

Weekly Media Updates
(29 January – 03 February, 2018)

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Africa

- **Nigeria-India Trade Volume Hits U.S.\$9.4 Billion¹**

The value of trade between Nigeria and India has hit \$9.4billion, just as the two countries prepare to mark 60 years of diplomatic relations in 2018, since the establishment of such relations in 1958.

Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Nagabhushana Reddy, said this at an event to mark the 69th Republic Day of India in Abuja. He disclosed that over the years, both countries have remained strategic partners with improved levels of cooperation between them. According to him, with a bilateral trade volume of \$9.4billion in 2017, India has become the largest trading partner of Nigeria in the world.

Nigeria has also become the largest trading partner of India in Africa. Both countries have had existing relations in various areas including agriculture, defence, trade, capacity building, healthcare, infrastructure, and socio-cultural relations. In an interview with journalists, he said most of the trade volumes are oil imports from Nigeria, which stand at 80 per cent compared to 20 per cent of Indian exports to Nigeria.

- **Western Envoys Rush in as Zimbabwe Changes²**

Former colonial master, Britain, leads a pack of western countries that seem to have made a dramatic foreign policy turn on Zimbabwe since the fall of long time ruler Robert Mugabe last year. British Prime Minister Theresa May's office said it will send an envoy to meet Mnangagwa this month with Australia and the US expected to follow suit in few days' time.

In a short message on Twitter this week the US embassy in Harare said Zimbabwe should brace for investment from the world's largest economy. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Assistant Secretary for Africa, Gita Kamath is also expected in Harare next week, according to reports. Mnangagwa has also indicated his willingness to return Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth from which Mugabe angrily pulled out in 2003 after accusations of human rights violations and electoral fraud.

¹ Africa Updates, 26 Decemebr2017, <http://africaupdates.info/sudanese-president-vows-to-remove-trade-barriers-for-turkey/>

² News Zimbabwe.com, February 2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201802020693.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt

British Minister for African Affairs Rory Stewart attended Mnangagwa's inauguration in November while Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov will also be in Harare this month

- **President João Lourenço Debuts in AU Meeting³**

The Angolan leader, João Lourenço, had his debut participation in the African Union (A.U) Summit meeting held in the Ethiopian capital, in his capacity as President of Angola. Elected August last year, the Angolan Head of State was one of the four debutant statesmen that spoke at the 30th Ordinary Session of the Conference of A.U Heads of State and Government.

The Angolan President put stress on matters relating to conflicts and fight against poverty in the continent, having appealed for more concrete actions to be taken with a view to changing the image of the continent in the world. He reiterated Angola's commitment to the African Union (A.U) and the availability

- **Nigeria, Niger Republic to Build Oil Refinery⁴**

The Federal government on Thursday, 1 February 2018, announced plan to build an oil refinery by Nigeria and neighbouring Niger Republic.

A statement by the Ministry of Petroleum Resources said Ibe Kachikwu, Nigeria's minister of state for petroleum resources, led a Nigerian government delegation to Niamey, the Nigerien capital, on Wednesday, 31 January 2018 to discuss a firm agreement for the design and construction of the refinery.

The statement said the refinery will be strategically located at a border town between the two countries. Mr. Kachikwu said the move is in line with the commitment to collaboratively work across the region to ensure definitive solutions to the petroleum sector challenges.

According to the statement bilateral and technical agreements will be signed in coming days. Nigeria owns four refineries located in Kaduna, Warri and Portharcourt.

- **Namibia Facing Financial Ruin⁵**

The President of Namibia, Hage Geingob, has tightened government spending by banning politicians and civil servants from foreign business travel. In December, the President took a commercial flight to the African Union summit, rather than traveling with his private jet.

³ Angola Press, 29 January 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201801290976.html>

⁴ Premium times, 1 February, 2017,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201802020008.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta

⁵ DW, 1 February 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201802020111.html>

This move comes after the Namibian Defense Force announced last week that it could no longer afford to pay the water and electricity bills for its military bases, or pay for food for its soldiers. It has requested that soldiers who are currently on holiday do not report for duty, and thousands of army personnel will be forced to take leave next month, as reported by the Reuters news agency. According to Namibian economic expert, Henning Melber, the current economic crisis is a combination of unfortunate external factors, as well as domestic economic mismanagement. Namibia has long had a reputation for being a stable, democratic and mineral-rich nation. But Melber points out that the situation is the result of events and actions taken over recent years.

Melber outlined the main factors that led to the current crisis. For example, the drought across southern Africa, which is a result of the El Nino weather effect in the region, has been disastrous for the Namibian economy. As well, the important fishing industry has suffered due to the severe decline in fish stocks. The pilchard species, for example, has been so depleted that it may never recover. Water shortages have directly impacted local industry, creating a rise in unemployment. The mining industry has also suffered with the consistently low price of minerals, particularly uranium, which Namibia relies on.

A further factor in the current crisis has been that the Namibian dollar is pegged to the South African rand. With the South African currency having performed so badly over the last two years, the Namibian dollar has suffered as well.

- **South Africa's Zuma Faces New No-Confidence Vote This Month⁶**

Zuma, who is battling corruption allegations, is in a weakened position since he was replaced as leader of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party in December by Cyril Ramaphosa, the deputy president. Ramaphosa, 65, has been lobbying the ANC's national executive to force Zuma to resign. The ANC has said it has discussed Zuma resigning before the end of his term in mid-2019, although his staunch supporters within the party say that will not happen. Zuma, who has not said whether he will step down voluntarily before his second term as president ends, has been deserted by several prominent allies in the ANC since Ramaphosa took over leadership of what is the only party to govern South Africa since the end of apartheid. On Friday, parliament speaker Baleka Mbete agreed to a request from the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) for a motion of no-confidence, though she refused to hold the vote before the president's state of the nation address on February 8, and scheduled it for February 22, 2018.

⁶ Reuters, 2 February 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-politics/south-africas-zuma-faces-new-no-confidence-vote-this-month-idUSKBN1FM1B5>

- **Thabo Mbeki is on the Comeback Trail**⁷

Thabo Mbeki is emerging from the political wilderness to actively participate in South African politics once more and is working closely with Cyril Ramaphosa to save South Africa and rejuvenate the strife-torn ruling ANC. Mbeki was quoted by the SABC from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia as saying he was ready to assist the new ANC leadership. He said new president Ramaphosa and his entire leadership must be given a chance to lead and implement their conference decisions. As former presidents of the ANC, both Mbeki and Jacob Zuma are ex-officio members of the NEC and may fully participate in its activities and advise the organisation and its leadership on various matters. But since his recall as state president by the party under Zuma, Mbeki had boycotted the NEC meetings.

