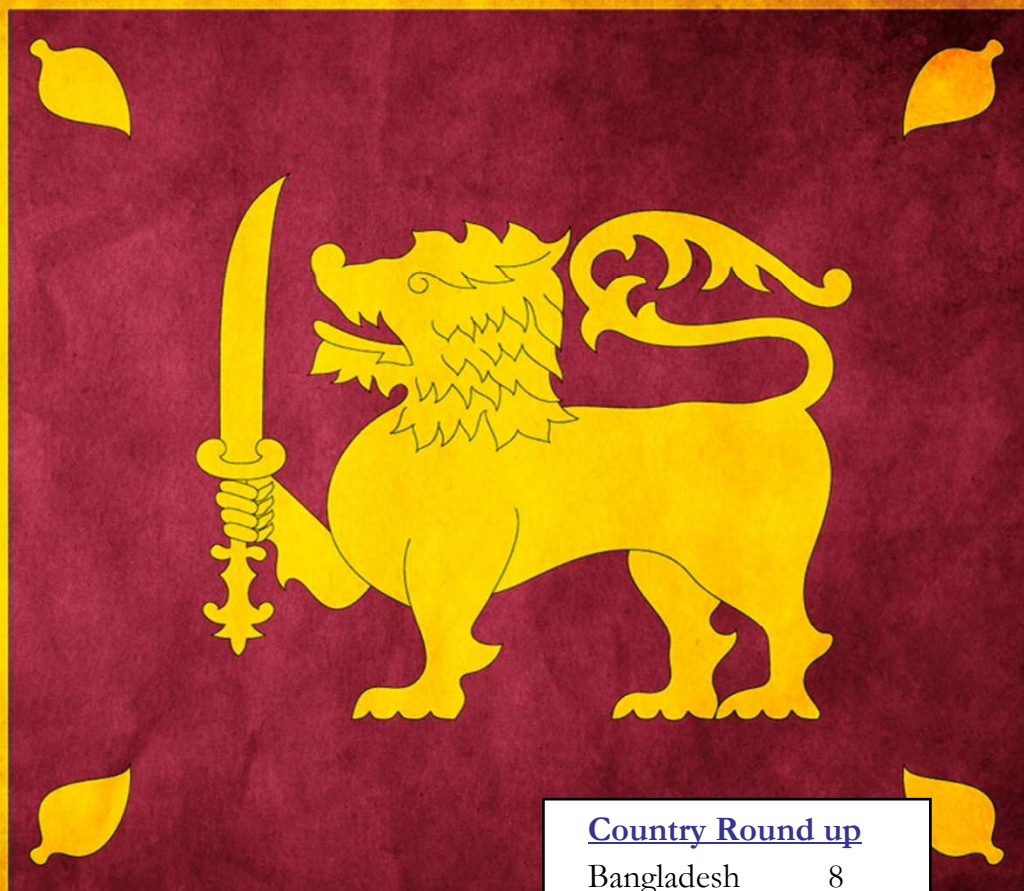


SRI LANKA

Buddhists: Peace Messenger to Terror Monk[er]



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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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Buddhists: Peace Messenger to Terror Monk[ger]

Vehemently opposing the Human Rights violation report submitted by the UN Human Rights Commissioner Navanethem Pillay, the Sri Lankan (SL) government has recently rejected her call for establishing ‘an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged rights violations (both Human Rights and Humanitarian Law) and for monitoring any domestic accountability process in Sri Lanka. The report claims to have found proof of sporadic attacks on minorities: Muslims and Christians in the country and that the “government has failed to take any action against the perpetrators.” The SL government may not accept the other aspects of report, but the fact is that attacks on the minority groups have increased manifold. A closer look at the attacks on the minorities by Sinhala extremist Buddhist organisations showed that the report has some substance. The continuation of the attacks for a long period also reflects that the present government has either a tacit understanding with the radical groups or completely subservient to them since they can swing the vote bank during the elections. Perhaps this has emboldened the extremists to continue their attacks on the minority groups.

Both government and private sources have confirmed regular attacks on the minorities in Sri Lanka especially in the post-civil war period. First, the Colombo Police informed that nearly 20 mosques were attacked in 2013. Second, the Presidential Commission investigating alleged abductions or disappearances of residents in the Northern and Eastern Provinces during the period 1990-2009 pointed out that around 5,000 Muslims had gone missing in the country during the period of the war. Third, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Secretary handed over a special report to Navanethem (Navi) Pillay during her visit to SL in August last year. According to this special report, there were some 280 incidents of threat and violence against Muslims in 2013, as well as attacks on mosques and places of business. Christian groups also reported more than 103 incidents of attacks on churches and Christians in 2013.¹ Lastly, media report indicated that major actions are taken by the Buddhist radical groups in 2013-14. Some of them are:

- February 16, 2014: More than 200 Buddhist activists of the Sinhala Ravaya, an extremist Buddhist outfit, threatened self-immolation if the government did not ban the slaughter of cattle.
- January 12, 2014: Around 200 people led by Buddhist monks attacked two Christian churches in Hikkaduwa.
- October 15, 2013: Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), an extremist Buddhist outfit, threatened to re-commence its agitation against the issuing of halal certificates in the country.
- October 06, 2013: The BBS declared that a crusade would be launched in support of allowing the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to engage in politics.

