action if they continue their anti-state activities further. In the last, the HT-B criticized the present government in the following words: "The oppressive Awami League government, agents of US-India-Britain banned Hizb ut-Tahrir due to the party’s stance on the side of the defence forces of the country and leading the work for re-establishing the Khilafah (Caliphate)." It was under the scanner for its involvement with proscribed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Hizbut Towhid and other Islamic terror organizations. The Dhaka University professor Mohiuddin Ahmed, who is the chief of HT-B, denied the allegations brought against the organisation in a statement released by the group. It claimed that the outfit would continue with its movement for a Muslim Ummah. According to Mohiuddin Ahmed's revelation, HT-B has units at all divisional headquarters and have around 10,000 members across the country.

HT-B became the fifth militant outfit to be outlawed in Bangladesh, following Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Shahadat-e Al Hikma. seven other organisations, such as Hizb-ut-Towhid, Islami Samaj, Ulema Anjuman al Baiyinaat, Islamic Democratic Party, Tawhid Trust, Tamir ud-Deen and Alla'r Dal, were also blacklisted in 2009 for their suspected involvement in militant activities. Just before the ban, around 40 cadres of the HT-B were arrested for distributing leaflets in support of the border guard’s mutiny, in which around 50 army officers were killed. The HT-B has consolidated its hold in Bangladesh by taking advantage of frequent political instability and misgovernance. During its public appearances and programmes in the mosques, the outfit appealed to its supporters to give it an opportunity to rule the country. It promised to address all the existing social and economic problems after establishing a Khilafat in Bangladesh. It has student wings in all the universities of Bangladesh and a major

portion of its support comes from among the rural youth. The rural unemployed youth make up are its ready recruits. These youth are getting regular training for Jihad.

The outside world witnessed HT-B rise to prominence in 2004 and during the Muhammad cartoon controversy in 2007. The counter-terror unit of Bangladesh found out the statements of HT-B and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are similar in nature.

The HT-B operations pass through three stages. First, the party tries to educate and spread awareness about its objectives among the masses in search of a dedicated and committed cadre. Second, the dedicated cadre interacts with the masses to encourage them to embrace Islam. The third objective is to establish a Caliphate. While progressing from one stage to another, the outfit adopts a strategy that is a combination of military and political campaigning. Although the outfit discards violence, on several occasions, the HT-B cadres are arrested for their involvement in subversive activities or with arms and ammunition within Bangladesh. Interestingly, in January 2012, the Bangladesh Army revealed that a coup planned by some middle-level officials, allegedly with the support of the HT-B to establish the Khilafat, was foiled.

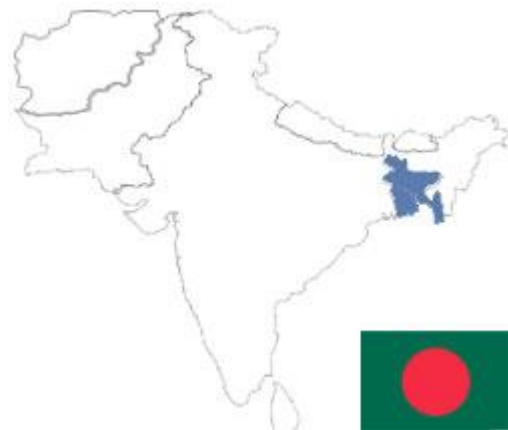
The HT-B leaders in Bangladesh are in constant touch with its UK branch. They get both material and moral support from them. The outfit also gets regular contributions from their sympathizers. Media reports have indicated that the HT-B is one of the richest organisations in Bangladesh and gets millions of Bangladeshi Taka (National Currency) from unknown sources. The Bangladeshi intelligence agencies suspect that the outfit even has linkages with Al Qaeda.