- **Angola Ends Contracts with North Korean Builder, Orders Workers to Leave**⁸

Angola has terminated all its contracts with a North Korean construction company and asked its workers to leave the country in line with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Pyongyang. In an implementation report recently submitted to the UNSC sanctions committee, Angola said that in November it informed the North of its decision to end the construction project contracts with the company, Mansudae Angola. The move is in line with Resolution 2371, which was adopted by the UNSC in August last year in condemnation of the North's launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles. It includes restrictions on the overseas employment of North Korean workers.

- **International Finance Corporation Looks to Help Boost Angolan Private Sector**⁹

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) will evaluate a study of the Angolan private sector to create financing mechanisms to promote the economic development of Angola, the group's Vice President and Treasurer Hua Jingdong said on Thursday. Hua told the press in Angola that he expects to work with the Angolan government and support the development of the country's private sector. The study involves credit reports, credit risk analysis both at the corporate and individual levels as well as the registration of properties that can generate warranties for obtaining credit.

- **Indian Mission in Nigeria Monitoring Case of Missing Ship**¹⁰

⁷ The Citizen, 31 January 2018, <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/1800561/thabo-on-comeback-trail/>

⁸Yonhap News Agency, 30 January 2018,

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2018/01/30/0401000000AEN20180130003100315.html>

⁹ Xinhua Net, 2 February 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/02/c_136944996.htm

¹⁰ NDTV, 4 February 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indian-mission-in-nigeria-monitoring-case-of-missing-ship-external-affairs-ministry-1808421>

The Indian mission in Abuja is in touch with authorities in Nigeria and Benin about a ship carrying 22 Indians believed to have gone missing in the Gulf of Guinea, the External Affairs Ministry has said. "A merchant vessel Marine Express (oil tanker), owned by Mumbai-based Anglo Eastern shipping company with 22 Indian nationals onboard, is presumably missing off the coast of Benin in the Gulf of Guinea," MEA Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said in a tweet. The India mission in Nigeria was in touch with the authorities concerned and the situation was being constantly monitored, the MEA said.

- **Dozens of Villagers Died in Nigerian Air Force Raids, Says Amnesty¹¹**

At least 35 people were killed by the Nigerian military's air raids on villages last month, according to the human rights organisation Amnesty International. Witnesses described Nigerian air force jets bombing houses and targeting civilians trying to hide in five villages in raids that a military spokesman said at the time had a "positive effect" in tackling communal violence. Launching the attacks in December, the military said that it was targeting "hideouts of miscreants" in the villages, referring to herdsmen who it said were armed.

- **Kenya Political Crisis Hits a New Low¹²**

Kenya on Friday defied a court order to lift a ban on three private television stations and briefly detained an opposition politician, deepening a crisis sparked by a disputed presidential election. The media crackdown, criticised by the United Nations, the United States and former colonial power Britain, could set up a showdown between the judiciary and the executive next week. On Tuesday, opposition leader Raila Odinga symbolically inaugurated himself as president in a direct challenge to President Uhuru Kenyatta. The government responded by shutting down three television channels planning to stream the event. On Thursday, activist Okiya Omtatah won a court order saying the channels should be reopened. But when he tried to serve it to Kenya's communications authority on Friday, they refused to receive it.

- **China Denies Bugging African Union Headquarters it Built in Ethiopia¹³**

Leaders of China and the African Union have denied a published report that Beijing spied for years on the African Union headquarters through computer systems it helped install. Quoting anonymous sources, the French daily newspaper Le Monde reported Friday that data were transferred over five years from the African Union's Chinese-built headquarters in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to its servers in Shanghai. A spokeswoman for China's foreign ministry said the Le Monde report was based on "groundless accusations." African

¹¹ The Guardian, 29 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/29/dozens-of-villagers-died-in-nigerian-air-force-raids-says-amnesty>

¹² The Herald, 3 February, 2018, <http://www.herald.co.zw/kenya-political-crisis-hits-a-new-low/>

¹³ CNN, 2 February 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/africa/china-denies-spying-au-building-intl/index.html>

Union spokeswoman Ebba Kalondo also dismissed the Le Monde report as containing "baseless accusations."

- **Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to Meet for Nile Dam Talks¹⁴**

The leaders of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan will meet on Monday in a bid to break a deadlock in negotiations over a hydroelectric dam Addis Ababa is building along its share of the Nile river. The dispute threatens to undermine unity at the African Union's annual gathering in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra reports from Addis Ababa.

- **BBC Launches Ethiopian and Eritrean Radio Services¹⁵**

The BBC on Monday launched new daily radio services producing news, current affairs, features and English language training for Ethiopians and Eritreans. The BBC World Service programmes will be broadcast from Monday to Friday in the Amharic, Afaan Oromo and Tigrinya languages and will be aired on shortwave radio and streamed on Facebook. "There will be a strong focus on culture, health and original journalism from the region," the British broadcaster said.

- **Over US\$3 billion Sought as Aid for South Sudan Set to Become Africa's Largest Refugee and Humanitarian Crisis¹⁶**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, launched a funding appeal for US\$1.5 billion to support refugees fleeing the worsening humanitarian situation in South Sudan and for US\$1.7 billion for people in need in the country during 2018. With the conflict now in its fifth year, nearly 2.5 million South Sudanese have fled the country. Conflict and insecurity has forcibly displaced 1 in 3 of the country's population - either within South Sudan or across borders. Inside the country, 7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. The number of refugees is projected to cross the 3 million mark by the end of this year, making South Sudan Africa's largest refugee crises since the Rwanda genocide.

- **US Bans Arms Sales to South Sudan and Urges Others to Follow¹⁷**

The United States has banned the export of weapons to South Sudan and has urged other nations and the UN to adopt a global arms embargo. It is a largely symbolic move, as the US does not export arms to South Sudan. But the move prevents any US company or citizen from offering defence services to the country.

¹⁴ Al Jazeera, 29 January 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egypt-ethiopia-sudan-meet-nile-dam-talks-180129083958377.html>

¹⁵ The Citizen, 29 January 2018, <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/1799081/britain-ethiopia-eritrea-radio-bbc/>

¹⁶ UNHCR, 1 February 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/2/5a7222da4/aid-appeals-seek-3-billion-south-sudan-set-become-africas-largest-refugee.html>

¹⁷ BBC News, 2 February 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42923089>

The US has expressed frustration with the failure of South Sudanese leaders to put an end to the country's four-year civil war.

- **Free Speech 'Non-Existent' in Zambia, Says Exiled Musician¹⁸**

Freedom of expression has deteriorated under Zambia's President Edgar Lungu, according to a leading musician who fled the country after receiving death threats. Fumba Chama, who goes by the stage name Pilato, fled Zambia at the start of January following a series of intimidating messages. His song *Koswe Mumpoto* (Rat in the pot) was seen as critical of the government and resulted in menacing voice and video messages. Rights group Amnesty International described the threats to Pilato's life as a "brazen" attempt to silence dissenting views. The singer-songwriter has been charged with "disobedience of lawful order" due to his participation in a protest during September in front of the country's parliament building.