¹ “U.N. rights boss seeks international probe into Sri Lanka war crimes”, Reuters, February 25, 2014.

- September 20: A group of radical Sinhalese Buddhists attacked a Protestant church.
- August 11, 2013: The BBS attacked a Muslim prayer centre at Grandpass area of Colombo.

Given the frequent attacks and the absence of action against the perpetrators, the minorities feel insecure. There is a perception amongst the minority groups that Buddhist radical groups especially the BBS, have the sympathy of defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The minorities feel that the BBS and other Buddhist organizations maintain double standards on cattle slaughter, and this is a conspiracy with a hidden agenda. The interpretation of the minorities seems to be correct to some extent right, as the Buddhists themselves consume beef and meat. Some also believe that these are political strategies of the government to hide its inadequacies by pitting the monks against the people.

There are allegations that the BBS has the political patronage of the present government. The BBS's political affiliation can be discerned from the fact that Gotabaya inaugurated the Buddhist Leadership Academy of the BBS on March 09, 2013 at Galle. Even other Buddhist organizations are critical of the BBS's anti-minority policy and extremist views.

A closer examination of the radical Buddhist groups' demands and statements indicate that there are political and economic aspects to these attacks. Politically, these attacks are motivated to suppress the minority groups with an objective to form a single Sinhala nation.. After the fall of the LTTE and establishment of absolute control over the north-eastern provinces, the government feels that the Tamil minority may not be a major threat towards its goal of establishing Sri Lanka as a Sinhala-dominated state. Therefore, the next targets are Muslims and Christians, who constitute roughly 8 and 7 per cent of the total population respectively, of the 21 million inhabitants of Sri Lanka. The Christians are targeted because Buddhists feel insecure about perceived rapid conversion of Sinhala people to that religion.

Economic Causes

Available documents suggest that the Tamils were attacked in 1983 because of their economic prosperity and domination in the service sectors. They had prospered in the major cities of Sri Lanka, including Colombo. Since the Tamils are now politically marginalized after the fall of the LTTE, the government reportedly has been trying to contain the other religious minorities. Since the Muslims have dominated economically like Tamils did in 1980s, the government has been using Buddhist radical groups to keep a check on them. The Sri Lankan Muslims are mainly

from India or the Arab nations. Although the Muslim population is comparatively less, they are the most affluent community in Sri Lanka. All major business houses are controlled by them in the eastern provinces like those in Ampara, Batticaloa and among others. Some Sinhala businessmen reportedly pay money to the Buddhist organizations to harass the Muslim business groups. Media reports indicated that in January 2013, Buddhists called for boycott of Muslim-owned businesses and ban on headscarves and halal foods.

The Crisis Group report in November 2013 found that five years after the end of the civil war, the Rajapaksa government needs new issues, in order to cover for its failure to deliver good governance. The government seems to be "tacitly encouraging, and in some cases directly supporting, the anti-Muslim campaigns led by militant and often violent Buddhist organisations."²

Political Causes

Not only the Buddhist radical groups, but also both Rajapaksa himself and his other coalition partners are not happy with the SLMC, which represents a large portion of the Muslim community from the north-eastern part of the country. The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), a coalition partner in the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) criticized the SLMC leader Justice Minister Rauff Hakeem for his alleged intervention in the legal education system in the country. The JHU alleged that Hakeem has been trying to 'Muslimise' the legal sector of Sri Lanka.

The party even labelled Hakeem as a racist and argued that the number of Muslim students has increased because Hakeem has tampered with the Law College Entrance Examination rules to allow for the accommodation of Muslim students. In fact, the allegations are very close to the BBS, which charged that there was a scandal behind the disproportionate increase of Tamil and Muslim students who passed the law entrance examination in 2013. The outfit also organized street protests against Hakeem. This reflects that there is common ill-feeling on minorities at the party, government and civil society level.

Other than this, a rift has also occurred within the SLMC and UPFA over the former's sharing of the a report on the number of attacks on minorities in the northeastern provinces to Navi Pillay. In this regard, in early March, President Rajapaksa personally during a cabinet meeting, asked Hakeem to decide whether he and the SLMC want remain in the Government. The

² Sri Lanka's Potemkin Peace: Democracy Under Fire, Crisis Group Asia Report No. 53, 3 November 2013, p.27.

cabinet felt that the Tamil Diaspora have been campaigning in Muslim countries for vote in favour of the March 26 Human Rights resolution against Sri Lanka.

