

## **Weekly Media Updates** (23 – 29 October, 2017)

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## Africa

- **Burundi withdraws from the International Criminal Court<sup>1</sup>**

Burundi has become the first country to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC). The country announced its plan to withdraw a year ago. The withdrawal is seen as “a setback in the fight against impunity”.

Last year, Burundi sent its application to the then United Nations Secretary General Ban ki Moon after the court made a decision to initiate an investigation into possible war crimes in connection to President Pierre Nkurunziza’s term extension. While it is the only country to exit the Rome Statute, it was not the first to initiate the process. The Gambia, under President Yahya Jammeh, initiated the process basing the decision that the court is biased against African countries. President Adama Barrow revoked The Gambia’s application.

South Africa also started the process in 2016 but a high court revoked the decision, stating it was unconstitutional and invalid. A number of other countries, including Kenya, Uganda and Zambia also threatened to exit the court but did not go ahead with the application.

Burundi’s withdrawal does not impede the ICC’s ongoing bid to investigate the country. The exit comes at a time when Burundi is undergoing human rights violations. Just last month the United Nations Human Rights Council Meeting adopted two resolutions by the European Union and a group of African Countries to get information on human rights violations in Burundi.

In a report, the UN independent Commission of Inquiry accused Burundian authority of crimes against humanity. It called on to the ICC to open an investigation into the country.

- **Nigeria Wants Single Currency for Ecowas Region Slowed Down<sup>2</sup>**

President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday, 24 October 2017 in Niamey, Niger, urged members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to tread carefully in pushing for a single currency in the sub-region by 2020, drawing attention to the challenges faced by the European Union (EU) in realising the same goal.

In his speech at the fourth meeting of the Presidential Task Force on the ECOWAS Currency Programme, President Buhari said the necessary economic fundamentals among countries continue to differ over the years, making it more difficult to pull through with the project by 2020.

President Buhari, noted that some of the obstacles to realising the roadmap for the implementation of a single currency include diverse and uncertain macro-

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<sup>1</sup>This is Africa, 27 October 2017, <https://thisisafrica.me/burundi-icc/>

<sup>2</sup>This Day, 25 October 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201710250058.html>

economic fundamentals of many countries, unrealistic inflation targeting based on flexible exchange rate regime and inconsistency with the African Monetary Co-operation Programme.

The President said domestic issues in ECOWAS member countries relating to their constitutions and dependence on aid continue to affect the framework for implementing the single currency in the sub-region.

He suggested a thorough review of the convergence roadmap and the constitution of an expert committee on each of the subject areas to come up with acceptable time frame, defined cost and funding sources identified.

Buhari further noted that the West African Economic and Monetary Union, UEMOA, countries should make a presentation on a clear roadmap towards delinking from the French Treasury.

He also advised an examination of the African Union position on the same issue, which the African Central Bank Governors, in line with the African Union programme of monetary convergence, recommended a convergence deadline of 2034 for the establishment of Regional Central Banks in all sub-regions.

## North Africa

- **Barizani informs Kurdish parliament of his decision to resign<sup>3</sup>**

According to high level source of Arabic daily, Asharqal Awsat, President Masood Barizani of Kurdish regional government had decided to convey his decision to the Kurdish parliament, not to contest the next presidential election. He also informed that he would transfer his power to other state institutions in coming days. It should be known that the decision of Mr. Barizani has come after the high level drama in the regional politics in the wake of referendum for independence of Kurdistan which was severely opposed by Iran and Turkey. One Kurdish source informed that Mr. Barizani decided to distribute power of presidential office among parliament, executive and judiciary. The tenure of current president will be ending in four days and the day of the end of his tenure was fixed for election of parliament and the president but has been postponed indefinitely following the emerging situation due to referendum of September 25. Barizani served as president for many years but after the referendum and subsequent military onslaught of Iraqi army in Kirkuk region (oil rich region and lifelong of future Kurdish state) against the verdict of referendum changed the political scenario very fast and the decision of Barizani can be seen in the light of fast unfolding political drama. But the advisor to the president Barizani in a tweet confirmed that

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<sup>3</sup> Asharqal Awsat, An Arabic Daily

<https://aawsat.com/home/article/1066961/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%BA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%87-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86>

outgoing president would continue to be the source of inspiration for the Kurdistan and he would be an important member of Kurdish forces and would be a vital part of regional political process.

- **Strategic meeting in Riyadh of head of the coalition forces in Yemen**

The foreign ministers and heads of the armed forces of coalition partners in war of Yemen are scheduled to meet today in Riyadh to discuss the political, military and human assistance coordination among members in the war-torn nation of Yemen. The meeting is an important step towards achieving the proposed goals of ongoing mission in Yemen to establish the legitimacy of the government, peace and stability in the country and in the region. The meeting is also scheduled to discuss the future course of action and ways to fight the Iranian intervention in Yemen. In a related development few armed person killed a Salafist Imam in the town of Aden and this is the third killing of Salafist Imam in the month of October. The incident took place when the deceased Imam of the mosque in western part of the town was going for the Morning Prayer in the early hour. None has claimed the responsibility so far but in the past some Salafist group have extended the supports to the southern secessionist movement in Yemen and the killing may have some like with this stance of the Salafist in the national politics.

## China

- **(CPC Congress) Urgent: "Belt and Road" incorporated into CPC Constitution<sup>4</sup>**

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has incorporated pushing for Belt and Road development into its Constitution, according to a resolution approved by the 19th CPC National Congress on Tuesday. The congress agreed to write into the Constitution "following the principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration, and pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative," according to the resolution. Proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to build a trade and infrastructure network connecting Asia with Europe and Africa along and beyond the ancient Silk Road trade routes. It comprises the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

- **Confident Xi begins second term with ambitious promises for "new era"<sup>5</sup>**

Dark suit, red tie and familiar air of confidence: Xi Jinping's first public appearance in his second term as helmsman of the world's largest political party brought back memories from five years ago when he first took over the leadership of the Party. His ambitious roadmap and grand vision for the future, however, suggests a "new era" has dawned.

Addressing journalists shortly after the first plenary session of the 19th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee elected the Political Bureau and its

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2017-10/24/content\\_41784046.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2017-10/24/content_41784046.htm)

<sup>5</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/25/c\\_136705344.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/25/c_136705344.htm)

Standing Committee Wednesday morning, Xi described the next five years as a period of "important junctures and signposts." "In this new context, we must get a new look and, more importantly, make new accomplishments," said Xi who was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee for his second term.

- **Xi urges study, implementation of CPC congress spirit<sup>6</sup>**

General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee [Xi Jinping](#) has said that the study and implementation of the "spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress" is the "primary political task" for the Party and country from now on. Xi made the remarks while presiding over the first group study of the Political Bureau of the 19th CPC Central Committee on Friday, focusing on the study and implementation of the spirit of the congress, according to a press release Saturday.

Xi asked all CPC members to "study CPC congress spirit, and adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era." "Members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee should regard the study and implementation of CPC congress spirit as their first Party course to improve their political and theoretical level, in order to better take the duties bestowed by the Party and the people," Xi said.

## European Union

- **French Defence Minister Visit to India**

Minister for the Armed Forces of France, Florence Parly visited India on 27- 28 October 2017. Her visit was aimed to "strengthen all aspects of France's fast developing defence cooperation with India, its foremost Asian strategic partner."<sup>7</sup> She met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. India and France discussed a number of issues such as regional security situation, joint development of defence platforms and expansion of military-to-military ties. The visit of French Defence Minister is also to prepare the ground for French President Emmanuel Macron's upcoming visit to India.<sup>8</sup>

- **Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni Visit to India**

Prime Minister of Italy, Paolo Gentiloni is visiting India. The visit of Italian Prime Minister is aimed at 'strengthening the bilateral political and economic relations' between the two countries.<sup>9</sup> He will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 30

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<sup>6</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/28/c\\_136711933.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/28/c_136711933.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Official Visit to India of Florence Parly, French Embassy in New Delhi, October 28, 2017, <https://in.ambafrance.org/Official-Visit-to-India-of-Florence-Parly>

<sup>8</sup> India, France to boost defence ties, the Hindu, October 28, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/india-france-to-boost-defence-ties/article19935775.ece>

<sup>9</sup> State Visit of Prime Minister of Italy to India (October 30,2017), Ministry of External Affairs, India, October 27, 2017, <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29055/State+Visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Italy+to+India+October+302017>

October 2017. A delegation of Italian CEOs has also been accompanying the Prime Minister.

- **Catalan Parliament Voted for Independence**

The Catalan Parliament voted for independence of Catalonia from Spain on 27 October 2017. Carles Puigdemont said, “Our legitimate parliament has taken a very important step. This is the people's mandate.”<sup>10</sup>

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy sacked the Catalan parliament and has taken over the control of Catalonia on 28 October 2017. The election in the region has been announced for December 21. People also called for Spanish unity. A rally has been organized to show up the unity and it is expected that more than a million people will turn up.<sup>11</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **2017 Japanese election: Ruling coalition retains two-third majority**

The ruling coalition of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party and its partner Komeito retained two-third majority in the Lower House of Japanese Diet by winning 312 seats out of 465 seats in the October 22 election. LDP secured 284 seats retaining its pre-election position. Kibō no Tō (Party of Hope), new party founded by Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike won 50 seats. The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan secured 54 seats. LDP’s coalition partner Komeito secured 29, Japan Community Party won 12 and Hope Party’s coalition partner Nippon Ishin won 10 seats.<sup>12</sup>

- **Democratic Party to remain but under a new leadership**

On October 27, 2017 at a general assembly of lawmakers, the remaining members of the Democratic Party decided to maintain the depleted party, including its regional organizations. At the meeting President *Seiji Maehara*, who announced the dissolution of the party on September 27 in an attempt to merge the party with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike’s Hope party, formally announced his resignation. The Democratic Party will soon start procedures to choose a new president. Some

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<sup>10</sup> Catalonia crisis: Spain takes over regional parliament, calls elections after independence declaration, DW, October 28, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/catalonia-crisis-spain-takes-over-regional-parliament-calls-elections-after-independence-declaration/a-41135190>

<sup>11</sup> Catalonia: Barcelona protesters march in favor of national unity, DW, October 29, 2017 <http://www.dw.com/en/catalonia-barcelona-protesters-march-in-favor-of-national-unity/a-41151991>