- **Tanzania Auctions 3.5 tonnes of Hippo Teeth¹⁹**

A Tanzanian firm on Monday bought 12,467 pieces of hippopotamus teeth weighing 3,580 kg at an auction conducted by Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA), a government agency overseeing sustainable management of wildlife resource and biodiversity conservation. The government last sold hippo teeth in 2004, TAWA Acting Director of Wildlife Protection Services Mabula Misungwi said, adding that the sale of the teeth is restricted to people who possessed valid licenses and would not encourage poaching.

- **Tanzania Wants Kenya to Pay Sh2.3 billion Uchumi Supermarket Debt²⁰**

The frosty trade relations between Kenya and Tanzania could get worse after the latter demanded payment of a Sh2.3 billion debt owed by Uchumi Supermarket. Tanzania wants the Kenyan Government to take responsibility for the debt to its suppliers racked up by the struggling retailer's Tanzanian subsidiary that was shut in 2015. This was one of the top agenda of a four-day bilateral trade meeting between the two countries held in Mombasa. The meeting had been called to discuss the waning relations between Nairobi and Dar es Salaam but saw the issue of Uchumi and Nakumatt supermarkets sneaked into the agenda. At the Mombasa meeting, Kenya through International Trade Principal Secretary Chris Kiptoo, however, outrightly rejected the demand by the Tanzanian delegation.

¹⁸ RFI, 29 September 2018, <http://en.rfi.fr/africa/20180130-free-speech-non-existent-zambia-says-exiled-musician>

¹⁹ Xinhua Net, 29 January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/30/c_136936542.htm

²⁰ Standard Digital, 1 February 2018,

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2001268166/tanzania-wants-kenya-to-pay-sh2-3-billion-uchumi-debt>

- **North Korea Caught Dodging Sanctions through Fronts in Mozambique²¹**

Pyongyang's interest in a couple of aging African trawlers may seem odd at first. But fishing is big business in Mozambique — it is one of the country's most lucrative industries. North Korea wants a slice of that much-needed cash, and boats are easy to move and conceal. Joint fishing ventures are just one area of illicit trade the two countries are engaged in. In a months-long investigation, CNN uncovered a secret web of front companies, military cooperation and elite-forces training deals between North Korea and Mozambique, all in violation of international sanctions, according to United Nations investigators. Documents reviewed by CNN show that the cooperation is sealed with illegal contracts worth millions of dollars. The money is funnelled through regionally based North Korean diplomats to Pyongyang, some 7,500 miles away.

North Africa

- **After Aden Bloodshed, Houthis Call for Unity Dialogue and Cooperation²²**

Following a week of bloodshed and violence in the city of Aden in Yemen, the Houthi leader, Abdul Malik has called all parties in Yemen for dialogue and negotiations based on the principles of partnership, freedom and liberty. In an interview with Maseer TV, a mouthpiece of the Houthis, he said that whatever happened in Aden in last few days could not be seen without taking into consideration the constant act of hostile forces pointing to the military operation of Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. It is worth mentioning her that the town of Aden has been witnessing a bloody battle for last one week between Hadi's federal military forces and southern transitional council which has led to the death of 29 people and injury of more than three hundred people so far. He also said that ongoing conflict involving many parties would not lead to any positive outcome. There was no immediate official reaction from the Saudi-led coalition to this statement of Abdul Malik Houthi.

- **Egyptian Civic Bodies Reacts Sharply to President El-Sisi's Threat²³**

The democratic and civic bodies in Egypt have come down heavily on recent statement of Egyptian President El-Sisi who during an election campaign threatened to take tough action against those who are trying to challenge his authority. Several civil society groups said that El-Sisi's ides of linking his stay in power with security and stability in the country is a dangerous move and it is nothing but an effort to spread fear and terror among the people of Egypt. An organization representing eight political parties and one hundred fifty politician

²¹ Fox 17, 3 February 2018, <http://fox17online.com/2018/02/03/north-korea-caught-dodging-sanctions-through-fronts-in-mozambique/>

²² Rail Youm , An Arabic Daily

²³ Aljazeera Arabic , An Arabic Daily

and activists in a statement said that El-Sisi only meant the revolution of January 2011 when he said that nothing of the sort happening in Egypt for last seven years would be allowed. The statement also said that one cannot deny the relevance of 2011 revolution because it is one of the many glorious pages of Egypt's long history. The statement added that one can also infer from President's statement that corruption and political fraud of Mubarak's days leading to revolution would not be allowed to take place in Egypt. Recently President El-Sisi had said that whoever wants to destroy or spoil the nation of Egypt should first keep himself away from him and safety and security of Egypt is his as well as his national army's top mission.

Central Asia

- **India Joins Ashgabat Transit Corridor Agreement**

India has joined the Agreement on the Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, informed the Ministry of External Affairs on February 1, 2018.²⁴ The agreement was signed on 25 April 2011 and it is called as the Ashgabat Agreement. Turkmenistan is the depository state of the agreement. Initially, Qatar had also joined the corridor agreement but it later withdrew, however, Kazakhstan joined the agreement in February 2015²⁵ and Pakistan in 2016. Currently, the seven members of transit accord are: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman, Pakistan and India.

India's Connect Central Asia policy 2012 envisages improving connectivity with Central Asia vital for increasing country's trade and commercial relations with Afghanistan and the Eurasian region. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to all five Republics of Central Asia in July 2015 India called for an expansion of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Ashgabat Agreement and Turkmenistan's inclusion in INSTC and India's in the Ashgabat Agreement were sought.

The Ashgabat Agreement is expected to facilitate transit and transportation of goods among Central Asia, Persian Gulf ports and South Asian regions along the north-south direction. The agreement aims to increase transportation speed and optimize logistics costs by simplifying and harmonizing the legal instruments.²⁶ The Ashgabat corridor link to Central Asia has the potential emerge as a direct route for India to the region from Iran's Chabahar, where New Delhi is developing the port and making investments.

²⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India Joins the Ashgabat Agreement," 1 February 2018, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29406/India_Joins_the_Ashgabat_Agreement

²⁵ Kazinform, "Agreement on Central Asia - Persian Gulf corridor enters into force," 24 April 2016, http://www.inform.kz/en/agreement-on-central-asia-persian-gulf-corridor-enters-into-force_a2896354

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, "The Agreement Entered Into Force," 23 April 2016, <https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2016/04/7251/>

China

- **Visit of Minister for Civil Aviation, Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju to Beijing**

An Indian delegation led by Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister for Civil Aviation attended the 1st Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation held in Beijing, from 31 January to 1 February, 2018. The purpose of this conference was to address the issue of Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) of ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation). Besides this the issues of air navigation were also discussed, as it was felt that there is no regionally coordinated future plans on Air Traffic Management like the SESAR in Europe or NextGen in USA. In nutshell, the core objective of this conference was to get potential mandate of Ministers of Asia Pacific Region to collaborate at the regional level to address the issues of Aviation Safety, Air Navigation Services, Accident Investigation and Human Resource Development.