The rift appeared during the provincial elections, while the SLMC opposed the Government's position on the 13th amendment. Then, the ALMC hinted that Muslims do not trust the Rajapaksa Government. It joined the Government to share power to offset the domination by Tamils. Therefore, the SLMC contested the north-eastern provincial council elections independently.

Since the BBS has committed to carry out protest rallies to impose ban on Halal meat, cattle slaughter and use of Purdah/Burka, the Muslim community might oppose that strongly. The Sri Lankan Government therefore would tacitly encourage the religious tension in the country for some time, to divert international attention over the Human Rights issue. The politicization of the minority issue might widen the trust deficit between the Sinhalese and other communities. In that case, the country may soon witness another round of civil war.



SACM Profile: I**Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB): Resurgence of Bengali Taliban**

The well-orchestrated militant ambush on a prison van on February 23 at Mymensingh has revealed Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh's comeback plan and future motive. The gunfight and subsequent escape of three fellow cadres from police custody who were on their way to court for a trial, left one policeman dead and several injured.



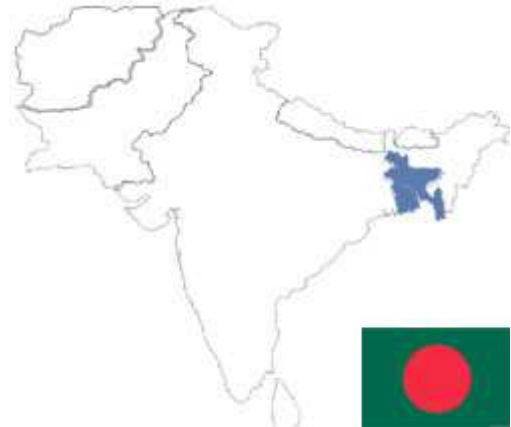
The JMB which is considered to have been decimated by the security forces a few years ago, still remains the most lethal and resilient Islamist militant organization in Bangladesh. Emerging on the militant landscape of Bangladesh since 1998, the JMB aims to establish an Islamic state based on Sharia laws. Its violent manifestation took the form of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB: Awakened Muslim People of Bangladesh) which was solely devoted towards eliminating Left-wing extremist groups and other criminal groups operating in the north-western region of the country. The JMB had championed the ideals of Talibanism and Islamic jihad in the country. The JMB, which largely draws inspiration from the Afghan Taliban and Osama bin Laden, calls for unity of Islamic forces in the country against the secular and democratic political forces. Many believe that the August 2005 serial explosions would remain JMB's last audacious act designed for creating countrywide chaos and instability. It perpetrated a series of deadly bombings in market places, court premises, carried out targeted assassinations of lawyers, politicians and writers. However, the March 2007 executions of JMB leaders, the second-rung JMB leaders were forced to hide and regroup in Bangladesh's rural pockets, under the active leadership of Maulana Saidur Rahman. But again, JMB faced a leadership crisis, following the arrest of Saidur and has maintained a low profile since.

With a strong grassroots Jihadi organizational structure, the resilient JMB has made several attempts to stage a comeback, camouflaging itself under different nomenclatures in the past; for example Hizb-e-Abu Omar, Tanzin-e-Tamiruddin, Jadid Al Qaeda and Islam-o-Muslim and BEM. Even though JMB is an overtly domestic Islamic terror group, it has strong ideological links with the Ahle Hadith sect and operational links with Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Qaeda-linked Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Islamic political party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh (JEI-BD). Likewise, the Tanjim-e-Tamiruddin and BEM are the offshoots of the HuJI-B and the JMB. On the surface, JMB's strength and activities inside Bangladesh appear depleted especially following the executions and arrest of senior leaders. However, it would be still impractical to strike it out as a 'defunct' or a 'neutralized' group, especially after the February 23 ambush. With the JMB's Jihadi motivations and grassroots connection remaining intact, the organization is capable of staging another comeback anytime in future, as the JMB had demonstrated the effectiveness of its comebacks with recruitment drives and fund-raising in the past.

COUNTRY ROUND UP

BANGLADESH

The country remained relatively free from major violent incidents in comparison to the previous month. The opposition party looked fragmented. However, they leveled the accusation that the number killings and disappearances had gone up in the post-election period. The opposition parties organised protests against the rigging during the upazilla elections. Despite the Bangladesh Nationalist Party



(BNP)'s poor performances in the Parliamentary elections, the party performed well in the upazilla elections along with the Jamaat-e-Islami. The alliance won around 55 out of 97 seats in the elections held on February 19. The most interesting aspect of the election was the resurgence of the Jamaat, which secured around 15 per cent of the votes by the end of the second round of the elections. The BNP also performed well in the city local body elections before the parliamentary elections. The party's credible performances in the recent elections reflects its electoral potential .