COUNTRY ROUND UP

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh's religious and political predicaments continued all through December as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led opposition alliance called at least five Hartals (general shutdown) in this month leading to sporadic violence that left more than 120 deaths since January election date was announced. The elections which are widely perceived as illegitimate, triggered further violence and created a



virtual stalemate. The Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir activist clubbed their protests against trial of their senior leaders with the BNP led Hartals. The JeI also supported the BNP led strikes. Apart from these Hartals, there was not a single day when Bangladesh did not witness violence during strikes organised by local wings of the opposition alliances. With no changes in Awami League (AL) position on the elections, the BNP once again called for “March for Democracy” on December 29 in an effort to disrupt the 10th general elections scheduled on January 05, 2014. The month long strikes affected common people and business community most. Unlike previous month strikes, this month strikes were imposed simultaneously on transportation sectors. As a result, countries trade was affected badly.

While uncertainty looms large over the successful holding of the January 05 elections, political violence in the form of group clashes and targeted killings are the most likely scenario in the coming months.

Major Events

December 03: Six civilians were killed and unspecified number of people injured in different places as activists supporting the BNP-led opposition alliance clashed with security forces on the fourth day of blockade called by the opposition to demand a non-party caretaker administration to oversee the parliamentary elections (News Nextbd, December 03, 2013).

December 14: Three persons were killed and 150 others injured in clashes between the activists of the Awami League (AL) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) in the northern Nilphamari district. The incident occurred at Ramganj Bazar when the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its ally Jamaat-e-Islami attacked the convoy of the ruling party MP Asaduzzaman Nur (News Nextbd, December 14, 2013).

December 17: Awami League advisory council member Suranjit Sengupta said there was no

scope left for holding talks with the BNP-led opposition parties on the 10th parliamentary elections, as the Awami League (AL) has already won most of the seats unopposed (*Daily Star*, December 17, 2013).

December 17: The activists of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islami Chhatra Shibir removed 100 fishplates from rail tracks at Bawra and Awliarhat areas of the upazila (*Daily Star*, December 17, 2013).

December 17: One Awami League leader was stabbed to death allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men in Kaliganj upazila of Satkhira while security forces were conducting a joint operation in the same upazila on the first day of the BNP-led opposition's 72-hour nationwide blockade (*Daily Star*, December 18, 2013).

December 17: Another spell of a 72-hour countrywide rail-road-waterway blockade was enforced by the BNP-led 18-party alliance amid sporadic violence. The opposition activists blasted three crude bombs in the Chowdhury Para area of Malibagh. The BNP-led alliance called the blockade demanding elections under a non-party caretaker government and cancellation of the January 5 polls schedule (*New Age*, December 17, 2013).

December 19: Two civilians were injured when a crude bomb exploded in the Bangshal area of old Dhaka on the last day of the 72-hour blockade (*Daily Star*, December 19, 2013).

December 19: The Opposition has called a 4-day countrywide blockade starting from December 21 6 am onwards (bdnews24, December 19, 2013).

December 19: The fourth spell of the road, railway and waterways blockade enforced by the opposition ended. The opposition announced the fifth spell of the blockade and enforced a blockade after November 25, when the Election Commission announced the schedule for the 10th parliamentary elections, setting the polling date for January 05, 2014 (*New Age*, December 20, 2013).

December 22: The second day of the 83-hour road-rail-waterway blockade enforced by the opposition concluded amid sporadic incidents of violence. Opposition activists blasted at least 10 crude bombs near Kawran Bazar in Dhaka (*New Age*, December 22, 2013).

December 23: Fifteen people including four policemen were injured in a clash between BNP activists and security forces in Shailakupa upazila of Jhenidah during the third day of the opposition's countrywide blockade (*Daily Star*, December 23, 2013).

December 23: Around 07 persons including a local leader of the Chhatra Dal were arrested for possessing 8 kilograms of explosives used to make hand-made bombs from Khilgaon area of Dhaka. The arrested persons revealed that they were paid to make and hurl bombs during strikes and blockades (*New Age*, December 23, 2013).

December 24: Three persons are killed and 25 trucks were burnt during the opposition's 83-hour nationwide blockade. The opposition imposed blocked roads, rail traffic and waterways from December 21 protesting the schedule of the 10th parliamentary elections and demanding an apolitical caretaker government. The opposition alliance had called for a blockade i five times since November 26. In a separate incident, a bomb was exploded in a lower Court suspected by Jamaat-e-Islami cadres of thwarting the ongoing trial of its top leaders (*The Hindu*, December 24, 2013).