The Minister delivered the speech during conference depicting India's contribution in aviation sector. He clarified that India remains committed to ICAO's objectives of performance driven, and results based management strategies to achieve consistent improvements in the areas of safety, efficiency, security and environment. Significant improvements have already taken place and will take place in the sphere of providing better airport infrastructure through liberal and dynamic policy initiative.²⁷

- **China's domestic strategic debate and confusion over the South China Sea issue**

Nie Wenjuan (Faculty, International Relations Institute, China Foreign Affairs University) has written an article titled "China's domestic strategic debate and confusion over the South China Sea issue". This article recognizes that China has not yet decided whether the SCS issue should be included among China's core national interests. Additionally, China has not quite figured out whether the priorities should be placed on the SCS claims or the Sino-US relationship. In addition, China has not worked out exactly what the Nine-Dash Line means. It contends that identity is a key factor in informing a state's strategic concerns and policy objectives regarding the SCS. This article argues that China's dual identities force China to strike a middle ground, which causes domestic strategic debate and confusion. In the final analysis, this article tries to determine what salient implications a prevailing identity of China as a rising power would yield for its SCS policies.²⁸

²⁷ <http://indianembassybeijing.in/gallery-n13.php>

²⁸ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09512748.2017.1370608?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

- **Policies released on China's rural vitalization**

China released a package of policies under the “No. 1 central document” of the year on February 4, charting the roadmap for the country's rural vitalization strategy. There is quite a lot to be accomplished in the rural area where opportunities for development have arisen as the country enters a new era, said the document jointly released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and State Council. The “No. 1 central document” is the name traditionally given to the first policy statement of the year released by the central authorities, and is seen as an indicator of policy priorities.²⁹

- **Xi meets delegates to Party Congress of armed police force**

Chinese President Xi Jinping met all delegates to the third Party Congress of the armed police force in Beijing on February 2.

Xi expressed congratulations on the convening of the congress and extended greetings to the delegates and all officers and servicemen of the armed police force. The congress was convened with approval from the CMC after the transfer of command of the armed police force from the State Council to the CPC Central Committee and the CMC starting from January 1, 2018.

The main task of the congress is to implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress as well as Xi's thought on making the armed forces stronger.³⁰

- **Xi meets May, calling for better Sino-British ties in new era**

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with visiting British Prime Minister Theresa May on February 1, calling on both countries to forge an enhanced version of the “Golden Era” bilateral ties.

- **China to work with Sri Lanka for strategic cooperative partnership**

China is willing to work with Sri Lanka for better development of strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries, Chinese President Xi Jinping said in a message addressed to Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on February 4.³¹

²⁹ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/04/c_136948801.htm

³⁰ http://english.qstheory.cn/2018-02/05/c_1122369595.htm

³¹ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/04/c_136948457.htm

European Union

- **German Foreign Minister Gabriel Said “Europe must begin new initiatives for arms control and disarmament”**

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said, “As in the times of the Cold War, we in Europe are especially endangered” by “a renewed nuclear arms race.” He added, “That is precisely why we in Europe must begin new initiatives for arms control and disarmament.” His response came after Pentagon's “Nuclear Posture Review”, which outlined the US new military and nuclear strategy and called for a ‘tailored and flexible’ approach to deterrence and an increase to the US’ nuclear capabilities.³²

- **French President Macron Visited Tunisia**

French President Macron paid two-day state visit to Tunisia from 31 January to 1 February 2018. He said that France would enhance support for Tunisia's democracy. France also wanted to help Tunisia to tackle unemployment challenges. France has called for French firms to invest in Tunisia. France shares deep trade ties with Tunisia and it is largest trading partner within the European Union. It was the second-largest investor in Tunisia in 2016 behind the UAE.³³

- **German Coalition Talks**

Talks for forming a grand coalition between Conservatives and Social Democrats will resume on February 5, 2018. SPD General Secretary Lars Klingbeil said, “We've decided together that we won't have a night session tonight but rather that we will continue our negotiations and discussions in a detailed and focused way here in Willy Brandt House (the SPD's party headquarters) from 10 o'clock tomorrow.” It was reported that issues related to health care and labor policy are points of contention between the two sides.³⁴

³² Nuclear weapons: Germany's Sigmar Gabriel calls on Europe to lead disarmament push, DW, Feb. 4, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/nuclear-weapons-germanys-sigmar-gabriel-calls-on-europe-to-lead-disarmament-push/a-42449629>

³³ France's Macron pledges support for Tunisia on maiden state visit, France24, Jan 31, 2018, <http://www.france24.com/en/20180131-france-macron-bolster-tunisia-ties-maiden-state-visit-tunisia>; Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, Trade and security to dominate Macron visit to Tunisia, AL JAZEERA, 30 Jan 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/trade-security-dominate-macron-visit-tunisia-180123194317773.html>

³⁴ German coalition talks adjourned, set to continue Monday, DW, Feb 4, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-coalition-talks-adjourned-set-to-continue-monday/a-42450453>

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Kim Yong Nam, ceremonial leader of North Korea to PyeongChang Winter Olympics**

On February 4, 2018, North Korean newspaper KCNA announced that a high-level delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea led by Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, will visit South Korea to attend the opening ceremony of the 23rd Winter Olympics. As President of the Presidium, Kim Yong Nam has been called the "nominal head of state" of North Korea.³⁵

- **Conservative civic groups hold rally against N.K.'s participation in Olympics**

On February 3, 2018 South Korea's conservative civic groups held a massive rally against North Korea's participation in the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, with some members burning North Korea's flag and photos of the North's leader Kim Jong-un. The two Koreas have engaged in a flurry of sports diplomacy since the North's leader expressed his willingness to send a delegation to the games in his New Year's speech. "We will burn Kim Jong-un's photos and the North's national flag on February 11 when Hyun shows up at the National Theater of Korea for the concert," Rep. Cho Won-jin, head of the far-right Korean Patriots' Party, said during the protest.³⁶

- **Moon- Abe Summit during the Winter Olympics**

According to South Korean Foreign Ministry, President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will hold a summit in Pyeongchang, Gangwon, town that will host the upcoming Winter Olympics. Prime Minister Abe will be attending the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics. During the Winter Olympics, President Moon will hold talks with 14 top state and government representatives. US delegation will be led by Vice President Mike Pence. Han Zheng, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China will represent China as President Xi Jinping's special envoy.³⁷