Meanwhile, al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri reportedly appealed to the Bangladeshi people to protest against the anti-Islamic secular Awami League (AL) government. The radical groups in Bangladesh feel that the AL in its second term may retaliate against them. Therefore, a joint front needs to be formed to counter such a move. The BNP-Jamaat domination in the ongoing upazilla elections may embolden the opposition parties to organise more protest rallies against the ruling party.

Major Events

February 02: The International Crimes Tribunal-2 (ICT-2) indicted Syed Mohammad Qaisar on 16 charges of crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Habiaganj and Brahmanbaria districts during the Liberation War in 1971. Qaisar, who was allegedly involved with pro-Pakistani groups like Razakar and Peace Committee, was charged for "participating and abetting" an act of genocide in 22 villages in Brahmanbaria district. He founded 'Qaisar Bahini' that worked alongside the Pakistani Army during the liberation war.(Daily Star, February 03, 2014)

February 04: The BNP accused the government of being involved in the killing or disappearance of more than 300 activists around the time of the country's January 14 election.

The government responded to the accusations by saying the BNP allegations had previously been found to be untrue (Reuters, February 04, 2014).

February 11: The verdict of the 2004-Chittagong arms cases said that former army officials pulled up in the sensational case, had confessed that officials of both the NSI and DGFI had a close relationship not only with the ULFA, but also the Pakistan High Commission, the Dubai-based Aga Rahman Yusuf (ARY) Group and the US embassy (BanglaNews24, February 11, 2013).

February 15: A-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri has invited people of Bangladesh to "confront the crusader onslaught against Islam." The message titled 'Bangladesh: A Massacre Behind a Wall of Silence', contains photographs from Hefajat-e Islam programmes and law enforcers action on them (Daily Star, February 15, 2014).

February 19: BNP has called for a hartal (shutdown) in three upazilas of Barisal, Pabna and Jhenidah for February 20 to protest against the vote rigging in the first phase of upazila elections. Local units of the BNP will observe half-day hartal. Voting in 97 upazilas was held amidst tight security (Daily Star, February 19, 2014).

February 22: A senior leader identified as Abu Hanif affiliated with Purbo Bangla Communist Party-Red Flag (PBCP-Red Flag) was arrested in Chachkia area of Pabna district.

February 23: A police team escorting three Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activists to produce them before a court in Mymensingh, were attacked by around 15 JMB activists and took away the three convicted JMB members. Later, one of the convicts was killed in a shootout with police. The JMB cadres were arrested in connection with a sedition case filed on March 11, 2006 (Daily Star, February 24, 2014).

February 24: Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militant, Rakib Hasan Russell was killed in crossfire at Mirzapur. Rakib was one of the three JMB men who were taken away from a prison van in an ambush on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway (Daily Star, February 24, 2014).

February 27: Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) authorities in Sylhet district have expelled 14 Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), for vandalising and attacking a human chain formed by teachers and students in December last year (New Age, February 28, 2014).

INDIA

Despite the declaration of special operations against the Maoists by the CRPF with the support of affected state police forces, central India continued to witness violence by the Maoists. The objective of the special operation was to sanitise the so-called Maoists strongholds and familiarise the forces before the Parliamentary elections scheduled in April and May. The Maoists took advantage of the special operations and targeted paramilitary forces in Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh. Since the Maoists were busy with anti-elections preparations, they did not carry out major attacks during these operations.



The north-eastern region of India again caught media attention due to revival of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) movement after the formation of Telangana and fresh violence in the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border region. The increased opposition of the KLO and ULFA to the elections made Assam vulnerable to violent incidents.

The country may witness more violent incidents because of the Parliamentary elections in April and May this year and the resistance of the anti-state elements to that.

Major Events

February 03: P.C. Haldar, member of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), indicated that in Northeast India, Maoists have been focusing on areas in upper Assam and a few pockets in the interior areas to set up bases. According to him their choice of areas assumes added significance because of its proximity to the international border and traditional routes of armed groups of the region to their bases in Myanmar. He also urged the security establishment to take the attempts by the CPI-Maoists to consolidate themselves in the area seriously while planning a strategy to tackle them (The Times of India, February 04, 2014).

February 06: Suspected Maoists set four bauxite-laden trucks on fire near Sudikona village in Gumla district of Jharkhand. The incident occurred a day before the CPI (Maoist) enforced the Jharkhand bandh (shutdown) to press for the release of Maoist prisoners who have completed their terms (PTI, February 06, 2014).

February 09: Two CRPF personnel, including a deputy commandant, were killed and 12 security personnel were injured in a landmine blast triggered by the Maoists in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh. (The Hindu, February 09, 2014).