December 24: More than 20 opposition alliance members and leaders were arrested after the death of a police constable in an arson attack at the Bangla Motors crossing in Dhaka. Meanwhile, the government had deployed the Army and paramilitary forces to maintain law and order in Dhaka and adjacent areas (New Age, December 26, 2013).

December 25: Intelligence reports indicated that a large number of opposition party supporters started moving towards Dhaka in response to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's call for joining the "March for Democracy" scheduled for December 29. On December 24, Khaleda announced the 'March for Democracy' programme (Daily Star, December 26, 2013).

December 27: Hizb-ut Tahrir activists exploded bombs when police prevented them from taking out a procession at Segunbagicha in Dhaka (BDNews24, December 27, 2013).

INDIA

India's three major conflict areas witnessed moderate violence. Except in the Northeast, the civilian casualties in Jammu & Kashmir and Maoist-affected areas remained low. In Jammu & Kashmir, the militants continued their attacks on the security forces. On a couple of occasions, the security forces foiled militant attacks on them. The infiltration attempts from across the border continued this month. The LeT was responsible for most of the violent incidents in the region.



In central and eastern India, the Maoists targeted security forces and government offices. Although Maoist-related incidents came down in Andhra Pradesh, the fear of their revival and that of the Maoist movement in the state increased, with Telangana being a major concern of the state police. Andhra Pradesh has witnessed low level of Maoist incidents consecutively for the fourth year. Despite that, the Maoists continued their recruitment and training programmes in Chattisgarh, Odisha, eastern Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar. The Maoists also tried to revive the movement in West Bengal. Anticipating increase of Maoist activities or attacks in 2014, the security forces carried out simultaneous combing operations in the Maoist-affected areas. The CPI-Maoist will celebrate its 10th anniversary in September 2014.

Manipur and Assam remained the most disturbed states in the north eastern region. Despite the continuation of the peace process with ULFA, the presence of the Paresh Barua faction and formation of six new militant outfits in the state disturbed the peaceful atmosphere. Similarly, Manipur is home to more than 30 militant outfits, which is the highest in the region. These

outfits have been operating for the last 40 years. The militants took advantage of recent public reactions in the state against the construction of wooden fencing at undemarcated border areas with Myanmar. The Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), which was dormant for quite some time in the region, triggered a bomb blast in northern West Bengal.

Major Events

December 03: Eight policemen were killed in a Maoist attack in Bihar's Aurangabad district. The Maoists detonated the landmines while the policemen were travelling in a jeep (NDTV, December 03, 2013).

December 03: Three militants including one divisional commander of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) were killed in exchange of fire with security forces in Handwara area of North Kashmir. Two Army personnel were also injured in the incident (Daily Excelsior December 4, 2013).

December 04: Two activists of the Islamic Movement of India, Abdul Wahid Khan and Uber Sidhhiqi, told intelligence agencies and the National Investigation Agency that the outfit is now training “human bombs” to target top political leaders, including Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, in the election season (Asian Age, December 04, 2013).

December 11: Three suspected Kuki militants were killed in an encounter with a combined team of police commandos and the 21st Para commandos in Thoubal district of Manipur (One India, December 11, 2013).

December 14: Four police personnel were injured in a blast triggered by the Maoists at Halwada in Etapalli tehsil of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra (The Times of India, December 15, 2013).

December 15: The Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) killed two civilians at Meka Adu area near Gausapara. The GNLA, one of the five Garo rebel groups, is fighting for a separate Garoland in the western part of Meghalaya. Separately, a cadre of the breakaway faction of the A'chik National Volunteers Council (ANVC-B) was arrested in Meghalaya's South Garo Hills (Sify.com, December 16, 2013).

December 15: One person was killed and four others injured by suspected NDFB (Songbijit) insurgents who exploded two grenades and fired indiscriminately at Molandubi Market in Assam's Kokrajhar district (Times of India, December 15, 2013).