³⁵ "DPRK High-level Delegation to Visit S. Korea", KCNA, February 4, 2018, <https://kcnawatch.co/newstream/1517781676-386577533/dprk-high-level-delegation-to-visit-s-korea/>

³⁶ "Conservative civic groups hold rally against N.K.'s participation in Olympics", The Yonhap News, February 3, 2018, www.english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2018/02/03/0401000000AEN20180203004300315.html

³⁷ "Moon, Abe to meet formally at Olympics", Korea JoongAng Daily, February 3, 2018, www.koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3044144

- **Victor Cha won't be US Ambassador to South Korea**

Former National Security Council (NSC) official and academician Victor Cha who was considered as the next U.S. ambassador to Seoul, a post which has been vacant for a year is no longer being considered for the post. US media reported that Cha expressed disagreement with the Donald Trump administration's considerations of a limited military strike on North Korea and objected to its threats to terminate the bilateral free trade agreement with Seoul. In December 2017 United States requested approval of Cha as the new ambassador appointee from the South Korean government in a diplomatic protocol also known as agrément, which was quickly granted by Seoul.³⁸

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Indonesia- Timor-Leste Foreign Minister Meeting**

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi had a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Prof. Dr. Aurelio Sergio at Jakarta, on January 31, 2018. Both ministers discussed several issues, including border negotiations, connectivity, border area development, and technical and educational cooperation. On the border issues, the two ministers agreed to complete the negotiations of two unresolved segments of land borders. Foreign Minister Marsudi stated that the Government of Indonesia is paying close attention to the developments in border areas, including between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Indonesia and Timor-Leste agreed to build roads and bridges that will increase the flow of people and goods. This will have positive impact on improving the welfare of people in the border area of the two countries. In addition, air connectivity is also strengthened by aviation cooperation from Kupang, NTT, to Dili by Air Timor and Transnusa airlines. The Government of Timor-Leste entrusted the construction of a number of strategic infrastructure projects to construction companies from Indonesia. On the other hand, Indonesia is committed to support Timor-Leste's development through various capacity building programmes.³⁹

- **Cambodian court rejects bail for opposition party leader Kem Sokha**

A Cambodian court on February 1, 2018, rejected a plea for bail by detained opposition leader Kem Sokha, following his arrest last year on charges of seeking to overthrow the government. Kem Sokha, head of the now dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), was arrested on September 3, 2017, amid a

³⁸ "Victor Cha no longer being considered for ambassador to Seoul", The Korea JoongAng Daily, January 31, 2018, www.koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3044037

³⁹ "FM Retno Met Timor-Leste Foreign Minister, Discussed Several Issues of Concern", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, January 31, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/berita-perwakilan/Pages/FM-Retno-Met-Timor-Leste-Foreign-Minister,-Discussed-Several-Issues-of-Concern.aspx>, accessed on February 1, 2018.

crackdown on critics of authoritarian Prime Minister Hun Sen. Touch Tharith, a spokesman for the Appeal Court stated that the court decided to uphold the lower court's decision not to release Kem Sokha on bail, but declined to say why the application was rejected. The rights groups have criticised the crackdown as Cambodia prepares to hold a Senate election is set for February 25 and a general election in July this year. According to the group the dissolution of the CNRP's by the Supreme Court in November 2017 and the jailing of Kem Sokha have removed the biggest challenge Hun Sen may have faced at the polls.⁴⁰

- **Thailand's National Legislative Assembly (NLA) Chief hints delays for the election**

Mr. Pronpetch Wichitcholchai, President of the NLA has hinted that the organic bills relating to the election of MPs and selection of Senators could be scrapped, which in turn could delay the general election beyond February 2019. The bills despite being passed by the NLA could be returned to the assembly and voted down in which case the poll date would be pushed back since the NLA would need to look at them again. Mr. Pronpetch Wichitcholchai stated that the bills have been sent to the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) and Election Commission (EC) to study, and after their examination over the bills the two would decide whether there are issues which need to be addressed. Another factor which could possibly cause the election deadline in February 2019 to be missed is if the lawmakers submit the organic laws to the Constitutional Court for an opinion over whether they comply with the charter.⁴¹

Myanmar

- **Myanmar Government denies UN Security Council visit, citing Rakhine 'tension'**

The Myanmar government informed the UN Security Council that February is “not the right time” for a leading UN body to visit conflict-torn Rakhine State, said the council's president on 1st February. The Myanmar authorities intend to set up a visit for residing diplomats while stressing that “tensions are high in Rakhine State at the moment”, according to the UN Security Council's president, Kuwaiti ambassador al-Otaibi. The delay of the UN visit comes amid a decision to postpone the gradual repatriation, initially scheduled to begin on January 30, of close to

⁴⁰ “Cambodian court rejects bail for opposition leader Kem Sokha” *The Straits Times*, February 1, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/cambodian-court-rejects-bail-for-opposition-leader-kem-sokha>, accessed on February 2, 2018.

⁴¹ “NLA Chief hints at more election delays”, *The Bangkok Post*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1406126/nla-chief-hints-at-more-election-delays>, accessed on February 2, 2018.

650,000 Muslim refugees from Bangladesh due to fears they were being forced to return and as tensions remain in the area, according to a Bangladesh official⁴².

- **Myanmar denies report of mass graves in Rakhine**

Myanmar officials have denied a report of five mass graves of Rohingya in a village in crisis-hit Rakhine, a border region gutted by a military crackdown on the Muslim minority. Myanmar troops are accused by the UN of waging an “ethnic cleansing” campaign against the Rohingya, nearly 700,000 of whom have fled to Bangladesh since last August. Myanmar denies the allegation, saying it launched a proportionate “crackdown on Rohingya terrorists”, but has blocked reporters and UN investigators from independently accessing the conflict zone⁴³.

- **KIA launch attacks on Myanmar Army**

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), one of the non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), has been attacking the regional military headquarters Kachin state since 31 January according to state media. On 3 February, a force of some 50 KIA troops also attacked military camps in Lwele village, Moe Kaung Township in Myitkyina, with small arms and heavy guns, with some injuries being reported during the attacks⁴⁴.

- **KIA, Tatmadaw Hold Peace Talks in China**

Amid a weeks-long surge in fighting in parts of Kachin State under the control of the Kachin Independence Army, the KIA and leaders of Myanmar’s military, or Tatmadaw, met for talks in China’s Yunnan province on 1st February. The talks are at the military-to-military level and being conducted with the support of China, according to sources close to the peace process who spoke on condition of anonymity. The two sides were headed by Lieutenant-General Tun Tun Naung, the head of the Defense Ministry’s Bureau of Special Operations 1, and Kachin Independence Organization/Army (KIO/KIA) chairman N’Ban La, according to Kachin News. No one from the government’s Peace Commission, which handles most peace negotiations, was present at the talks, as the KIA reportedly requested that the talks be limited to representatives of the two sides⁴⁵.