February 17: Seven Maoists died in an encounter near Bedkathi village in Gadchiroli district of

Maharashtra. Firearms including AK 47, two SLRs, one carbine and other weapons have been recovered from the incident site (The Times of India, February 18, 2014).

February 19: Minister of State for Home R.P.N. Singh informed the upper House of Parliament that Indian Maoists have close links with foreign Maoist organisations— in Philippines, Turkey and a few other countries— and the possibility of their front outfits getting foreign funds cannot be ruled out. He pointed out that the recovery of arms and ammunition of foreign origin from the Maoists in different encounters is an indication of the fact that the outfit is procuring weapons from external sources (Indian Express, February 19, 2014).

February 20: A militant leader belonging to National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB-Songbijit) was killed in a joint operation by the Assam police and the Army (Times of India, February 21, 2014).

February 13: Two unidentified militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in south Kashmir's Shopian district (NDTV, February 13, 2014).

February 15: The seventh round of tripartite talks between the United Naga Council (UNC), the central government and the Manipur government over the demand for an alternative arrangement for Nagas of Manipur, was held at the Senapati District, Manipur. The UNC is the apex body of the Nagas in Manipur and has been demanding an alternative arrangement beyond the control of the Manipur government for the Nagas in the state (Business Standard, February 15, 2014).

February 23: The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) held rallies in three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling district demanding a separate state of Gorkhaland. However, no top-level leaders were seen in the three rallies. The GJM's demand resurfaced after Parliament passed the Telangana bill (Business Standard, February 23, 2014).

February 24: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah informed the state Assembly that at least 5,300 security personnel have been killed over two decades of militancy in the state (New Indian Express, February 24, 2014).

February 23: An indefinite curfew was clamped at Borgang in Sonitpur district of northern Assam following fresh incidents of violence after the police recovered decomposed bodies of four persons on the Arunachal Pradesh border. With these, the number of persons killed in the January 29 incident has risen to 15 (Indian Express, February 24, 2014).

February 24: Police claimed seven terrorists were killed after a gunfight between security forces and terrorists in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir (NDTV, February 24, 2014).

February 24: At least 10 people were injured when militantshurled two grenades near Baihata Chariali in Assam's Kamrup district. The attack took place a day ahead of Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi's scheduled visit to the state (New Indian Express, February 24, 2014).

February 24: Manipur Governor V.K. Duggal said the state has been affected by insurgent activities since last four decades and more than 60 militant groups have been operating in the State (Epa0/Hueiyen News Service, February 25, 2014).

MALDIVES

Maldives continued to be divided on the secularism versus fundamentalism line even during the local council elections. As during the Presidential elections, this time also, the ruling coalition came together to prevent the main opposition party, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) in the local council elections. They believed that if the MDP gets majority in the People's Majlis then it would be difficult for the government to pass any bill in the House.



Therefore, the ruling coalition may go to any extent to prevent the MDP for securing a majority in the Majlis. They wanted to control the election commission by replacing its officials through a diktat of the Supreme Court.

Major Events

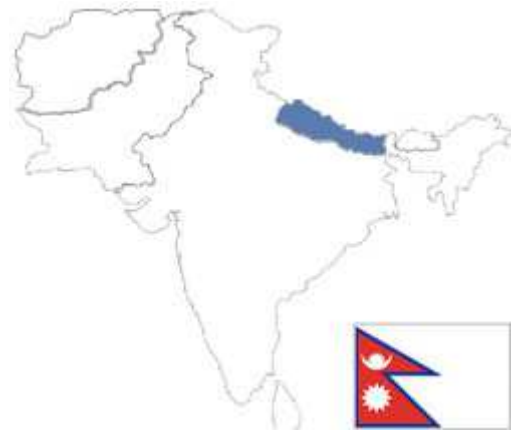
February 06: The Election Commission (EC) dissolved eight parties for failing to reach the mandatory minimum of 3,000 registered members. The eight parties were: the People's Alliance, Dhivehi Qaume Party, Islamic Democratic Party, the Maldivian Labour Party, the Social Liberal Party, the People's Party, the Maldivian National Congress and the Dhivehi Rayyithunge Social Democratic Party (Minivan News, February 08, 2014).

February 16: The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) won seven out of the 10 seats in the second round of voting in the local council elections (Minivan News, February 16, 2014).

February 28: Saudi Arabia and the Maldives have reiterated their determination to fight extremism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations. President Abdulla Yameen and the visiting Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz have underscored the significance of boosting bilateral security cooperation in fighting piracy, drug trafficking and money laundering (Haveeru Online, March 1, 2014).