December 16: The Assam government informed the state assembly that six new militant outfits have emerged in the state in the last two years. This takes the number of active outfits in Assam to 12, making it one of the worst militancy--affected states in India after Manipur (Times of India, December 17, 2013).

December 20: A group of 20 armed Maoists attacked a construction company camp by setting fire to three vehicles used in road construction work in Rayagada district (Times of India, December 22, 2013).

December 24: A group of 40 to 50 armed Maoists belonging to Kalimela division of the outlawed CPI(Maoist) blew up a block office at Podia town using powerful explosives in

Malkangir district of Odisha (New Indian Express, December 26, 2013).

December 26: A Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant was killed in an encounter with security forces in Budgam district of Kashmir. An AK-47 assault rifle and some ammunition were recovered from the incident site (Indian Express, December 26, 2013).

December 26: Three people were killed and six others injured in a bomb blast in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Police suspect the involvement of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) in the attack (DNA India, December 26, 2013).

December 27: Four people including three women have been killed by suspected Karbi Peoples' Liberation Tigers (KPLT) militants at Khowanigaon in Karbi Anglong district. (Assam Tribune, December 28, 2013).

December 30: Indian Mujahideen (IM)'s Yasin Bhatkal has reportedly told interrogators that his outfit was planning to acquire and detonate a small nuclear bomb on Surat Gujarat (Times of India, December 30, 2013).

MALDIVES

The new government in Maldives headed by Abdulla Yameen struggled to get opposition leaders' approval over appointing ministers from its coalition partners. Meanwhile, the PPM consolidated itself further with former President Mohamed Waheed joining the party. Waheed's Gaume Ithihaad Party (GIP – National Unity Party) was dissolved and all its party members joined the PPM. The Yameen government is part in the trilateral security group comprising India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The group in the last meeting decided to expand its membership by including Mauritius and Seychelles. The new government after assuming office has taken steps to improve its strained bilateral relations with India.



Major Events

December 14: The Omadhoo Island Council stopped controversial preacher Sheikh Adam Shameem from delivering a religious lecture at the local mosque, fearing it might “disrupt the stability and social harmony of the island”. Sheikh Shameem studied at Jamia Salafiyya in Pakistan, Medina Islamic University, and has a Masters degree in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage from International Islamic University in Malaysia (*Minivan News*, December 16, 2013).

December 25: Former President Mohamed Waheed decided to join the ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) after his Gaume Ithihaad Party (GIP – National Unity Party) was dissolved

by the party's council. The party council members had unanimously made the decision to dissolve the party as they did not believe it wise to continue running the party in the present political and economic circumstances (Minivan News, December 25, 2013).

NEPAL

After 40 days of the second Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, eight party leaders signed on an eight-point agreement to resolve the preset political stalemate. The major political parties struggled to form the government and the Constituent Assembly since the completion of the election process on November 19. The process was delayed because of differences between the Maoists, the Nepali Congress and the



UML over the structure and function of the high-level political committee; the Maoists demanded elections within nine months after the promulgation of the new Constitution. The UCPN-Maoist, its Democratic Federal Alliance partners, demanded that they would not submit their proportional representation list until the government formed an enquiry commission to investigate into election irregularities. The process was delayed further due to frequent threats of dissolution of the new constituent assembly and formation of a high-level all-party political committee.

Despite some progress in the formation of the CA, the new government in Nepal may face some challenges like distribution of key portfolios and constitutional positions, accommodating agitating parties in the Constitution-making process and finding solutions to old problems like consensus on federalism, nature of governance and state and the Judiciary.

Major Events

December 16: The CPN-Maoist has vowed to fight for the dissolution of the new Constituent Assembly (CA) saying that the November CA polls were held as per the 'master plan' of foreign forces. The party has set its political line as building a national political agreement to "liberate" the country from foreign intervention and conspiracy (MyRepublica, December 16, 2013).