<sup>12</sup> VOTE 2017: Coalition retains two-thirds majority as all seats finalized”, Asahi Shimbun, October 23, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201710230012.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

lawmakers are backing Katsuya Okada, a former party leader who ran and won as an independent in the election but kept his party membership.<sup>13</sup>

- **Koike faces calls to resign as party chief over election results**

Following the poor performance of the Hope Party in the October 22 election, demands have grown in the party for the resignation the leader Yuriko Koike. Despite criticism Koike indicated that she would remain as party leader. The Hope Party, meanwhile, will hold an election next month to choose a co-leader. Yuriko Koike heads the party, but she is not a Diet member. The co-leader is expected to serve as chief of the party's lawmakers while assisting the governor.<sup>14</sup>

- **US Defense Secretary warns North Korea of massive military response if it attacks**

On October 28, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned that North Korea will be defeated with a "massive military response" if it attacks his country or its allies. He said he "can't imagine" accepting North Korea as a nuclear power. He warned North Korea to "make no mistake -- any attack on the United States or our allies, will be defeated." Mattis was in Seoul to attend the annual US-South Korea Security consultative meeting with his South Korean counterpart.<sup>15</sup>

- **North Korea repatriated captured South Korean boat in 'humanitarian' step**

A South Korean fishing boat and its 10-member crew, which were held in North Korea for six days, returned home on October 27. The repatriation came after Pyongyang announced it would take a "humanitarian" step to release the fishing boat 391 Hungjin that it captured on October 21 for illegally intruding into waters under its control.<sup>16</sup>

## (ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **India-Singapore to step-up defence Cooperation**

Singapore and India reaffirmed their strong and long standing defence relationship in bilateral talks on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. Both

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<sup>13</sup>"Democratic Party to remain but not with Maehara as chief", The Asahi Shimbun, October 28, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201710280020.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>14</sup>"Koike faces calls to resign as party chief over election results", Asahi Shimbun, October 26, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201710260049.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>15</sup>"Mattis warns N. Korea of massive military response if it attacks", The Yonhap News, October 28, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/10/28/0401000000AEN20171028002752315.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>16</sup>"S. Korean boat held in N. Korea returns home", The Yonhap news, October 27, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/10/27/0401000000AEN20171027000853315.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2017)

the defence ministers Ng Eng Hen and Nirmala Sitharaman also discussed ways to enhance bilateral defence cooperation under the revised Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) signed in November 2015. Under the DCA, both nations agreed to establish a regular defence ministers' dialogue, deepen cooperation in maritime security, and encourage cooperation between their defence industries. Further, the agreement also encompasses bilateral training and exercises, and cooperation in area of common interests including defence technology and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Both ministers acknowledged the good progress made under the revived DCA, with the inaugural Singapore-India Defence Ministers Dialogue (DMD) held in June 2016.<sup>17</sup>

- **11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), October 23, 2017**

The 11<sup>th</sup> ADMM was held on October 23, 2017, at Clark Freeport in the north of Manila, Philippines. Singapore assumed the chairmanship of the ADMM, where its Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen, stated that it will focus on three 'key thrusts'; promote regional counter-terrorism collaboration, grow collective capability for chemical, biological, and radiological threats, and promulgate the use of practical confidence-building measures in the aviation and maritime domain.<sup>18</sup> Singapore in particular said that it will step-up counter-terrorism collaboration between ASEAN defence establishments during its chairmanship of the ADMM. The rise of radicalism and terrorism in the region is seen as ASEAN's biggest security threat. Thus, Indonesia in the ADMM proposed the creation of a "mini-Interpol" that would involve six countries in the region sharing intelligence through the "Our Eyes" Initiative. Under this initiative, each participating country would create a new unit for sharing intelligence between them, while the person in charge from each country would be expected to maintain communications on a regular basis about the collection of information.<sup>19</sup>

- **4<sup>th</sup> ADMM- Plus, October 24, 2017**

The ADMM- Plus meeting held on October 24, 2017, noted the joint efforts in promoting practical cooperation and collaboration on maritime security. The meeting also noted the importance of the effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), in order to build mutual trust and confidence and maintain peace, security, and stability in the region. The peaceful resolution of disputes, non-militarisation and self-restrain,

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<sup>17</sup>Singapore, India to Step up defence cooperation", *The Straits Times*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/singapore-india-to-step-up-defence-cooperation>, accessed on October 25, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> "Singapore takes over chairmanship of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting", *The Straits Times*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/singapore-takes-over-chairmanship-of-asean-defence-ministers-meeting>, accessed on October 25, 2017.

<sup>19</sup>"Indonesia proposes 'mini-Interpol' plan to boost ASEAN counter-terrorism efforts", *The Straits Times*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-proposes-mini-interpol-plan-to-boost-asean-counter-terrorism-efforts>, accessed on October 27, 2017.



including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The meeting expressed concerns on the escalation of tension in the Korean Peninsula and called for peaceful conflict resolution through diplomatic means. Further, the meeting discussed the situation in Myanmar's State of Rakhine and the implications to regional stability. The meeting also called on the need to sustain as well as intensify cooperation on HADR, while also addressing new security challenges from cyber threats. The meeting also agreed that there is a need to intensify efforts at realising an ASEAN Community that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible in order to take advantage of current and future opportunities and to equip the region with the necessary capabilities to respond effectively to regional and global issues.<sup>20</sup>

## Myanmar

- **Myanmar army vows to eject Indian rebels**

A Top Myanmar military official has said no organisation that poses a threat to India's security or interests will be allowed to stay in Myanmar territory. Addressing the three-day India-Myanmar regional border committee meeting Imphal, capital Manipur, Major General Phone Myat, commander of the North West Command of Myanmar Army, said the military will fight off such outfits under the commander-in-chief. The 11th edition of the meet, held at the headquarters of the Inspector General of Assam Rifles here, concluded on 27<sup>th</sup> October<sup>21</sup>.

- **Peace, stability restored in northern Rakhine, some troops withdrawn**

Tatmadaw has withdrawn some of its troops in northern Rakhine State after peace and stability were restored in the area in the aftermath of the August 25 attacks, it said in a statement. The statement said Tatmadaw had to "carry out area clearance operations" in response to the attacks launched by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist groups against 30 police outposts and an army unit base in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. The Tatmadaw's operations in the area were necessary because "the rule of law and community peace and tranquillity" were disrupted, the statement added.

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<sup>20</sup> "Chairman's Statement on the Fourth ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting- Plus (4<sup>th</sup>ADMM- Plus) manila, 24 October 2017", ASEAN, <http://asean.org/storage/2017/10/Chairmans-Statement-on-the-4th-ADMM-Plus.pdf>, accessed on October 27, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Myanmar army vows to eject Indian rebels, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-army-vows-eject-indian-rebels.html>

It also said that “engagements were on the decrease after 5 September” and since the areas in northern Rakhine state are quite stable in terms of rule of law, some of Tatmadaw columns have been withdrawn from the two townships<sup>22</sup>.

- **Peace commission, DPN fail to agree at seventh meeting**

The government’s Peace Commission (PC) and the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) concluded the seventh official meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October in Yangon with no final agreement reached. Concerning eight points brought by UNFC for signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreements (NCA), delegates from PC and UNFC’s Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) said disagreements over military matters remain. Another meeting is scheduled on November 8<sup>23</sup>.

- **Myanmar, Bangladesh strike deal on refugee return**

Myanmar and Bangladesh have agreed to boost security along the border and cooperate on the repatriation and resettlement of refugees from northern Rakhine State. Agreements on security dialogue and the establishment of border liaison offices were signed following a meeting between Minister for Home Affairs Lieutenant-General Kyaw Swe and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Mr Asaduzzaman Khan, in Nay Pyi Taw on 24<sup>th</sup> October. In a statement, the two countries also agreed “to cooperate in the verification process, reintegration and return to their own villages” of refugees who have fled northern Rakhine State in recent months<sup>24</sup>.

- **US targets Tatmadaw over violence in Rakhine State**

The United States announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> October that it was withdrawing military assistance from Myanmar units and officers involved in violence against Rohingya Muslims that has triggered a massive exodus.

"We express our gravest concern with recent events in Rakhine state and the violent, traumatic abuses Rohingya and other communities have endured," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in announcing the punitive measures. "It is imperative that any individuals or entities responsible for atrocities, including non-state actors and vigilantes, be held accountable<sup>25</sup>."

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<sup>22</sup>Peace, stability restored in northern Rakhine, some troops withdrawn, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/peace-stability-restored-northern-rakhine-some-troops-withdrawn.html>

<sup>23</sup>Peace commission, DPN fail to agree at seventh meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/peace-commission-dpn-fail-agree-seventh-meeting.html>

<sup>24</sup>Myanmar, Bangladesh strike deal on refugee return, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/myanmar-bangladesh-strike-deal-on-refugee-return>

<sup>25</sup>US targets Tatmadaw over violence in Rakhine State, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/us-targets-tatmadaw-over-violence-in-rakhine-state>

## North America

### Canada

- **Canadian review of China bid for Aecon to look at security: PM**  
Canada will look very closely at security issues when it decides whether to allow a Chinese firm to buy construction company Aecon Group Inc (ARE.TO), Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said. China's CCCC International Holding Ltd said on Thursday it intended to buy Aecon for C\$1.51 billion (\$1.18 billion), a deal that requires Ottawa's approval under the Investment Canada Act. Trudeau told a news conference in Quebec that Ottawa would examine the implications for intellectual property protections. Canada, citing national security needs, places strict restrictions on the Canadian assets that China and other nations can buy. Canada recently encouraged plane maker Bombardier to sell control of its CSeries jet to European rival Airbus SE rather strike a deal with a Chinese firm. Ottawa sources said one reason was what some officials see as inadequate Chinese safeguards against intellectual property theft.<sup>26</sup>
- **Canada suspends special forces training and assistance mission in Iraq**  
Canada's special operations troops have put a temporary hold on their training of Iraqi and Kurdish forces in the wake of fighting between the two factions. Although sprinkled in different locations outside of the main Canadian base in Erbil, the troops are safe and have not sustained any injuries as a result of recent clashes, the military said. Roughly 200 Canadian commandos have been providing advice and assistance on the ground in northern Iraq since late 2014 in an effort to help defeat ISIS militants, a mission that the Liberal government recently extended for two years. The special forces are not the only Canadian military on the ground in Iraq. There are intelligence officers, a helicopter detachment and a medical contingent based in Erbil, the Kurdish capital. Separately, in Kuwait, there is a surveillance plane and an air-to-air refueller.<sup>27</sup>
- **Liberals announce \$15 billion in fresh spending thanks to strong economy**  
The Trudeau government is dedicating about a third of the windfall it's expecting from Canada's surprisingly strong economy towards investments, tax relief and new spending on social programs to support children and the working poor. The new measures take advantage of this year's unexpectedly robust economic performance, which is projected to provide an additional \$46.6 billion for its