NEPAL

Political stalemate continued in Nepal despite a new coalition government. Cabinet formation was delayed over distribution of portfolios. It took more than a week to resolve the issue. After two days of intense deliberations on the portfolio issue, the coalition partners again had differences on the issue of the authentication of the draft of the Constitution. While these issues were resolved amicably, the opposition parties – Madhesis and the Maoists–criticized the government’s decision of holding the local body elections in mid-June. Meanwhile, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal-Nepal, a royalist party, demanded that Nepal should be a Hindu state and monarchy should get some space in the Nepalese polity.



The lack of consensus on contentious issues may delay the Constitution-drafting process further. If the present ruling coalition undermines the Maoists’ demand for a new Constitution, federalism and republican system, then they may declare a fresh war against the state and government.

Major Events

February 06: The Mohan Baidya faction of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) formed the United People’s Committee (UPC) to launch a struggle for the establishment of “peoples’ government”. The UPC comprises around 150 members, which will prepare a protest programme for preparation of a people’s Constitution and anti-nationalist agreements on resources. (Republica, February 07, 2014).

February 10: Nepali Congress (NC) President Sushil Koirala was elected as the new Prime Minister of the country by the Constituent Assembly-cum-Legislature Parliament. He polled 405 votes in the voting while a total of 148 lawmakers voted against him (Republica, February 10, 2014).

February 10: Madhes-centric parties voted against the nomination of Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala, apprehensive about the Koirala government’s ability to address their concerns, including that of citizenship, inclusion and propositional representation in state organs (Ekantipur, February 11, 2014).

February 13. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) and the Mohan Baidya led Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) expressed regret over their June 2012 split, realizing that the movement launched by their ‘people’s war’ had weakened after their separation. Both groups have commemorated the 19th ‘People’s War’ Day at separate functions in Kathmandu as their leaders have stressed the need for unification of the communist parties into an alliance (Republica, February 13, 2014).

February 20: Nepalese Army Chief Gaurav SJB Rana said the separatist movement, religious and ethnic tension, general strikes and terrorist activities in the region has caused threats to Nepal's security (Republica, February 20, 2014).

PAKISTAN

The TTP increased its attacks on moderate shrines and their preachers, Shia community, security forces and moderate tribal leaders, this month. Despite the negotiations over a formal peace process, both the sides continued their attacks on each other. The Pakistani Army is vehemently opposed to the peace talks after frequent attacks on Army personnel. However, the peace process resumed after the Prime Minister convinced the Army. The vernacular media tried to create divisions between the government and the Army. The killing of Shaheen Bhattani reflected the leadership crisis in the TTP.



Since the TTP is a loosely networked outfit with differences of views about implementation of Shariah law, an early breakthrough on peace talks is unlikely. If one group supported the peace talks, another might continue their operations.

Major Events

February 04: Nine people were killed and 50 others injured in a powerful bomb blast in a local hotel in Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most of the victims were Shias, who frequented that hotel (Dawn, February 04, 2014).

February 05: Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a vehicle on Miramshah-Mirali road in Pir Kallay area of North Waziristan, killing all its occupants. Those killed in the attack were Shafiq, a Taliban commander, and his three guards (Dawn, February 06, 2014).

February 06: Negotiators for the Pakistani government and the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) met for a first round of peace talks aimed at ending the militants' bloody seven-year insurgency. The two sides gathered at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad for a preliminary meeting (Dawn, February 06, 2014).

February 07: The TTP has given its negotiators the authority to agree on a ceasefire if the government agrees to halt troop deployment. The authority was delegated to the negotiating body headed by Maulana Samiul Haq in a contact between members of the group with Qari

Shakeel, who is heading the nine-member monitoring committee of the TTP (Dawn, February 07, 2014).

February 08: The former cleric of the Lal Masjid and member of the TTP negotiating committee, Abdul Aziz, has said that he would not participate in the peace dialogue until he is given assurance on enforcement of Sharia from the government's side (Nation, February 08, 2014).

February 09: The TTP handed over 15 demands to Professor Ibrahim, one of the three TTP-named negotiators. The demands reportedly include introduction of Sharia laws in courts, Islamic system of education in both public and private sectors, ending of interest-based financial and banking system, replacing the existing governance system with the Islamic system, discontinuing support to the US in the 'war on terrorism', withdrawal of the Army from tribal areas, removal of checkpoints and giving control of tribal areas to civil armed forces, release of Pakistani and foreign Taliban captured by the state forces and dropping of all criminal charges against the Taliban, stoppage of drone attacks, restoration of damaged property and compensation for all the damage done by the drones, jobs for the families of drone attack victims, and equal rights for all, poor and rich (Nation, February 10, 2014).

February 09: Six gunmen on three motorcycles shot dead eight and wounded 15 at a faith healer's house in Karachi's Baldia Town (Nation, February 10, 2014).

February 10: A suicide blast near a house in Peshawar's Essa Khel Garhi area killed four women and wounded three others. The attack took place where Quran khwani (funeral prayers) were being held. Separately, unknown motorcyclists shot dead three school teachers in Kach Banda area of Hangu district (Dawn, February 10, 2014).