December 23: The Ashok Rai-led Federal Socialist Party Nepal (FSPN) and Federal Democratic Alliance (FDA) have decided not to submit the final list of candidates under the proportional representation (PR) system until an independent commission is formed to investigate alleged vote fraud (MyRepublica, December 24, 2013).

December 26: Chairman of CPN-Maoist Mohan Baidya said only people's revolution could bring transformation in society, so the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) must be dissolved to pave the way for a people's revolution (Himalayan Times, December 26, 2013).

PAKISTAN

Despite positive signals from the government for peace talks with the TTP, the trust deficit continued between both the parties. The TTP outrightly rejected the new peace talks offer; the trust deficit was reaffirmed by the lack of sincerity from the government's side. The TTP suspected that the US drone attacks in Pakistan are carried out with the connivance of Pakistani security agencies. As a result, the TTP attacked the security forces engaged in counter-insurgency operations in their strongholds. In fact, the TTP subsequently came out with new attack plans and target groups. As a response, the Pakistan Army also warned the TTP of dire consequences for attacks on the Army personnel. The Army intensified its counter-insurgency operations in TTP strongholds to exert pressure on them for agreeing to peace talks.



Karachi continued to bleed due to sectarian conflict and gang war. Hundreds of people were killed in the city in different incidents this month.

The renewed attacks on target groups by the TTP will bring fresh violence in new areas of Pakistan. Although the Pakistan Army has a new chief, there is no change in its position on the Taliban. The TTP may open some new battlefronts to engage the Pakistan Army so as to limit its focus in the northern-western region. The TTP may continue its attacks on soft targets in future.

Major Events

December 05: Five militants and security personnel were killed in an exchange of fire in Naseerabad district of Balochistan. A large quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered from the militants' possession (Dawn, December 05, 2013).

December 16: Four security personnel of the bomb disposal unit (BDU) were killed and two others injured when a remote-controlled explosive device targeted their vehicle in Badhabera area of Peshawar (Nation, December 17, 2013).

December 17: Militants torched a tanker carrying fuel for US and NATO troops in

Balochistan's Khuzdar district. No group or individual had claimed responsibility (Dawn, December 17, 2013).

December 17: A landmine explosion killed at least two tribesmen and wounded two others in the Kurram tribal region whereas a roadside remote-controlled Improvised Explosive Device (IED) struck a police mobile van on the Kohat road of Peshawar, injuring one policeman (Dawn, December 17, 2013).

December 17: The government ruled out military action against the Taliban and promised to pursue peace only through talks. The Cabinet's Committee on National Security on Tuesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to the strategy of carrying out negotiations with the TTP and was considering use of other options only as the last resort. The TTP immediately rejected the offer (Daily Times, December 18, 2013)

December 18: Three people were killed and 14 others injured in a suicide attack outside an Imambargah situated in the Gracey Lines area (Dawn, December 18, 2013).

December 19: Thirty-three militants and three civilians were killed in counter-insurgency operations in the North Waziristan Agency. The incident took place a day after a suicide bombing at a military checkpoint killed five soldiers and wounded 34 others. Ansar-ul Mujahideen linked to the TTP, claimed responsibility for the December 18 suicide attack (Daily Times, December 20, 2013).

December 22: Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Raheel Sharif warned the militants who have been fighting the security forces in the north-western tribal region to pay them in the same coin. The statement came after a targeted military offensive of the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps (FC), in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) in response to a recent attack on a military picket that left at least five soldiers dead. He however, reiterated full support to the government-led ongoing peace process (Nation, December 22, 2013).

December 24: Six persons, including five militants and a para-military personnel, were killed in an exchange of gunfire in the Turbat area of Balochistan (Dawn, December 24, 2013).

December 24: The Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMO) from Pakistan and India met at the Wagah border post, near Lahore, for the first time in 14 years in a bid to reduce tensions in Kashmir after a year of intermittent clashes (Daily Times, December 25, 2013).

December 28: Taliban Militants attacked a hospital in Matni area of Peshawar (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and killed a polio worker and injured two other people involved in the vaccination campaign. (Daily Times, December 31, 2013).

SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan government came under pressure to resume dialogue with Tamil political parties after the Commonwealth summit. The British government was very critical of the Sri Lankan government over human rights issues. The UK also vowed to pursue an international inquiry into the alleged war crimes during the final offensive against the LTTE.

Meanwhile, the TNA decided to continue boycotting the Parliament Select Committee meeting on devolution and other national issues. It believed that there might not be any visible results after the meeting. The trust deficit between negotiating parties widened further while the chief minister of the Northern Province C. V. Wigneswaran came out with a statement that the government has been trying to revive the LTTE with the support of a former LTTE military commander to de-legitimize the TNA. Earlier, some members in the Sri Lankan government and Sinhala Buddhist hardliners accused the TNA of supporting the LTTE.



Major Events

December 21: Northern Province Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran warned that a former LTTE military commander was being commissioned to restart an LTTE outfit subservient to the powers by one influential leader in the government (Colombo Telegraph, December 21, 2013).

December 22: The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) said the party is prepared to talk to the government, if it will engage with it in a meaningful manner. The statement came in response to the invitation extended by President Mahinda Rajapaksa last week for the TNA to resume the long stalled talks on finding a political solution to the national question (*Colombopage*, December 23, 2013).

December 26: The Colombo administration rejected a claim by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) that the census conducted by the Government on human and material losses due to the war will attempt to play down the number of casualties. The survey, carried out in 14,022 Grama Niladhari Divisions, island wide deploying 16,000 officials to collect information, was completed by December 20. The report of the island wide survey will be available in March next year, according to the Department. (Colombo Page, December 26).



SACM BRIEF-II**CorCOM: The Militant Conglomerate of Manipur**

Manipur is one of the most violence-prone states of India, next only to Jammu & Kashmir. This North eastern state has earned the notoriety of having the highest number of militant-criminal groups in the region. While most of the militant groups are involved in extortion, drugs and arms trade for their sustenance, a minuscule number of groups fight in the name of identity and a separate homeland while attempting to secure the state's resources from the so-called outsiders or non-Manipuris. One of them is CorCom (Coordination Committee) which had served a 'quit notice' to non-Manipuris recently, setting December 31, 2013 as the deadline. However, the CorCom exempted those who came to Manipur for study, service or as tourists. The militant conglomerate believes people of Manipur are not Indian and denounces the October 1949 merger of Manipur into the Indian Federation.

The CorCom, an umbrella organization originally comprising seven militant groups: the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), the PREPAK(Progressive), the Kanglei Yawol Kunna Lup (KYKL), the United People's Party of Kangleipak (UPPK) and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF). The UPPK was expelled in February 2013 from the committee. The main objective of the CorCom is



to establish a 'United Front' to bring unity among revolutionary groups to free Manipur from India's 'colonial regime'. Since its formation in July 2011, CorCom has been appealing to the people of Manipur and the region to stand united and to wage a war of liberation collectively. While issuing the ultimatum to all outsiders to leave Manipur, the militant conglomerate threatened to check the influx of migrants through violent means.

Irengbam Chaoren of the RPF is the 'convener' and H. Poirei is the media coordinator of CorCom. The RPF is the political wing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), one of the oldest armed movements of Northeast India. CorCom has been instrumental in perpetrating several bombings and incidents of arson in Manipur since its formation. The most lethal attack took place on August 15, 2012 during Independence Day celebrations when a series of bombings across Manipur left at least four people injured. The CorCom claimed responsibility for the blasts, indicating that the four bombings were part of its general strike to boycott India's Independence Day celebrations. Earlier in that year, CorCom had carried out three bombings during the Republic Day celebrations in Manipur. The latest attacks, suspected to be handiwork of CorCom, took place at Thangal Bazar on October 29 and at Moirangkhom Moreh Van parking area on October 30, 2013. However, CorCom denied its hand in the attacks fearing public backlash.

Even though Manipur has been witnessing multiple insurgencies during the last couple of decades, the emergence of CorCom consolidated the armed rebellion further in Manipur. This has been a cause of concern for the government and security forces for quite some time.