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<sup>26</sup> Reuters, "Canadian review of China bid for Aecon to look at security: PM," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-aecon-group-m-a-canada/canadian-review-of-china-bid-for-aecon-to-look-at-security-pm-idUSKBN1CW2S4>, Accessed on 30 October 2017

<sup>27</sup> Murray Brewster, "Canada suspends special forces training and assistance mission in Iraq," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/iraq-canadian-special-forces-suspended-1.4376244>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

bottom line over the same five-year period. The governing Liberals will press ahead with their deficit-spending approach, with a focus on lowering the debt-to-GDP ratio, a measure of Ottawa's debt burden.<sup>28</sup>

- **PM says Canada recognizes one united Spain**

Canada supports an undivided Spain, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in response to the Catalan regional parliament in Barcelona passing a motion unilaterally establishing a new country. "Canada recognizes one united Spain," Trudeau said in Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, just east of Montreal. "We understand there are significant internal discussions that they are going through right now and we simply call for those discussions to be done according to the rule of law, according to the Spanish constitution, according to the principles of international law. The Quebec sovereigntist leader said Canada doesn't shy away from "giving lessons" to countries in Africa, Asia or South America that have seen violence erupt after contested votes. "And then, all of a sudden, because it's happening in Europe, (Canada) wants to protect the status quo?" Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard reacted to the Catalan government's declaration by citing a motion passed in the provincial legislature on Oct. 4 that called for the crisis to be solved peacefully. The Conservative party, which has been relatively quiet on the issue since the crisis in Spain began, said it was up to the federal government to take a position.<sup>29</sup>

## The United States

- **First charges filed in Mueller investigation**

A federal grand jury in Washington approved the first charges in the investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller, according to sources briefed on the matter. The charges are still sealed under orders from a federal judge. A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment. The White House also had no comment. Mueller was appointed in May to lead the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Mueller is authorized to investigate "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation," according to Rosenstein's order. The special counsel's investigation has focused on potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia, as well as obstruction of justice by the President, who might have tried to impede the investigation. In addition to Mueller's probe, three committees on Capitol Hill are conducting their own investigations.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Andy Blatchford, "Liberals announce \$15 billion in fresh spending thanks to strong economy," <https://globalnews.ca/news/3822469/canada-economy-liberal-spending/>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>29</sup> The Canadian Press, "PM says Canada recognizes one united Spain," <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/pm-says-canada-recognizes-one-united-spain-1.3652479>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Pamela Brown, Evan Perez and Shimon Prokupez, "First on CNN: First charges filed in Mueller investigation," <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2017/10/27/politics/first-charges-mueller-investigation/index.html>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

- **James Mattis: North Korea Has 'Accelerated' Threat of Nuclear Attack**

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the threat of nuclear missile attack by North Korea is accelerating. In remarks in Seoul with South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo at his side, Mattis accused the North of illegal and unnecessary missile and nuclear programs — and vowed to defeat any attack. Mattis said North Korea engages in "outlaw" behavior and that the U.S. will never accept a nuclear North. He added that regardless of what the North might try, it is overmatched by the firepower and cohesiveness of the decades-old U.S.-South Korean alliance. As he emphasized throughout his weeklong Asia trip, which included stops in Thailand and the Philippines, Mattis said diplomacy remains the preferred way to deal with the North.<sup>31</sup>

- **Designate Pak As 'Country Of Particular Concern': US Senators To Rex Tillerson**

Six influential US Senators have urged Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to designate Pakistan as a "country of particular concern" on the issue of religious freedom violation, saying its discriminatory laws continue to result in prosecution of individuals due to their faith. Senators Bob Menendez, Marco Rubio, Chris Coons, Todd Young, Jeff Merkley and James Lankford wrote a letter to Tillerson ahead of the November 13 deadline before which the State Department needs to notify Congress on its country of particular concern (CPC) designations. In the letter to Tillerson, who has just concluded a visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, the bipartisan group of Senators said that they believe "the State Department should designate Pakistan as a CPC as long recommended by US Commission on International Religious Freedom. In the letter to Tillerson, who has just concluded a visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, the bipartisan group of Senators said that they believe "the State Department should designate Pakistan as a CPC as long recommended by US Commission on International Religious Freedom.<sup>32</sup>

- **US keen to move forward on key defence pacts with India: Alice G Wells**

The US is keen to move forward on some important defence agreements with India that will make it easier for the Trump administration to share classified data and facilitate the sale of F-16 and F-18 fighter jets to New Delhi, a top American diplomat has said. The Trump administration last month told Congress that it "strongly supports" the sale of F-18 and F-16 fighter jets to India and asserted that the proposals have the potential to take the Indo-US defence ties to the next level. There are important defence agreements that the two countries can move forward

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Burns, "James Mattis: North Korea Has 'Accelerated' Threat of Nuclear Attack," <http://time.com/5001305/james-mattis-north-korea-acclerated-nuclear-threat/>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>32</sup> PTI, "Designate Pak As 'Country Of Particular Concern': US Senators To Rex Tillerson," <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/designate-pak-as-country-of-particular-concern-us-senators-to-rex-tillerson-1768220>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

on, Alice G Wells, acting assistant secretary of state for the South and Central Asian Affairs, told reporters. The agreements will make it easier for the US to share classified data and that will facilitate sales like the F-16 or the F-18 fighter jets and will help create a defence technology partnership, which is what India is seeking, but which will also create jobs for Americans.<sup>33</sup>

## Mexico

- **Conflict in Mexico Senate over corruption investigation**

Opposition members in Mexico's Senate seized the speakers' podium to head off an attempt by the governing party to schedule a fast-track secret vote to uphold the firing of a key prosecutor. The opposition called the vote an attempt by President Enrique Peña Nieto's party to blunt an investigation into possible illegal campaign finances. Peña Nieto's administration once prided itself on building consensus in the Senate, but appeared willing to risk a conflict in a bid to uphold the firing of electoral crimes prosecutor Santiago Nieto. The administration says the prosecutor was fired for revealing parts of an ongoing investigation. Peña Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI, tried to ram through a little-used provision that would allow senators' votes to be kept secret in a session on whether to uphold the firing.<sup>34</sup>

- **Mexican President And Caricom Meet In Belize**

Belize hosted a historic meeting between heads of government of CARICOM and the president of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto at the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza on October 25, 2017, at which the devastation recently wrought by multiple catastrophic hurricanes in the Caribbean region as well as Mexico—also hard-hit by devastating earthquakes in the recent weeks—took center stage. Peña Nieto, who was visiting Belize for the first time, announced at the summit that Mexico will provide US\$14 million to the CARICOM nations in disaster relief, to be channeled through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). At the press conference at the closing of the summit, Peña Nieto, who pledged that his country will pay more attention to the Caribbean region, spoke of the declaration developed jointly by the parties at the summit which aims to strengthen cooperation in areas such as ICT, promoting Spanish as a second language, agriculture and health.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> PTI, "US keen to move forward on key defence pacts with India: Alice G Wells," <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-keen-to-move-forward-on-key-defence-pacts-with-india-alice-g-wells/articleshow/61290281.cms>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Stevenson, "Conflict in Mexico Senate over corruption investigation," [http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2017/oct/24/mexican-president-met-odebrecht-says-he-didnt-get-/,](http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2017/oct/24/mexican-president-met-odebrecht-says-he-didnt-get-/) Accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>35</sup> ---, "Mexican President And Caricom Meet In Belize," <http://amandala.com.bz/news/mexican-president-caricom-meet-belize/>, Accessed on 30 October 2017.

- **Brazil's Congress rejects corruption case against President Temer**

Brazilian lawmakers rejected corruption charges against President Michel Temer on Wednesday evening (October 25, 2017), shelving a case that had threatened to oust a centre-right leader who investors hope will bring Brazil's budget deficit under control. The lower house of Brazil's Congress, which has the authority to decide whether a president should stand trial by the Supreme Court, voted 251-233 to throw out charges of obstruction of justice and organized crime filed by federal prosecutors. The vote means that President Temer is safe from prosecution while he remains president. But he is still subject to investigation and possible trial by lower courts after his term ends in late 2018. While President Temer's opponents were far from the 342 votes - or two-thirds of the seats - needed to put him on trial, he got 12 votes less than in August 2017 when the lower house voted 263-227 to block an initial corruption charge against him. The slip in support signals President Temer will have trouble passing a pension reform bill that is crucial for plugging Brazil's budget deficit. Many lawmakers are reluctant to back the reform, which would make Brazilians work more years before retirement. Opponents criticized President Temer for making policy concessions and fast-tracking pork barrel spending to win votes to ensure his survival. To please the powerful farm lobby that has two-fifths of the votes in the lower house, President Temer agreed to lower fines for environmental damage. He attempted to relax a definition of slave labour, but was forced to backtrack after an outcry.<sup>36</sup>

## Venezuela

- **Russia agrees to restructure Venezuela's \$3 billion debt**

Russia has agreed with Venezuela on terms of restructuring a total of \$3 billion of the South American country's debt to Moscow, including a postponement of debt repayment. "We are ready to make a two-stage postponement. The first part includes pretty favourable terms with a small sum due for repayment so that it's manageable for our Venezuelan colleagues," Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told reporters on October 28, 2017. According to Mr Siluanov, Venezuela asked Russia to restructure the debt, which is why Moscow is analysing those conditions in the Ministry of Finance. "The bigger part of the debt is put off until the second stage of repayment," Siluanov said. He declined to elaborate on the dates and terms of the debt restructuring deal. The minister made such remarks during a meeting of finance ministers of the Group of 20 in Washington, whose policy of blocking payment accounts made it very difficult for foreign currency to enter Venezuela. Venezuelan Ambassador Carlos Rafael Faria Tortosa was cited by

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony Boadle and Maria Carolina Marcello, "Brazil's Congress Rejects Corruption Case Against President Temer," October 26, 2017, <https://in.reuters.com/article/brazil-temer/brazils-congress-rejects-corruption-case-against-president-temer-idINKBN1CVoAH>, Accessed on October 30, 2017.

the RIA news agency as saying earlier on October 27, 2017 that Moscow and Caracas may ink the debt restructuring deal on November 23-24, 2017.<sup>37</sup>

- **Latin American Governments Meet to Discuss Sanctions against Venezuelan Regime, UN Involvement**

Though the Venezuelan government continues to deny it is facing the worst economic and political crisis in the country's history, other nations in the region continue to work on addressing the problem. The Lima Group—12 countries determined to fix the situation Nicolás Maduro won't—met for a third time in Canada on October 26, 2017. Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland said that while Maduro insists that what happens in Venezuela is of no concern to other countries, "hunger, lack of resources to treat the sick, beatings, mass arrests and civilian torture, as well as the destruction of democratic institutions, are of concern to everyone." The member countries said that the situation has worsened in Venezuela of late, especially with the "electoral fraud" that occurred during regional elections, which led to the Maduro regime obtaining the majority of governor positions nationwide. They also lamented the fragmentation of the political opposition.