February 11: Around 13 people were killed and 19 others injured in three back-to-back explosions that occurred inside Peshawar's Shama Cinema. The attack took place while negotiators for the federal government and for Taliban militants met for peace talks for a second time. The TTP denied its involvement in the attack (Dawn, February 11, 2014).

February 11: The Army commanders have pledged to follow the policy of ceasefire during peace talks with the militants in line with the government's decision. The reported decision was taken during the first day of the 169th Corps Commanders Conference held at the General Headquarters (GHQ) with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif in the chair. However, the Army kept its options open in case there was any direct attack on the security personnel by the TTP (Nation, February 11, 2014).

February 12: Nine members of a family were shot dead in a Peshawar suburb by suspected militants in Mashukhel area of Badhabher police station of Peshawar. The attackers used hand grenades and automatic assault rifles (Daily Times, February 13, 2014).

February 13: Around 13 persons were killed and 47 others, including civilians, were wounded in a suicide attack targeting a police bus near Razzaqabad police training college in Karachi's Shah Latif Town. The TTP claimed responsibility for the killings (Dawn, February 13, 2014).

February 13: At least four suspected militants were killed during an operation conducted by security forces in Balochistan's Dera Bugti area. An unspecified number of weapons, ammunition and bombs to blow up railway tracks were also recovered from their possession (Dawn, February 13, 2014).

February 14: The intelligence agencies arrested three men associated with Ashaab, a group working for Al Qaeda in Karachi. An unspecified amount of explosive material and a large quantity of ammunition was recovered from their possession (Dawn, February 14, 2014).

February 16: Around eight people including six children died due to the derailment of a train by a bomb explosion in the Kashmore district of Sindh. The Baloch Republican Army claimed responsibility for the attack as a reaction to the killings in Dera Bugti by the security forces. This was the third incident by Baloch militants in three months (Nation, February 17, 2014).

February 17: A militant outfit identifying itself as Mohmand Agency Taliban (MAT) claimed to have killed 23 Frontier Constabulary (FC) soldiers, who were kidnapped from Shongari check-post in the tribal region in 2010. The MAT said FC soldiers had been slain to avenge the custodial killing of their 'fighters' in various parts of Pakistan. It is learnt that the MAT is against the peace talks with the government (Dawn, February 17, 2014).

February 17: As many as 15 people, including 13 children, were injured in an explosion outside a private school in Dhab area of Karak district. No outfit has claimed responsibility for the incident (Dawn, February 17, 2014).

February 17: Professor Ibrahim, while addressing a press conference with Maulana Yousuf Shah in Akhora Khattak, said that a deadlock had been reached between the Taliban and government negotiators (Dawn, February 17, 2014).

February 18: One senior army officer and three militants were killed in an exchange of fire after peace negotiations between the government and Pakistani Taliban insurgents broke down a day earlier. The incident took place near Peshawar, close to the Afghan border. One army Major was injured in the incident (Dawn, 18 February, 2014).

February 18: The government committee formed to hold talks with negotiators representing the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) expressed its inability to carry forward peace talks before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The committee said during the 13-day process of talks several acts of violence took place killing a number of people including the February 13 Karachi attack on the police bus near Razzaqabad and the MAT killing of 23 FC personnel (Dawn, February 18, 2014).

February 21: The aerial attacks were launched in retaliation against the recent acts of violence by the TTP. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Pakistan Army led these strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Security forces suspected that around 40 terrorists were killed in the North Waziristan Agency and 10 in Khyber Agency during the counter insurgency operations (Nation, February 21, 2014).

February 22: Nine suspected militants were killed in counter insurgency operations in Thall village in Hangu district of Orakzai (Dawn, February 22, 2014).

February 23: Pakistan Army claimed that around 35 suspected militants were killed and 15 others injured in air strikes on suspected insurgent hideouts in Tirah valley area of Khyber tribal region (Dawn, February 23, 2014).

February 23: 12 people were killed and several others injured in an explosion on Hangu road near the Police Lines area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kohat district (Dawn, February, 2014).

February 24: Asmatullah Shaheen, a senior TTP commander, and three other militants were ambushed near the Afghan border. He was ambushed as he drove through a village near

Miranshah in North Waziristan. It is unclear who killed them (BBC News [Islamabad], 24 February, 2014).

February 25: The Pakistan Army claimed that in the fourth wave of airstrikes on militant hide-outs and training centres, round 30 militants were killed in the border area of South and North Waziristan tribal regions. The air strikes took place mainly in the remote Shawal valley and Dattakhel areas (Dawn, February 25, 2014).