⁴² Government denies UN Security Council visit, citing Rakhine ‘tension, 5th February 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-denies-un-security-council-visit-citing-rakhine-tension.html>

⁴³ Myanmar denies report of mass graves in Rakhine, 3rd February 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/myanmar-denies-report-mass-graves-rakhine>

⁴⁴ KIA launch attacks on Myanmar Army, 5 February 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/kia-launch-attacks-myanmar-army>

⁴⁵ KIA, Tatmadaw Hold Peace Talks in China, 1st February 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/kia-tatmadaw-hold-peace-talks-china.html>

- **N. Korea flouts sanctions, sends weapons to Syria and Myanmar: UN**

North Korea is flouting sanctions by exporting coal, iron, steel and other banned commodities, earning nearly \$200 million in revenue last year, a UN report said 2nd February. A UN panel of experts also found evidence of military cooperation by North Korea to develop Syria's chemical weapons programs and to provide Myanmar with ballistic missiles⁴⁶.

North America

Canada

- **Canada's UN peacekeeping contributions shrink again, despite Trudeau Liberals' promises**

Only weeks after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada was prepared to offer helicopters, aircraft and hundreds of troops to peacekeeping, the number of Canadians on UN missions reached a new low, new figures indicate. Canada had a total of 43 peacekeepers deployed around the world at the end of December, according to the most recent UN numbers, down from 62 in November. The decline, largely the result of a reduction in the number of Canadian police officers deployed to Haiti, means Canada has fewer peacekeepers in the field than at any point since the 1950s. That's despite the Liberals having repeatedly promised to ramp up Canada's contributions to UN missions — most recently by pledging equipment, troops and trainers at a peacekeeping summit that Canada hosted in November. But aside from planning to base the transport aircraft in Uganda, the commitments did not come with any specifics. Canadian and UN officials say the two sides are working to identify when and where those pledges will be utilized, but they have declined to provide any timeline for when a decision will come.⁴⁷

- **Trudeau: Canada could walk away from NAFTA over 'multiple issues'**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says there are several reasons he could choose to not accept a renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In an interview with local Winnipeg radio host Geoff Currier of AM680 CJOB, Trudeau was asked whether he is still optimistic that negotiators can reach a deal on NAFTA and whether there is a point at which he would be willing to walk away. "There are multiple issues at which point we will not accept a deal," said Trudeau. Canada, the United States and Mexico are facing down a March deadline to renegotiate the 25-year-old deal, which allows for the free flow of goods between

⁴⁶ N. Korea flouts sanctions, sends weapons to Syria and Myanmar: UN, 3rd February 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-international/n-korea-flouts-sanctions-sends-weapons-syria-and-myanmar-un>.

⁴⁷ Lee Berthiaume, "Canada's UN peacekeeping contributions shrink again, despite Trudeau Liberals' promises," <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/02/02/canadas-un-peacekeeping-contributions-shrink-again-despite-trudeau-liberals-promises.html>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

all three countries. There have since been six rounds of negotiations, most recently one held last week in Montreal that was supposed to be the final one.⁴⁸

The United States

- **US unveils new nuclear weapons strategy**

The US will adopt a more aggressive nuclear posture, contemplating strikes in response to non-nuclear threats and deploying new “low-yield” devices after a government review that detractors say will raise the risk of nuclear war. Although the nuclear posture review states that the US would only consider such an attack in the case of “extreme circumstances”, these could include “significant non-nuclear strategic attacks”. This raises the prospect that nuclear weapons could be deployed in response to a severe cyber attack, a large terror attack such as those staged on September 11 2001, or another strategic threat. While the Trump administration says the stance merely “clarifies” previous policy, critics say it marks a radical departure. The posture review plans to reintroduce a nuclear sea-launched cruise missile that was retired under the Obama administration. It also seeks to equip submarines with lower-yield weapons whose impact could deliver up to the equivalent of the nuclear bomb that the US deployed to destroy Hiroshima in 1945. Although the Trump administration is preoccupied with the accelerating nuclear threat from North Korea, experts say the review is aimed at a rising threat from China and Russia, which are seeking to modernise their military capabilities.⁴⁹

- **Republicans differ with Trump on whether memo undercuts Russia probe**

Several Republican lawmakers disagreed on Sunday with President Donald Trump’s assertion that a memo released last week by the House Intelligence Committee vindicated him in the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. Several Republican lawmakers disagreed on Sunday with President Donald Trump’s assertion that a memo released last week by the House Intelligence Committee vindicated him in the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. The Republican memo has fueled a battle between Trump and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which argued against the document’s release. The memo accuses senior FBI and Justice Department officials of using unverified information from a politically biased source when they sought approval from the FISA court to monitor the communications of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on Oct. 21, 2016. Investigators had asked for permission to monitor Page as part of the wider probe into alleged Russian meddling in the election and potential collusion between Trump’s campaign and

⁴⁸ Amanda Connolly, “Trudeau: Canada could walk away from NAFTA over ‘multiple issues’”, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3997855/justin-trudeau-nafta-negotiations/>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁴⁹ Katrina Manson, “US unveils new nuclear weapons strategy,” <https://www.ft.com/content/283e432c-0842-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

Russia. Russia has denied meddling. Trump has insisted there was no collusion by his campaign. Democrats accuse Trump and his Republican allies of trying to use the memo to undermine the Russia probe and possibly make the case for the firing of Mueller or Rod Rosenstein, the No. 2 official at Justice who is overseeing Mueller.⁵⁰

- **Trump’s First State of the Union Address: A Call for Unity That Wasn’t Always Heard That Way**

President Trump delivered his first State of the Union address, followed by Representative Joseph Kennedy III’s response for the Democrats. Our reporters offered instant analysis, fact checked the speech and annotated the transcript. • The centerpiece of the State of the Union address was what Mr. Trump called a “down the middle” compromise on immigration, but Democrats booed some of his proposals. • The president called for bipartisan unity, citing infrastructure, but he gave no details and offered no road map for how to enact such an ambitious plan. • Also notable was what he left out. He made no mention of the Russia investigation that has dogged his presidency, nor did he acknowledge the #MeToo moment, even as female lawmakers wore black to mark the cultural moment. • Mr. Kennedy’s use of Spanish in the middle of his speech signaled a different attitude toward immigrants than Mr. Trump’s.⁵¹