The Lima Group—made up of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru — met with the intention of creating "a situation that will allow for a quicker and more decisive solution to encouraging the Venezuelan government to negotiate in good faith," Peruvian Foreign Minister Ricardo Luna said. Peru proposed involving the United Nations in order to strengthen the fight against the Venezuelan crisis, particularly General Secretary António Guterres. Among other demands, it includes a call to evaluate the country's electoral system, along with criticisms of both the recent regional elections and July 2017's Constituent Assembly process. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza responded by saying Canada's criticisms amounted to the government's "permanent" and "systematic interference" in the affairs of the Caribbean country. In response to the Lima Group's meeting, several Venezuelan solidarity groups in Toronto staged public protests. The Lima Group is set to meet again in Chile in January 2018.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>"Russia Agrees to Restructure Venezuela's 3 Billion Debt," October 29, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/10/29/russia-agrees-to-restructure-venezuelas-3-billion-debt/>, Accessed on October 30, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Sabrina Martin, "Latin American Governments Meet to Discuss Sanctions Against Venezuelan Regime, UN Involvement," October 27, 2017, <https://panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2017/10/27/latin-american-governments-meet-to-discuss-sanctions-against-venezuelan-regime/>, Accessed on October 30, 2017.



- **Maduro manages to divide Venezuelan opposition; Capriles steps down from coalition**

Venezuela's Opposition appeared close to disintegration in the last week of October 2017 after a key leader ditched the main coalition opposed to President Nicolas Maduro, bolstering the socialist leader ahead of elections due in 2018. Henrique Capriles, a former presidential candidate, announced he was pulling out of the beleaguered Opposition coalition after four of its governors pledged allegiance to a Constituent Assembly fiercely loyal to Maduro. Capriles said he would not stay in the coalition as long as another prominent figure, Henry Ramos Allup, leader of the Democratic Action Party, remained. Four Democratic Action Party governors pledged allegiance to the Constituent Assembly, which was elected in July 2017 in polls called by the unpopular leftist Maduro that were boycotted by the opposition. The developments follow a period of soul-searching by the opposition, routed in October 15, 2017 regional elections by Maduro's socialists who swept the vote in 18 of Venezuela's 23 states. Maduro had warned ahead of the polls that elected governors would have to be sworn in before the Constituent Assembly, which the Opposition has consistently refused to recognize. The Assembly has been handed sweeping powers, including over the opposition-dominated parliament, and has been condemned internationally as a naked power grab by Maduro. Despite the opposition saying it would not give in to government "blackmail," four of the five Opposition governors-elect said they had decided to submit to the inevitable and take the oath before the Assembly.<sup>39</sup>

## MERCOSUR

- **EU confirms commitment to reach trade accord with Mercosur by end of 2017**

European Union leaders have agreed to press ahead with Mercosur talks and European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker confirmed the bloc will "continue to do everything" to conclude a deal before the end 2017. "It's important," Mr Juncker said. "We underestimate the importance of Mercosur for the European Union." The EU estimates a deal with Mercosur could double EU exports to the region – mainly cars and chemicals – which stand at €66bn a year. It says the deal would eliminate €4bn a year in tariffs and knock down regulatory barriers to the lucrative market. But there are at least 11 countries—including Ireland and France—who oppose the EU's latest offer to Mercosur on beef and other sensitive agricultural products, which they say goes too far too fast. Opponents say that opening up the market to cheaper beef from Mercosur, at the same time as embarking on trade deals with New Zealand and Australia, will hit

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<sup>39</sup> "Maduro Manages to Divide Venezuelan Opposition, Capriles Steps Down from Coalition," October 26, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/10/26/maduro-manages-to-divide-venezuelan-opposition-capriles-steps-down-from-coalition>, Accessed on October 30, 2017.

farmers hard. EU beef imports from Mercosur are currently estimated at around 220,000 tons a year. The latest offer to Mercosur, tabled at talks earlier in October 2017, would lower tariffs on 70,000 tons of beef. A next round of talks with Mercosur is due to take place early in November 2017.<sup>40</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia's Defence Capabilities**

On 27 October, the Russian military carried out successful launches of ballistic missiles at range grounds near Arkhangelsk and on the Kamchatka Peninsula. All the missiles successfully struck training targets. For an example, Topol ICBM was launched from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in the Arkhangelsk region. The missile struck a training target at Kura range ground on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Two other ballistic missiles were launched from a nuclear submarine of the Pacific Fleet from the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk. The missiles struck training targets at a range ground in the Arkhangelsk region. The last missile used in the exercises was launched from the Barents Sea from a nuclear submarine of the Northern Fleet. Sea and air divisions of the Russian army equipped with strategic and tactical nuclear weapons also participated in the exercises. Long-range aircraft Tu-160, Tu-95MS and Tu-22M3 were involved. The planes took off from Russian airbases of Ukrainka (in the Amur Region), Engels (in the Saratov Region) and Shaikovka (the Kaluga Region). Russian President Vladimir Putin personally launched four ballistic missiles at the exercises. The Defence Ministry published a video of the tests of the Russian "nuclear triad."<sup>41</sup>

- **Russia and India**

Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force Air Marshal S B Deo on October 23 said that Russia's technology transfers to India in the defence sector have been without any strings attached and there is scope for further deepening the military ties. In May, the government had unveiled the strategic partnership model under which select private firms will be roped in to build military platforms like submarines and fighter jets in India in partnership with foreign entities. Noting that there was scope for expansion of India's defence ties with Russia, Air Marshal Deo also said the relationship should be developed focusing more on commercial aspects. Speaking at the event, Defence Production Secretary AK Gupta said Russian

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<sup>40</sup> "EU Confirms Commitment to Reach Trade Accord with Mercosur by the End of the Year," October 27, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/10/27/eu-confirms-commitment-to-reach-trade-accord-with-mercocur-by-end-of-the-year>, Accessed on October 30, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> "Putin personally launches four ballistic missiles during 'nuclear triad' tests", *Pravda ru.*, October 27, 2017. [http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/politics/27-10-2017/139050-putin\\_missiles-o/](http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/politics/27-10-2017/139050-putin_missiles-o/) Accessed on October 29, 2017.

defence firms should come forward for entering into strategic partnerships with Indian companies for developing various defence platforms<sup>42</sup>.

- **Russia NATO and Taliban**

On 25 October, the chairman of NATO's military committee said that he has not seen "hard" evidence that Russia is supplying arms to the Taliban. However, the general said that intelligence reports do indicate Russia is supplying fuel to companies that then sell it to the Taliban. Czech Gen. Petr Pavel acknowledged Russia's denials. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani this weekend also accused Russia of supporting the Taliban, saying that the insurgents "are accepting guns from those who have blood on their hands of 1.5 million Afghans." Russia has repeatedly denied claims it is arming the Taliban and laundering fuel sales. The Russian Foreign Ministry called Ghani's statements "unacceptable" and "groundless," saying that Afghanistan should not go along with "anti-Russian hysteria fanned by some Western media."<sup>43</sup>

NATO ambassadors met with Russian envoy Aleksandr Grushko for the NATO-Russia Council meet on 26 October. After the meet, General Jens Stoltenberg said that the last session was "frank and open discussion" on Ukraine, Afghanistan, transparency, and risk reduction. However, the Western military alliance and Russia "continue to have fundamental differences" regarding the conflict in eastern Ukraine. He said that the situation in eastern Ukraine remains "fragile," citing cease-fire violations and the continued presence of heavy weapons close to the line separating Ukrainian government forces and the separatists. He also said that the access of monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is "still obstructed, including at the Russian-Ukrainian border." The NATO and Russian ambassadors also exchanged information on recent military exercises, including the Zapad (West) drills that Russia held with Belarus in September. NATO allies "made clear that the scale and geographical scope of exercise Zapad 2017 significantly exceeded what Russia had previously announced," Stoltenberg said. "We agreed that the principle of reciprocal exercise briefings, including advance briefings, is useful," the NATO chief added. "We also agreed that we can enhance transparency and predictability in the Euro-Atlantic area through contact among our senior military leaders." Stoltenberg said that the alliance and Russia also had a "frank exchange" on the security situation in Afghanistan and the "regional terrorist threat," adding, "Our analyses differ considerably." However, he said the alliance and Moscow "share the same interest in ensuring security and

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<sup>42</sup>"Russia offers defence technology to India without any strings attached", *Economic Times*, October 23, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russia-offers-defence-technology-to-india-without-any-strings-attached/articleshow/61190714.cms> Accessed on October 30, 2017.