SRI LANKA

The UN Human Rights (HR) Commission Report on Sri Lanka brought forth the divisions between the Rajapaksa government and the minority groups. The increase of atrocities on minority and the government's silence on changes in the 13th Amendment generated fresh momentum within the Tamil Diaspora over the possibility of the revival of the movement. However, the Diaspora is divided on that. They believe that sympathy for Tamils in the west has increased recently.



Meanwhile, Buddhist radical groups continued harassing minorities by demanding prohibition on cattle slaughter and Halal certificates. They were also critical of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA)'s support to the Human Rights issues in the UN. Even if the Human Rights resolution is passed against Sri Lanka, the government would continue to use its front organisations (Buddhist radical groups) to suppress the minorities in the island nation.

Major Events

February 13: Sri Lanka's main opposition political party, United National Party (UNP) demanded that the Government conduct a domestic investigation into war crime allegations arising from the three-decade long civil war. The UNP's statement offered its support for such an inquiry. Both the government and the defeated LTTE have been accused of serious Human Rights violations, mainly in the final months of the war that ended in 2009 (The Hindu/Associated Press, February 13, 2014).

February 18: The Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), an extremist Buddhist organisation, announced it would support a Buddhist monk as a common opposition candidate for president at the next presidential election if he comes forward without the support of any other religious group. The statement came while the BBS had come to know that Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thero was planning to contest the presidential election as the common candidate of the opposition (Colombo Page, February 18, 2014).

February 18: The Sinhala Ravaya (SR), an extremist Buddhist organisation, has called off its

anti-cattle slaughter campaign launched after President Mahinda Rajapaksa has intervened in the matter. The SR has threatened that it would continue with its action if the issue was not resolved in six months (Colombo Page, February 20, 2014).

February 20: President Mahinda Rajapaksa has extended the mandate issued to the Presidential Commission to investigate cases of alleged disappearances of persons in the Northern and Eastern Provinces to August 12, 2014 (Colombo Page, February 21, 2014).

February 22: The Northern Provincial Council adopted a resolution against the alleged 'Sinhala colonisations' carried out in the North. The resolution was against the 'Sinhala colonisation' in the Mullaitivu District and grabbing lands of people in the Northern Province. The resolution highlighted that 29,311 acres of land has been forcibly grabbed and used for illegal settlements (Colombo Page, February 22, 2014).

February 23: A report from UN Human Rights High Commissioner Navnanethem Pillay urged the Lankan government to respond to the contents of report within a week. The report seeks an international probe into war crimes committed in Sri Lanka during the final stages of its ethnic conflict and recommends setting up of an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged violations of international Human Rights and humanitarian law and monitor any domestic accountability process (Sunday Times, February 23, 2014; The Hindu, February 17, 2014).

February 24: The Lankan government rejected the call by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navnanethem Pillay 'to establish an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged violations of Human Rights and monitor any domestic accountability process in Sri Lanka' (Daily Mirror, February 24, 2014).

February 26: The Department of Census and Statistics has begun the pre-processing of data of the countrywide Census to assess the human and property damages that occurred during the civil war period. The report of the Census is expected to be released in March 2014 (Colombo Page, February 27, 2014).

SACM Profile-II**A Brief Sketch of Slain Taliban Leader Asmatullah Shaheen Bhattani:**

Asmatullah Shaheen Bhattani also known as Asmatullah Bhattani, a top Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander, was killed in an attack by unknown gunmen on 24 February 2014. He was a key member of the TTP's shura (high council) and briefly served as the acting TTP chief after Hakeemullah Mehsud's death in November 2013. He was also reportedly chairman of TTP's shura and was removed from that position after differences with other senior leaders.



There are many theories, including an ISI hand, related to Shaheen's death. However, Shaheen was killed while his position in the TTP was not very strong because: (1) he was not from Mehsud tribe, (2) he was from Tank area, (3) he was not educated and articulate and (4) most importantly, there was competition between Sajna (belong to Mehsud tribe) with Shaheen and lastly, he supported the peace talks.

Shaheen belonged to the Khichi sub-tribe of Bhattani in Tank district in South Waziristan. Although he belonged to the Khichi sub-tribe, he was reportedly trying to gain support from Mehsud tribe. Many TTP leaders belonging to the Mehsud tribe were not happy with his ascendancy to a higher position since he belonged to a small tribe.

He was a hardcore TTP leader and laid emphasis on strict implementation of Shariah law. He asked his followers and others to grow a beard in 2006. He was known for his ruthless killings. He gained notoriety after he claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on an Ashura procession in 2009 which killed 44 people in Karachi. He caught the attention of other Taliban leaders when his men kidnapped about 15 Frontier Corps personnel in December 2011. He worked as a senior commander in the tribal areas for around a decade and for a short period in Karachi. His operational area was mainly South Waziristan, Jandola in Tank district and Dera Ismail Khan. He reportedly served as a military commander in Tank and reported directly to Hakeemullah. The Jandola jail was attacked under his leadership.