- **Mattis Meets With Ukrainian Counterpart at Pentagon**

Defense Secretary James N. Mattis met with Ukrainian Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak, at the Pentagon. During the meeting, Mattis emphasized the value of the U.S.-Ukraine security partnership. The defense secretary cited the Law on National Security as an urgent priority. The law is aimed at bringing Ukraine’s national security apparatus in line with NATO and E.U. standards. The two leaders pledged to strengthen a lasting partnership between the U.S. and Ukraine built on common security interests and shared principles.⁵²

- **Tillerson raises specter of U.S. sanctions on Venezuelan oil**

The United States is considering restricting imports of Venezuelan crude oil and exports of U.S. refined products to Venezuela, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on to put pressure on socialist President Nicolas Maduro to “return to the constitution.” Tillerson, on a Latin America trip that also includes visits to Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Jamaica, raised eyebrows on Friday after he suggested that

⁵⁰ Jonathan Landay, Doina Chiacu, “Republicans differ with Trump on whether memo undercuts Russia probe,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-russia/republicans-differ-with-trump-on-whether-memo-undercuts-russia-probe-idUSKBN1FN0JW>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁵¹ The New York Times, “Trump’s First State of the Union Address: A Call for Unity That Wasn’t Always Heard That Way,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/30/us/politics/trump-state-of-the-union.html>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁵² US Department of Defence, “Mattis Meets With Ukrainian Counterpart at Pentagon,” <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1431940/mattis-meets-with-ukrainian-counterpart-at-pentagon/>, Accessed on 05 february 2018002E

Maduro could be toppled by his own military. Restrictions on Venezuela's all-important oil industry would represent an escalation of financial pressure on the OPEC member, which is gripped by severe shortages of food and medicine. Sanctions have so far focused on individual members of Maduro's government and a ban on buying new Venezuelan debt. Standing next to Tillerson at the news conference, Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie said his country would "closely follow" the possibility of oil and fuel sale restrictions, but said sanctions "must never harm the Venezuelan people." Other Latin American governments have said they were unwilling to take steps that would worsen the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.⁵³

- **US missile defence test fails in Hawaii with 'military unable to shoot down incoming target'**

A test of America's missile defence systems in Hawaii has reportedly failed to shoot down its target, against the backdrop of heightened tensions with North Korea. An exercise conducted by the Missile Defence Agency was unsuccessful, with the military unable to shoot down an incoming missile launched from an aircraft, multiple outlets reported. A Department of Defence representative confirmed a drill had taken place without responding to questions about whether it had accomplished its objectives. North Korean aggression has raised the stakes for America's ability to repel missile attacks, with the isolated regime launching a series of ballistic missile tests and claiming it has the ability to strike anywhere on the US mainland. A test in May successfully intercepted and destroyed a medium-range missile, the Pentagon said at the time, the first live-fire test of defending against an intercontinental ballistic missile.⁵⁴

Mexico

- **Mexico Wins If Dreamers Are Deported, Country's Top Diplomat Says**

Mexico would greatly benefit if the Trump administration deports the estimated 600,000 Mexican-born recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA, Luis Videgaray, Mexico's Foreign Relations Secretary, said in Spanish at a joint news conference in Mexico City with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland. Videgaray qualified his comments by noting how thousands of Mexican immigrants protected under DACA are college-educated teachers, doctors, lawyers, and computer programmers. Videgaray also noted that the vast majority of immigrants protected under DACA, also known as dreamers, "want to stay in the United States," and that Mexico is keeping a close eye on Congress as it enters another

⁵³ Luc Cohen, "Tillerson raises specter of U.S. sanctions on Venezuelan oil," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-argentina-usa-tillerson/tillerson-raises-specter-of-u-s-sanctions-on-venezuelan-oil-idUSKBN1FO0P3>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁵⁴ Jeremy B White, "US missile defence test fails in Hawaii with 'military unable to shoot down incoming target'," <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-missile-defence-fails-test-drill-military-shoot-down-target-north-korea-a8188236.html>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

dealmaking week. Videgaray also underscored Mexico's growing relationship with the Trump administration, going so far as to say that bilateral ties under President Donald Trump are "in many ways, more fluid and closer than with previous administrations."⁵⁵

- **US and Mexico look to beef up security with armed guards on cross-border flights**

MEXICO and the United States are looking into whether armed US federal air marshals could be deployed on commercial cross-border flights, according to a document and a Mexican official, as Mexico deepens security ties with its neighbour. US Federal Air Marshal Service spokesman Thomas Kelly declined to answer questions on the proposed agreement, but said air marshals "are armed Federal Law Enforcement Officers with the mission of in-flight protection of US-flagged aircraft, crew members and passengers." In a statement, Mexico's foreign ministry confirmed that the government is evaluating the plan's potential operational and security benefits but added that no agreement has yet been reached. A Mexican official with knowledge of the plan said the hardest part of the negotiations would centre on allowing US officials to carry arms, given that the use of weapons by foreigners in Mexico is sensitive and tightly regulated.⁵⁶

Latin America and Caribbean Countries

Argentina

Macri opens free trade zone in Jujuy to develop northern Argentina

Argentina's President Mauricio Macri has inaugurated a free trade zone in the province of Jujuy, in the north of the country, with which he hopes to attract investments and increase access to technology and industrial production in the region. Macri argued that the project is part of the enhancement of the "bioceanic corridor", with which the Executive wants greater connections from Argentina with Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil; and encouraged the arrival of foreign investments, ensuring that they will be "loyal" to those who "accompany" them in the development. The Argentine president transmitted a positive message about the evolution of the economy of his country, and affirmed that "for the first time in 100 years" a government manages to lower the deficit, inflation and taxes. About the Andean province of Jujuy, the head of state defended that it is one of the richest in the country "in terms of the 21st century", thanks to the mining of

⁵⁵ Carlos Ballesteros, "Mexico Wins If Dreamers Are Deported, Country's Top Diplomat Says," <http://www.newsweek.com/daca-dreamers-deportations-mexico-nafta-rex-tillerson-799199>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁵⁶ Express, "US and Mexico look to beef up security with armed guards on cross-border flights," <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/911935/US-Mexico-security-armed-guards-cross-border-flights-Donald-Trump>," Accessed on 05 february 2018.

elements such as lithium and its potential for solar energy production, and said that “the engine of northern Argentina is going to be tourism”.⁵⁷

Brazil

Brazilian court upholds corruption conviction for ex-president Lula

A Brazilian court has upheld the conviction of the former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for corruption and money laundering, in a ruling that complicates his plans to run for a third term and marks an extraordinary change of fortune for the most popular leader in modern Brazilian history. Three judges at the appeals court in Porto Alegre voted unanimously to uphold the sentence that Lula was handed by a lower court, and increased the penalty from nine and a half years to 12 years and one month. The ruling prompted protests across Brazil, and protesters set fire to tyres and blocked streets in Porto Alegre and São Paulo. Lula leads early polls for October’s presidential election, but the latest court decision means that he could be barred from running.⁵⁸

Bolivia

Bolivia Tells President His Time Is Up. He Isn’t Listening.