<sup>43</sup>Rebecca Kheel, "Top NATO general says he hasn't seen evidence of Russia arming Taliban", *The Hill*, October 25, 2017. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/357103-top-nato-general-says-he-hasnt-seen-evidence-of-russia-arming-taliban> Accessed on October 30, 2017.

stability in Afghanistan," where the Western-backed government is struggling to beat back insurgents in the wake of the exit of most NATO forces in 2014. The NATO-Russia Council also addressed allegations that Russia is supporting the Afghan Taliban, which Moscow denies. Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, who attended the meeting, said that "no documents were provided" as evidence for the claim.<sup>44</sup>

- **Russia and US**

On 26 October, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on International Affairs, Andrei Klimov said that Russian senators (the Council of the Federation) upheld the bill providing for the introduction of restrictions on cooperation between Russia and the United States in the export of titanium and in space activities. He said that "Russia's responses to unfriendly US actions should be systemic in nature, and the draft law envisages such a systemic nature." In particular, Russia may restrict supplies of titanium to Boeing Corporation. Presently, titanium exports to the USA are operated by VSMPO-Avisma. According to various experts, the US aircraft construction industry depends on the export of titanium from Russia on the level of 40-60% of the total amount. At the same time, the Russian authorities realise that such countermeasures should not harm Russian producers. To avoid such a situation, the document will be coordinated with representatives of Russian business circles. The approval for the bill awaits.<sup>45</sup>

- **Russia, China and Antarctica**

Hopes for a vast new marine sanctuary in pristine East Antarctica were dashed on 28 October when a key conservation summit failed to reach agreement, with advocates urging "greater vision and ambition." Expectations were high ahead of the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) — a treaty tasked with overseeing protection and sustainable exploitation of the Southern Ocean. Last year's summit in Hobart, Australia, established a massive marine protected area around the Ross Sea following a push by the U.S. and New Zealand. It covers an area roughly the size of Britain, Germany and France combined. But a push this year to create a second protected area in East Antarctica, spanning another 1 million square kilometers (386,000 square miles), failed. That effort was led by Australia and France. Officials said Russia and China were the key stumbling blocks, worried about compliance issues and fishing rights. Consensus is needed from all 24 CCAMLR member

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<sup>44</sup>"Fundamental Differences' Remain After NATO-Russia Council Meeting", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 26, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-nato-council-meeting-ukraine-afghanistan-taliban-support/28816786.html> Accessed on October 30, 2017.

<sup>45</sup>"Russia Develops Most Stringent Law in Response to US Sanctions", *Pravda.ru.*, October 26, 2017. [http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/politics/26-10-2017/139039-russia\\_usa\\_sanctions-o/](http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/politics/26-10-2017/139039-russia_usa_sanctions-o/) Accessed on October 29, 2017.

countries and the European Union. Greenpeace called for “greater vision and ambition” in the coming year. WWF’s Antarctic program chief, Chris Johnson, said it was another missed opportunity. “We let differences get in the way of responding to the needs of fragile wildlife,” he said. Australia’s chief delegate, Gillian Slocum, described the failure as “sad.” She also bemoaned little progress on addressing the impacts of climate change, which was having a “tangible effect” on the frozen continent. Plans were set out in 2009 to establish a series of marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean allowing marine life to migrate between areas for breeding and foraging, but it has been slow going. CCAMLR was not able to adopt a Climate Change Response Work Program this year.<sup>46</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Abdullah Asks UN to Impose Sanctions on Taliban Leaders**

CEO of the National Unity Government (NUG) Abdullah Abdullah on October 29 called on the UN Security Council’s Sanctions Committee to improve monitoring mechanisms and impose sanctions on Taliban’s leaders including Mullah Haibatullah Akhunzada. Abdullah held a meeting in Kabul with the UNSC’s sanctions committee head Kairat Umarov. According to the statement issued by the CEO’s office, Abdullah said: “Armed Taliban are ruthless killers of innocent Afghanistan people and they are responsible for the destruction of this country. They should be deemed as terrorists.” Abdullah also asked the sanctions committee to strengthen their observation and assessment mechanism to limit activities and movement of terrorists and bring their financial resources to a halt.<sup>47</sup>

- **IEC Says Paper Ballot Poll is the Only Option for Elections**

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials said that due to financial and procurement challenges, they will not be able to roll out a digital voter list and that a paper ballot election is their only option for next year’s parliamentary and district council elections. According to IEC officials, a paper ballot can however pave the way for electoral fraud but that at this stage they have no other option. The Independent Election Commission has been working to roll out a digital voters list for the past five months, but on 29 October 2017 the IEC’s operational deputy head

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<sup>46</sup>“Russia and China block creation of Antarctic marine sanctuary”, *Japan Times*, October 28, 2017. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/10/28/world/science-health-world/russia-china-block-creation-antarctic-marine-sanctuary/#.WfbAUFuCzIU> Accessed on October 30, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> "Abdullah Asks UN to Impose Sanctions on Taliban Leaders", *Tolonews*, 30 October 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/abdullah-asks-un-impose-sanctions-taliban-leaders> accessed on 30 October 2017.

Wasima Badghisi said they will not be able to get this done in time for July elections.<sup>48</sup>

- **Ghani Refuses to Join CPEC While Access to India is Blocked**

While in India on Tuesday (October 24), President Ashraf Ghani called on Pakistan to end its support to insurgent groups and took a firm stand against joining the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to India's Live Mint news portal, Ghani said he would not join CPEC if Islamabad refused to permit connectivity between India and Afghanistan. The report stated that Ghani also rejected what he termed a "Pakistan-managed" effort to broker peace in Afghanistan. This comes just a week after talks between Pakistan, the US, China and Afghanistan in Oman which were aimed at getting the Taliban to the peace talks tables.<sup>49</sup>

- **EU Calling For Regional Consensus For Peace In Afghanistan**

The European Union is trying to create consensus – in the region and in the world – to bring peace to Afghanistan, the European Union's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Ambassador Roland Kobia said at a ceremony on Thursday (October 26). He said the countries in the region and around the world should think about helping Afghanistan instead of competing in the country.<sup>50</sup>

- **Noor Says He Might Run For Presidency In Next Election**

Balkh's Provincial Governor Atta Mohammad Noor on Sunday (October 29) slammed government leaders and accused them of poor management and said he is thinking about running for presidency in the next elections. Speaking at the 94th anniversary of the Declaration of the Republic of Turkey Noor blasted the National Unity Government (NUG) leaders and said they were negligent in maintaining security and said the sharp rise in casualties among soldiers was a shame for government.<sup>51</sup>

- **India Formally Start Exports To Afghanistan Via Chabahar**

India on Sunday (October 29) formally started exports to Afghanistan via Chabahar port in Iran by flagging off the first shipment of 1.1 million tons of wheat to Afghanistan. The Ministry of External Affairs of India in a statement said "External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Minister of the Islamic

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<sup>48</sup> "IEC Says Paper Ballot Poll is the Only Option for Elections", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 30 October 2017. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19306](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19306) accessed on 30 October 2017.

<sup>49</sup> "Ghani Refuses to Join CPEC While Access to India is Blocked", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 26, 2017, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19274](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19274) (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>50</sup> "EU Calling For Regional Consensus For Peace In Afghanistan", *Tolo News*, October 26, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/eu-calling-regional-consensus-peace-afghanistan> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>51</sup> Aref Musavi, "Noor Says He Might Run For Presidency In Next Election", *Tolo News*, October 29, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/noor-says-he-might-run-presidency-next-elections>

Republic of Afghanistan H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani, through a joint video conference, flagged off the first shipment of wheat from India to Afghanistan that would be transhipped through the Chabahar port in Iran.”<sup>52</sup>

## Bangladesh

- **Khaleda Tour Turns into ‘Election Showdown’**  
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia’s road trip to Cox’s Bazar to visit Rohingya refugees has turned into a pre-election showdown. Hundreds of party supporters were found standing for hours by the roadside all along her route from Dhaka to Chittagong and from Chittagong to Cox’s Bazar to greet the former premier. Local leaders and supporters held up banners and festoons bearing photographs of prospective party candidates for the next general polls and chanted slogans.<sup>53</sup>
- **BNP Wants to Return to Power by Creating Anarchy: Quader**  
Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader on Saturday (October 28) alleged that BNP is trying to go to the power through creating anarchy in the country. “BNP is continuing conspiracies and trying to get the power through creating anarchy in the country,” Quader said. BNP claimed that they are the champion of multiparty democracy, “but there is a question—does the multiparty democracy mean the rehabilitation of the killers of 1971 and 1975?” he added.<sup>54</sup>
- **Beijing to Stand Beside Bangladesh: Envoy**  
Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ma Mingqiang on Sunday (October 29) commits to stand beside Bangladesh to solve Rohingya problem. “We do hope that this issue will be settled as soon as possible peacefully,” he said. The Chinese envoy was addressing a function at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) here marking the handover of acceptance certificate of Chinese fire fighting equipment to Bangladesh with Chinese grant.<sup>55</sup>
- **Khaleda’s motorcade attacked in Feni**  
The convoy of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, heading towards Cox’s Bazar for her visit to Rohingya refugee camps, came under attack at Mohammad Ali Bazar near Feni district town yesterday (October 28). At least 45 people were injured and

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<sup>52</sup> “India Formally Start Exports To Afghanistan Via Chabahar With 1.1m Tons Of Wheat”, *Khaama Press*, October 29, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/india-formally-start-exports-to-afghanistan-via-chabahar-with-1-1m-tons-of-wheat-03738> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>53</sup> Rafiqul Islam Azad , “Khaleda tour turns into ‘election showdown’,” *The Independent*, October 30, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/121344> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>54</sup> “AL’s Quader says BNP wants to return to power by creating anarchy,” *Prothom Alo*, October 29, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/164685/AL’s-Quader-says-BNP-wants-to-return-to-power-by> (accessed on October 29, 2017)

<sup>55</sup> “Beijing to stand beside Bangladesh to solve Rohingya crisis: Envoy,” *The Independent*, October 29, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/121231> (accessed on October 29, 2017)

some 30 vehicles damaged in the incident. When the cars were crossing the area around 4:45pm, a group of 40 to 50 youths with iron rods, sticks and brick chips swooped on the convoy. Nearly 15 journalists were also assaulted even after they disclosed their professional identities.<sup>56</sup>

- **Interim poll-time govt a deviation: Sushma tells Khaleda**

The onus is on the incumbent government to ensure a congenial atmosphere to make sure that all political parties take part in the elections; India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj has conveyed Bangladesh politicians. During her interactions with leaders of two sides of the political divide, the Indian minister also made a general statement that it's the people of Bangladesh who will decide under which mechanism the next general elections would be held.<sup>57</sup>

## Pakistan

- **US and Pakistan**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged Pakistani leadership on October 24 to step up their fight against terrorist groups on their soil and facilitate the Afghan reconciliation process while visiting Islamabad. On October 23, he stated in Bagram Air Base that Islamabad needed to have “a clear-eyed view” of terror safe havens on its territory and cautioned that bilateral ties would be conditions-based in terms of whether or not its leaders take the “specific” actions that were being required of them.<sup>58</sup> Washington also handed over a list of 75 wanted terrorists during the visit. Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif told the Senate on October 25 that Pakistan won't surrender before US or compromise on its sovereignty. He said that while the Haqqanis were on top of the list, it did not contain the name of a single Pakistani.<sup>59</sup>

- **Nawaz and the Saudi Royals**

While returning back from London, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif made a detour by going to Jeddah instead of Lahore on October 23.<sup>60</sup> Sharif held meetings with some members of the Saudi royal family on October 25. Though there were no comments regarding the content of the meetings or how these meetings will

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<sup>56</sup> Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, “Khaleda's motorcade attacked in Feni,” *Daily Star*, October 29, 2-17, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/khaledas-motorcade-attacked-feni-1483114> (October 29, 2017)

<sup>57</sup> “Idea of interim poll-time govt a deviation, Sushma tells Khaleda,” *Prothom Alo*, October 24, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/164171/Idea-of-interim-poll-time-govt-a-deviation-Sushma> (accessed on October 24, 2017)

<sup>58</sup> Baqir Sajjad Syed, “Tillerson asks Islamabad to step up fight against terrorists,” *Dawn*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366133/tillerson-asks-islamabad-to-step-up-fight-against-terrorists>, (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>59</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan, “No surrender to US demands, Asif tells Senate,” *Dawn*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366298> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>60</sup> Zulqernain Tahir, “On way back home from London, Sharif makes detour to Jeddah,” *Dawn*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1365773/on-way-back-home-from-london-sharif-makes-detour-to-jeddah> (accessed on October 30, 2017)



shape the political scene in Pakistan, but there were reports that these [the meetings] were positive.<sup>61</sup>

- **FO rejects Indian Interlocutor**

Pakistan on October 24 rejected an Indian government decision to appoint an interlocutor to initiate dialogue with all stakeholders in Jammu and Kashmir, saying no interaction or dialogue would carry any weight without participation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leadership. In reply to a question about the Indian announcement designating Mr Dineshwar Sharma as the central representative to initiate “interaction and dialogue”, Foreign Office spokesman Nafees Zakaria said the measure did not appear to be “sincere and realistic”.<sup>62</sup>

- **Pakistan and Qatar**

In reply to a calling attention notice on October 26, PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi justified in the Senate about the LNG contract with Qatar, claiming that Pakistan had settled for the cheapest price among all 15-year term contracts in the world. Abbasi said it was the first contract with a price renegotiation clause under which Pakistan can terminate the contract after 10 years if it so desires.<sup>63</sup>

- **Case of Forced Turkish Expatriation**

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani has asked the government to explain the forced repatriation of Turkish teachers from Pakistan on October 27. Rabbani ruled that the observations made by a senator on the issue of repatriation of teachers at Turkish schools in Pakistan and their families should be provided to the interior minister so he could give a policy statement on the matter.<sup>64</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **US Nimitz Carrier Strike Group Arrives at the Port of Colombo**

The United States’ Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, which comprises the oldest American aircraft carrier in active service, USS Nimitz, the cruiser USS Princeton, and destroyers USS Howard, USS Shoup, USS Pinckney, and USS Kidd, arrived at the port of Colombo on October 28. This is the first time a US aircraft carrier has visited Sri Lanka since 1985. The visit, which occurs after 32 years, follows the recent completion of the inaugural bilateral Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) naval exercise.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Asghar & Zulqernain Tahir, “Nawaz Sharif holds ‘positive’ meeting with Saudi royals”, *Dawn*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366310/nawaz-sharif-holds-positive-meeting-with-saudi-royals> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>62</sup> Azfar-ul-Ashfaque, “FO rejects India’s move to name interlocutor for Kashmir”, *Dawn*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366131> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>63</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan, “Abbasi defends LNG contract with Qatar”, *Dawn*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366550/abbasi-defends-lng-contract-with-qatar> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>64</sup> “Senate seeks answers for forced repatriation of Turkish teachers”, *Dawn*, October 28, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366823> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>65</sup> “US Nimitz Carrier Strike Group arrives at the Port of Colombo”, 29 October 2017, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/18506-us-nimitz-carrier-strike-group-arrives-at-the-port-of-colombo>

- **Statement by Sri Lanka on the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Regional Parliament of Catalonia**

Sri Lanka and Spain enjoy an enduring friendship, and Sri Lanka considers Spain as an important member in Sri Lanka's partnership with the European Union. The Government of Sri Lanka unequivocally supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Spain, and considers Catalonia as an integral part of Spain. The Government of Sri Lanka urges the pursuit of dialogue for a united Spain in accordance with the rule of law, and within the Spanish constitutional framework.<sup>66</sup>

- **President Maithripala Sirisena's State Visit to Qatar**

At the invitation of the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, President Maithripala Sirisena undertook a two-day State visit to the State of Qatar, on October 25-26, 2017. Emir Hamad Al Thani appreciated the contribution made by over 150,000 Sri Lankans who live and work in Qatar. President Sirisena expressed gratitude for the donation of US \$500,000 (five hundred thousand) from the Qatar Fund for Development, to the people in the drought affected areas of Sri Lanka. With a view to further strengthening Qatar's close bonds of friendship and solidarity, Emir Hamad Al Thani stated that he looks forward to further development cooperation in Sri Lanka through the Qatar Fund for Development. Seven (7) Memoranda of Understanding/ Agreements were concluded and signed during the visit in the fields of diplomatic training and research; visa exemption for diplomatic, special and official passports; waste water management; health and medical science; energy sector; exchange of financial intelligence; and the donation of US \$500,000 by Qatar Development Foundation.<sup>67</sup>

- **TN Urges Modi to get Fishermen, Boats Released from Lanka**

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami has urged the Centre to take immediate steps to secure the release of 54 Indian fishermen apprehended by Sri Lanka. 140 fishing boats are also in Sri Lanka's custody and this is fuelling unrest among the fisher folk, he noted.<sup>68</sup>

- **PM congratulates President of China**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe sent a congratulatory message to President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping. "It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest congratulations on your re-election for a second term as the General-Secretary of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the Military Commission at the recently held 19th National Congress. The longstanding friendship between Sri Lanka and China built upon mutual respect, solidarity trust and understanding has led, over the decades, to both countries reaching new and

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<sup>66</sup> Statement by Sri Lanka on the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Regional Parliament of Catalonia, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/en/media/media-releases/7237-sl-ud>

<sup>67</sup> President Maithripala Sirisena's State Visit to Qatar, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/en/media/media-releases/7238-pres-qatar>

<sup>68</sup> TN urges Modi to get fishermen, boats released from Lanka, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/10/28/tn-urges-modi-to-get-fishermen-boats-released-from-lanka/>

historic milestones in our time tested bilateral partnership. It is my fervent belief that the close affinity and collaboration will continue to further flourish and expand for the benefit of the peoples of our two countries during your second term of office.<sup>69</sup>

## Maldives

- **Opposition in Talks Over Non-politician for Presidential Race**

Maldivian opposition parties are in talks about fielding a ‘unity’ candidate who is not a politician for next year’s election. Spokesman MP Ahmed Mahloof told the Maldives Independent that talks were already ongoing about who could represent the opposition. “I think at the moment we are discussing on the possibility of fielding a unified II candidate in the first round itself. We already have an understanding that any opposition candidate in the second round will have the backing of the whole opposition,” Mahloof said from Colombo.<sup>70</sup>

- **Yameen Urges Voters to Choose ‘Development Over Obstruction’**

President Abdulla Yameen underscored his campaign pitch of delivering island infrastructure and pursuing an ambitious development agenda on October 24. Speaking at a ruling party rally on the island of Meedhoo, Yameen said the dividing line in Maldivian politics at present is between “development and obstructing development”. “There are two ideologies in the Maldives now, that is, do we opt for the path of development that would take the Maldives to the tallest heights that we want, or do we remain forever at the crossroads,” he said. He excoriated estranged partners such as former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom who are now allied with the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party, contending that they are driven by self-interest instead of political principles.<sup>71</sup>

- **EU Delegation to Arrive on 30<sup>th</sup> October to Observe Maldives’ Political Situation**

A European Union (EU) delegation is set to arrive in the Maldives to observe its political situation. Mihaaru is aware that some members of the European Parliament will also be joining the delegation in its two-day visit. They will meet with the ruling coalition’s leaders, as well as members of the opposition, to discuss the current political situation and the upcoming presidential election slated for 2018. This will be the first visit from an EU delegation since the European

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<sup>69</sup> PM congratulates President of China, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://news.lk/news/politics/item/18495-pm-congratulates-president-of-china>

<sup>70</sup> Opposition in talks over non-politician for presidential candidate, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/opposition-in-talks-over-non-politician-for-presidential-candidate-133667>

<sup>71</sup> Yameen urges voters to choose ‘development over obstruction’, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/yameen-urges-voters-to-choose-development-over-obstruction-133655>

Parliament adopted a resolution on the Maldives submitted by the European External Action Service (EEAS), earlier this month in Strasbourg, France.<sup>72</sup>

## West Asia

### Israel

- **Syria and Israel** - At least 10 members of a small jihadist faction linked to the Islamic State terror group were killed on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in alleged Israeli air strikes in southern Syria. The Israel Defense Forces said it had no comment on the report.<sup>73</sup>
- **Firemen Drill through Joint Cooperation** - As forest fires and other major catastrophes engulf many parts of the world with greater frequency, the European Commission and the Israeli government organized an international exercise in Israel on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> for firefighters from Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Italy, France and Spain. It had more than 400 participants from the various countries — including 250 firefighters, pilots, ground crews and logistics personnel.<sup>74</sup>
- **West Bank Settlement** - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on October 29<sup>th</sup> that Israel must discuss a bill that would annex West Bank settlements to Jerusalem with the United States before moving forward and voting on it. According to the bill, the settlements of Ma'aleh Adumim, Gush Etzion, Efrat, Beitar Illit and Givat Ze'ev will be included under Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction, but not officially annexed to Israel. On October 26<sup>th</sup> the U.S. State Department signaled that it was not worried by the bill because the legislation is a long way from being approved by the Knesset, and could perhaps never even reach that point.<sup>75</sup>
- **Israel and Romania** - PM Netanyahu met Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu in Tel Aviv during the latter's Israel visit on October 23-24<sup>th</sup>. There were

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<sup>72</sup> EU delegation to arrive on Monday to observe Maldives' political situation, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/eu-delegation-to-arrive-on-monday-to-observe-maldives-political-situation/>

<sup>73</sup> "Israel said to carry out airstrike on IS-linked group in Syria", *The Times of Israel*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-to-carry-out-airstrike-on-is-linked-group-in-syria/> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>74</sup> "Israeli, Arab, European firemen share cross-border drill", *Israel 21c*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.israel21c.org/israeli-arab-european-firemen-share-cross-border-drill/> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>75</sup> JonathaN Lis, "Netanyahu: Israel Must Coordinate Jerusalem Annexation Bill With U.S.", *Haaretz*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.819622> (accessed on October 30, 2017); "Under US pressure, Israel delays move to expand Jerusalem", *WTOP*, October 29, 2017, <https://wtop.com/middle-east/2017/10/israeli-official-us-pressure-delays-jerusalem-bill/> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

lengthy discussion about extending Israel and Romania's collaboration in fields such as agriculture, technology, entrepreneurship and cyber.<sup>76</sup>

## Turkey

- **Ex-Turkish minister Meral Aksener launches new party, hints at run for presidency in 2019<sup>77</sup>**

Meral Akşener, an experienced right-wing politician and former Interior Minister, formed her long-anticipated political party under the title of the “Good Party” on October 25, hinting at a run for Turkey’s presidency against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2019. Akşener submitted a petition for the formation of the Good Party to the Interior Ministry earlier in the day before she held her first meeting with the founders and sympathizers of the new party. “Turkey will be good,” Akşener said in her first address to her followers, referring to the name of the party. “Turkey and its people are tired. The state has corroded. Public order has dissolved. There is no other way but to change the entire political climate,” she added.

Akşener and some other deputies were expelled from the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) amid disagreements with MHP Chair Devlet Bahçeli, who has sided with President Erdoğan on key issues in recent months, including the shift to an executive presidential system. In 2016 initiatives by Akşener-led dissidents to hold an extraordinary convention within the MHP to challenge Bahçeli were nixed in controversial court decisions, pushing the veteran politician to form her own party. Four MHP lawmakers and one Republican People’s Party (CHP) lawmaker joined the Good Party on its first day, securing five seats for Akşener in the parliament.

- **Istanbul police foil major ISIL bomb attack<sup>78</sup>**

Istanbul police have foiled a major Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) bomb attack and brought down two jihadist cells in the city. According to police, a car loaded with explosives and a bomb-laden motorcycle were found in the parking lot of a shopping mall in Istanbul’s Bayrampaşa district on October 28. Anti-terror police launched an operation after two consecutive explosions took place in two buildings in Istanbul’s Esenyurt and Arnavutköy districts, followed by fire, late on October 27. “Objects used in bomb making, including chemical materials, metal marbles, nails, a screw, a remote control, electronic circuits,

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<sup>76</sup> “Netanyahu, Romanian FM meet, mark decades of bilateral bonds”, *The Jerusalem Post*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/WATCH-Netanyahu-Romanian-FM-meet-mark-decades-of-bilateral-bonds-508266> (accessed on October 30, 2017)

<sup>77</sup> Hurriyet Daily, 25 October 2017 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/aksener-hints-at-run-for-presidency-in-2019-as-she-forms-good-party-121370>

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/istanbul-police-foil-major-isil-bomb-attack-121532>

cables, batteries and many other similar materials, were found in two houses in the Arnavutköy and Esenyurt districts by anti-terror and bomb disposal units, who carried out examinations after fire caused by explosions were put out.

- **No early elections, Erdoğan slams CHP leader**<sup>79</sup>

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has ruled out rumors of early elections being called, while blasting main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu over his criticism of the recent resignations of ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) mayors. "He keeps saying 'early elections.' The date for the elections is already determined. Only if there is a deadlock in the AK Party can early elections be called," Erdoğan said on Oct. 28 in a speech in the Central Anatolian province Konya.

"As you know, there was such a dead end after June 7, [2015], when we could not reach a conclusion in coalition talks. What happened? We called an early election and you shamed yourself," he added, referring to CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu. Turkey's next local elections are currently slated to be held in March 2019, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2019. Kılıçdaroğlu has called on the government to bring forward all three elections, in order to "avoid the further deterioration of democracy in the country."

"Today, Turkey is not being governed. [The AKP's] biggest anxiety is that the economy will get worse ... So I challenge them [to call early elections]," he said in an interview with CNN Türk on Oct. 26, after previously calling for local elections to be rescheduled over the controversial resignation of Melih Gökçek as mayor of Ankara.

- **Turkey, Pakistan finalize free trade agreement talks**<sup>80</sup>

Turkey and Pakistan have finalized negotiations on a free trade agreement and both countries wish to sign the deal at the earliest possible date, Turkish Minister of Customs and Trade Bülent Tüfenkci has said. The Minister met Pakistan's Commerce Minister Muhammad Pervaiz Malik, accompanied by a delegation, at the ministry on October 27. "I believe that trade relations [with Pakistan] will and must boost, thanks to the sincere brotherhood," Tüfenkci added. He also conveyed his appreciation for the Pakistani authorities. "Investment by Turkish firms in Pakistan increases day by day. In this context, we are pleased to observe Pakistani authorities' support for Turkish entrepreneurs," said the minister. Tüfenkci underscored the "importance" Turkey gives to a proposed regional trade corridor linking Islamabad, Tehran and Istanbul.

- **Barzani confirms intention to step down as KRG leader on Nov.**<sup>81</sup>

assud Barzani, the president of the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, told a closed-door session of parliament Sunday he was stepping

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<sup>79</sup><http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-blasts-chp-leader-vows-no-snap-elections-121557>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-pakistan-finalize-talks-on-free-trade-agreement-121550>

<sup>81</sup> Daily Sabah 29 October 2017 <https://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2017/10/29/barzani-confirms-intention-to-step-down-as-kr-g-leader-on-nov-1>

down amid the fallout from a controversial independence referendum. "After November 1, I will no longer exercise my functions, and I reject any extension of my mandate," the 71-year-old said in a letter read out to parliament in the Kurdish capital Irbil, a copy of which was obtained by AFP. "Changing the law on the presidency of KRG or prolonging the presidential term is not acceptable," said the architect of the September 25 independence vote, which led to the Kurds losing to Baghdad's forces disputed territory and oilfields to which they had laid claim.

"I ask parliament to meet to fill the vacancy in power, to fulfill the mission and to assume the powers of the presidency of Kurdistan", said the letter. Barzani said he would "remain a peshmerga (Kurdish fighter) among the ranks of the people of Kurdistan and I will continue to defend the achievements of the people of Kurdistan". Sunday's parliamentary session was held behind closed doors because of "sensitive questions" to be discussed, deputies said.

- **Kremlin says Putin, Erdogan discuss Syria in phone call**<sup>82</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan discussed an upcoming meeting of the Astana process on the Syrian conflict in the Kazakh capital in late October, the Kremlin said. During their phone conversation, Putin and Erdogan talked about joint efforts within the Astana process, including the creation of "de-escalation zones" in Syria, and further coordination towards resolving the Syria situation, the Kremlin said in a statement.

The Astana talks are brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran. In mid-September, the three countries agreed to post observers on the edge of a de-escalation zone in northern Syria's Idlib region largely controlled by Islamist militants. Putin and Erdogan also said the agreements reached between Russia and Turkey in Ankara in late September were being successfully implemented, particularly in trade and economic relations. "Overall, the conversation was business-like and constructive, directed at strengthening bilateral cooperation and interaction on the regional agenda," the Kremlin said.

## Cyber Security

- **Britain: North Korea Was Behind May Global Cyberattack**<sup>83</sup>

On 27 October 2017, in an interview with the BBC, British Security Minister Ben Wallace held that majority of global cyber attacks in early 2017 were carried out by North Korea. Wannacry attacked nearly 300,000 computers in 150 countries, disrupting government services, business especially Britain's National Health Service. Considering the highly devastating impact of this ransomware attack, the

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<sup>82</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-russia-turkey/kremlin-says-putin-erdogan-discuss-syria-in-phone-call-idUSKBN1CQoCV>

<sup>83</sup> New Delhi Times, 28 October 2017, <https://www.newdelhitimes.com/britain-north-korea-was-behind-may-global-cyberattack/>

minister said, “It’s a salient lesson for us all that all of us, from individuals to governments to large organizations, have a role to play in maintaining the security of our networks.”

- **Ravi Shankar Prasad touts India’s progress in IT infrastructure, at NY meet**<sup>84</sup>  
At a business meeting on 20 October 2017, held by US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) in New York, India’s Union Minister for Law & Justice and Electronics & Information Technology, Ravi Shankar Prasad stated that India’s digital initiative is bridging the digital gap between haves and have-nots. With the launch of digital India Campaign, 244,000 kilometers of the National Optical Fiber Network had been instituted to provide broadband connectivity to villages and small towns. The minister then talked about several advantages of Aadhaar Card such as allowing farmers to access different markets for crops, easy access hospitals, poor to seek pre legal advice, easy access to travel visa and smooth functioning of digital payments. Exploring India’s digital story, the Minister pointed out the benefits of digital economy in sphere of business, communication, IT services, e-commerce and cyber security.
- **North Korea’s hacker army could be fighting its war from India, says report**<sup>85</sup>  
Recorded Future, a cyber security company reported that North Korea is planning an underground international cyber attack from several countries such as India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nepal, Kenya, Mozambique, and Indonesia through malicious cyber and criminal attacks. The report claimed that hackers from North Korea could be launching the attack from India, since India has a close relation with North Korea. The report said, “it is clear that North Korea has a broad physical and virtual presence in India. Indo-North Korea relationship is characterized by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs as a relationship of friendship, cooperation, and understanding”. The report pointed out the presence of North Korean students at seven Indian Universities. The report maintained that recent occurrence of Wanna cry ransomware attacks on Indian companies by Lazarus; a hacking group has a direct connection with North Korea, revealed by Kaspersky Lab.
- **Kaspersky CEO says hack claims cutting U.S. cyber security sales**<sup>86</sup>  
On 27 October, 2017, with an interview with Reuters, Eugene Kaspersky, founder and head of embattled anti-virus software maker said that the Moscow based security firm would witness a “single digit drop in US sale as a result of suspicions about his company’s ties to the Russian government, but its global revenue should still increase”. Calling an information war against his company, Mr. Kaspersky said

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<sup>84</sup> News India Times, 24 October 2017, <http://www.newsindiatimes.com/ravi-shankar-prasad-touts-indias-progress-in-it-infrastructure-at-ny-meet>

<sup>85</sup> The Economic times, 24 October 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/internet/north-koreas-hacker-army-could-be-fighting-its-war-from-india-say-report/articleshow/61197263.cms>

<sup>86</sup> Reuters, 28 October 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyber-summit-kaspersky/kaspersky-ceo-says-hack-claims-cutting-u-s-cyber-security-sales-idUSKBN1CW2P1>



that the company had no contact with other espionage groups and its interaction with Russia was only to investigations in cyber crime and sharing of data related to cyber crime. Although Kaspersky Lab has millions of customers globally, but recently it witnessed losses on account of allegation by US authorities that it had closer ties with Russian hackers and meddled in U.S. presidential election. Abandoning its services with the U.S. government, Kaspersky Lab's vice president, Anton Shingarev said to Reuters, "It is pretty much impossible to sell to U.S. government these days, and we don't have any plans to do that." After Donald Trump administration's announcement of removal of Kaspersky products from U.S., Kaspersky Lab witnessed a loss of sale in U.S. According to Mr. Kaspersky, the security company suffered the impact of deteriorating relations between U.S. and Russia. However, U.S. official pointed out that Eugene Kaspersky was present at a KGB school, Russia's committee for state security, and has closer ties with Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB).

- **NATO's chief seeks stronger, broader partnership with Japan on security and cyber attacks<sup>87</sup>**

In an recent interview, ahead of his four day visit to Japan from 29 October to 1 November, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation(NATO) said that North Korea's offensive actions threatening global stability would be the prime focus in the discussion with regard to strengthen bilateral partnership between Japan and U.S. He added, "I am looking forward to go to Japan and also to (South) Korea to discuss how we can strengthen our partnership from fighting terrorism to cooperation in cyber and maritime security, and many other areas". Referring to North Korea's increasing threats, Mr. Stoltenberg also said, "NATO was not directly involved in resolving the (North Korean) crisis but we support our partners in the region, we support the efforts of the United Nations and we support efforts to find a peaceful solution." According to him, pressure is essential to find a solution.

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 26	Balochistan	Unidentified militants hurled a hand grenade at an office of a	0	8

<sup>87</sup> The Japan Times, 28 October 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/10/28/national/nato-chief-seeks-stronger-broader-partnership-japan-security-cyberattacks/#.WfafjGiCwdU>

			<p>newspaper agency in Turbat District, leaving eight people, including an on-duty traffic police constable and a child, injured.</p> <p>In another attack, the militants opened fire on a vehicle carrying newspapers in Awaran area, burst all its tyres with gunshots and torched the newspapers.<sup>88</sup></p>		
2	October 27	Balochistan	Awami National Party (ANP) local leader Abdul Razzaq and his brother were killed in an explosion in Harnai District. <sup>89</sup>	2	0
3	October 27	Balochistan	At least five passengers were injured in a blast targeting the Akbar Bugti Express, a passenger train, in Hirak area of Bolan District. <sup>90</sup>	0	5
4	October 27	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	The Deputy Governor of Afghanistan's Kunar province, Qazi Mohammad Nabi Ahmadi, was abducted from Dabgari area of Peshawar. Ahmadi was a leader of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami. <sup>91</sup>	Abduction	
5	October 29	FATA	At least two suspected militants were killed in a clash with the Aman Lashkar, a pro-government tribal militia, in Khyber Agency. The clash began after the militants attacked a militia post in the	2	0

<sup>88</sup> Behram Baloch, Eight injured in attack on newspaper agency office in Turbat, *Dawn*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366538/eight-injured-in-attack-on-newspaper-agency-office-in-turbat>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>89</sup> Syed Ali Shah, Local ANP leader, brother killed in blast in Balochistan's Harnai, *Dawn*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366590/local-anp-leader-brother-killed-in-blast-in-balochistans-harnai>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>90</sup> Syed Ali Shah, Five injured in blast targeting passenger train in Bolan, Balochistan, *Dawn*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366614/five-injured-in-blast-targeting-passenger-train-in-bolan-balochistan>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>91</sup> Ali Hazrat Bacha, Kunar's deputy governor abducted in Peshawar, *Dawn*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1367010/kunars-deputy-governor-abducted-in-peshawar>, accessed on October 30, 2017

			Zakhakhel area in Ladi Kotal <i>tehsil</i> (revenue unit) with heavy arms, according to security sources. <sup>92</sup>		
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## Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 23	Helmand	At least 25 Taliban militants were killed and several others were injured during clearing operation in the Garamser and Washir Districts. <sup>93</sup>	25	NS
2	October 25	Kunduz	Army officials in Kunduz said that strategic locations in Dasht-e-Archi district – in the south of the province – have been cleared of Taliban and that local residents are slowly returning to their normal lives. <sup>94</sup>	Kunduz cleared of Taliban	
3	October 27	Across country	The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that at least 95 militants were killed during offensives in Nangarhar, Ghazni, Paktia, Logar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab, Kunduz, Baghlan and Helmand provinces. 11 suspects were arrested during the offensive. <sup>95</sup>	95	NS
4	October 28	Ghazni	At least nine Policemen and 12 Taliban militants were killed while two Policemen and four	9	12

<sup>92</sup> Ali Akbar, Two 'militants' killed in clash with tribal militia near Pak-Afghan border, *Dawn*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1367045/two-militants-killed-in-clash-with-tribal-militia-near-pak-afghan-border>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>93</sup> 25 Taliban Killed in Fresh Helmand Offensives, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/October%2024,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>94</sup> Strategic Areas in Kunduz Cleared of Taliban, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 26, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/October%2026,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>95</sup> 95 Insurgents Killed in Countrywide Operations: MoD, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 27, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/October%2028,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on October 30, 2017

			Taliban militants were injured, in separate clashes in Ghazni province. <sup>96</sup>		
5	October 29	Zabul	At least six Policemen were killed and eight others were wounded in an attack on security check posts in Arghandab District province. In addition, eight other policemen were wounded. <sup>97</sup>	6	8

### Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 26	Anbar	Iraqi troops liberated several regions in western Anbar as part of the offensive launched to liberate the two Islamic State's bastions in the province. In a statement released, the Defense Ministry's War Media Cell said, "Al-Jazeera Operations liberated Rawa crossroads as well as al-Hasa, the residential complex of al-Hasa and al-Jibab region." <sup>98</sup>	Regions liberated	
2	October 27	Kirkuk	Iraqi troops have run into a mass grave, composed of relics of army and police personnel in southwestern Kirkuk. "A mass grave composed of relics of 50 army and police personnel was found in al-Bakara village in Hawija. They were executed by	50	0

<sup>96</sup> Nine Police, 12 Taliban Killed in Ghazni Clashes, *Tolo News*, October 29, 2017,

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/nine-police-12-taliban-killed-ghazni-clashes>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>97</sup> Six Police Killed in Taliban Attack in Zabul, *Tolo News*, October 30, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/six-police-killed-taliban-attack-zabul>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>98</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Regions liberated within offensive launched in western Anbar: Military, *Iraqi News*, October 26, 2016, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/regions-liberated-within-offensive-launched-western-anbar-military/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

			Islamic State,” the Defense Ministry’s War Media Cell. <sup>99</sup>		
3	October 27-28	Anbar	Over 70 IS militants were killed, while thirty-three regions and villages were liberated during the past two days in western Anbar, the Joint Operations Command said. <sup>100</sup>	70	NS

## Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 26	Deir Ezzor	The Syrian army forces had taken the village of Hawija Sukkar, in the eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor. The sources revealed that Syrian army forces recaptured Hawija Sukkar Village in the eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor after battles with the IS. <sup>101</sup>	Syrian army takes control	
2	October 26	Rif Dimashq	At least six civilians were killed, while others were injured, in an artillery shelling conducted by the Syrian forces on villages and towns of eastern Ghouta, in Rif Dimashq Province. <sup>102</sup>	6	0
3	October 28	Syria	Local sources informed that the Islamic State captured around	ISIS captures	

<sup>99</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Mass grave of 50 police, army personnel’s relics found in Hawija, *Iraqi News*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/mass-grave-50-police-army-personnels-relics-found-hawija/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>100</sup> Nehal Mostafa, 75 Islamic State militants killed in two days in western Anbar: Military, *Iraqi News*, October 28, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/75-islamic-state-militants-killed-two-days-western-anbar-military/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>101</sup> Loaa Adel, Syrian army forces retake Hawija Sukkar in Deir Ezzor, *Iraqi News*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-army-forces-retake-hawija-sukkar-deir-ezzor/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>102</sup> Loaa Adel, Syrian regime shells eastern Ghouta and leaves several casualties, *Iraqi News*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-regime-shells-eastern-ghouta-and-leaves-several-casualties/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

			18,000 m <sup>2</sup> of the Syrian territory in the provinces of Deir Ezzor, Homs, Hama, Daraa and Damascus. The area of the ISIS territory in Deir Ezzor is estimated by 15,000 m <sup>2</sup> , including the neighborhoods located inside the city and on the Khabour River. <sup>103</sup>	territory	
4	October 29	Daraa	Skirmishes broke out in northeastern countryside of Daraa. According to details, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) observed two insurgent technicals crossing a so-called 'red line area' in the rural region, prompting government forces to fire an anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) upon the hostile vehicles. The direct hit by the ATGM resulted in the death of six Free Syrian Army militants while two more were critically injured. <sup>104</sup>	6	2

<sup>103</sup> Loaa Adel, Islamic State controls nearly 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> in Syria, *Iraqi News*, October 28, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/islamic-state-controls-nearly-18000-m%C2%B2-syria/>, accessed on October 30, 2017

<sup>104</sup> Chris Tomson, Syrian Army conducts cunning ambush in northeastern Daraa, *Al Masdar News*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-conducts-cunning-ambush-northeastern-daraa/>, accessed on October 30, 2017