Mr. Morales’s determination to continue governing his landlocked country has echoes elsewhere in the region, where a stable grid of democracies suddenly looks a lot less solid. Corruption scandals have rocked Ecuador, a successful impeachment brought down a president in Brazil and an attempt to remove Peru’s president from office failed by only a slim margin. Before telling Mr. Morales, 58, in the referendum that it was time he retired, voters had repeatedly backed him, in three consecutive elections, bringing stability to a country that some politicians had considered ungovernable. Five presidents had served in the five years before the swearing in of Mr. Morales in 2006. When he first entered office, Mr. Morales, part of a group of leftist leaders in Latin America who rose to power at a time of high commodity prices, sought to tackle a history of inequality in Bolivia. He strong-armed foreign energy companies to share more profits with the state, investing the proceeds in education and health care while rewriting the country’s Constitution to speed his reforms. While Mr. Morales’s initial years in power were notable for reductions in inequality and increased rights for indigenous people, the

⁵⁷ “Macri Opens Free Trade Zone in Jujuy to Develop Northern Argentina,” February 3, 2018, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2018/02/03/macri-opens-free-trade-zone-in-jujuy-to-develop-northern-argentina/>, Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁵⁸ Dom Phillips, “Brazilian court upholds corruption conviction for ex-president Lula,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/24/brazilian-court-upholds-corruption-conviction-for-ex-president-lula>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

more recent news about his government has focused on the misuse of public funds and attacks on the news media.⁵⁹

Cuba

- **Cubans in rare state of uncertainty as Castro delays power transfer to Diaz-Canel**

Raul Castro, the 86-year-old president who succeeded his brother Fidel a decade ago, originally planned to step down in February but delayed his exit, claiming the need to deal with damage wrought by Hurricane Irma. In a fit of political uncertainty that Cubans have not known for decades, it is not clear that his long-presumed successor — 58-year-old First Vice President Miguel Diaz-Canel — has the job locked down. Major questions remain over the amount of power Mr. Diaz-Canel will have if he gets the job because Mr. Castro will still head the Cuban Communist Party. Even less clear, analysts say, is how the party plans to respond to longer-term challenges of the Trump administration's increasingly hardened line toward the island, after the historic thaw in relations during the Obama years. Concern in Havana over the policy shift in Washington away from the Obama-era charm offensive that brought an easing of U.S. sanctions on Cuba appears to have factored into Mr. Castro's decision to delay his retirement.⁶⁰

Venezuela

- **Venezuela Peace and Unity Agreement 'Ready to Sign': Maduro**

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has announced that an agreement between the government and opposition, drafted in the Dominican Republic during dialogue aimed at promoting peace and unity, is ready to be signed. In a press release issued by the Venezuelan government on Saturday, as Spanish former Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero arrived in Venezuela to refine the details, Maduro also called on the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) and National Electoral Council (CNE) to set a date for the presidential elections. Venezuela's ruling Socialist Party on Friday formally selected Maduro to run for re-election in the upcoming presidential election, party Vice-President Diosdado Cabello said during a televised party gathering. Maduro, 55, who narrowly won election in 2013 to replace Hugo Chavez, is the favorite to win the vote, due before the end of April, because his leading opponents are barred from standing.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Nicholas Casey, "Bolivia Tells President His Time Is Up. He Isn't Listening," <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/28/world/americas/bolivia-evo-morales-elections.html>, Accessed on 05 February 2018.

⁶⁰ Guy Taylor, "Cubans in rare state of uncertainty as Castro delays power transfer to Diaz-Canel," <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/30/raul-castros-exit-delay-puts-miguel-diaz-canel-cu/>, Accessed on 05 february 2018.

⁶¹ ----, "Venezuela Peace and Unity Agreement 'Ready to Sign': Maduro," Accessed on 05 february 2018.

- **Venezuela: Maduro named as socialist party's candidate for 2018 election**

Some 600 delegates from the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) ratified on Friday President Nicolás Maduro as his candidate for the upcoming presidential elections, which by decision of the National Constituent Assembly will be held before May 2018. “Approved by acclamation and unanimously, fellow president. You are officially the candidate of the PSUV, “confirmed the first vice-president of this party, Diosdado Cabello, after asking the delegates, during the plenary of the III Congress of this movement, if they were in agreement with the nomination. Cabello gave Maduro the party’s banner to go with him “through the streets to defend” the “party, the homeland and take it with all the honour it deserves.” The ‘number two’ of Chavismo cited Maduro as a presidential candidate “on behalf of the militants and on behalf of this people, delegates of the congress and if you can say in the name of the commander Hugo Chávez.” The National Constituent Assembly (ANC), plenipotentiary body composed only of Chavistas, decreed recently that the elections in the country will take place before May. The ANC is not recognized by the opposition or by several governments, which consider it fraudulent because of the way in which it was elected and installed. The particular date and the conditions of the elections in general are some of the most complicated points in the negotiations that the Government and the opposition are holding in the Dominican Republic to seek a way out of the crisis that the country has been experiencing for months.⁶²

- **Venezuela sets Petro's value at \$60; pre-sale starts on February 20**

A pre-sale of Venezuela’s new ‘petro’ crypto currency will begin on February 20, 2018, President Nicolas Maduro has said, a move that the government hopes will help pull the country out of a dire economic crisis. Caracas on Wednesday (January 31, 2018) set El Petro’s initial value at \$60, but its price will fluctuate based on the oil market, authorities said. The Latin American country – which has the world’s largest proven oil reserves but is facing a crippling economic crisis – said a pre-sale for 38.4 million “Petro” units out of a total 100 million would take place between February 20 and March 19. Maduro has previously said that the government will issue 100 million tokens, each valued at – and backed by – the equivalent of one barrel of Venezuelan crude. That would put the value of the entire petro issuance at just over US\$ 6 billion. Venezuela’s government has said that the petro issue will help the cash-strapped country make financial transactions and overcome U.S. sanctions against Maduro’s populist government. Critics have slammed the move

⁶² “Venezuela Maduro Named as Socialist Party’s Candidate for 2018 Election,” February 3, 2018, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2018/02/03/venezuela-maduro-named-as-socialist-partys-candidate-for-2018-election/>, Accessed on February 5, 2018.

as not only illegal but a simple debt issuance for a government overseeing quadruple-digit inflation and major shortages.⁶³

- **Macron calls on the EU for more sanctions on Venezuela**

French President Emmanuel Macron called for further European Union sanctions on Venezuela, days after the 28-nation bloc agreed a travel ban and asset freezes on seven senior Venezuelan officials. The West accuses President Nicholas Maduro's government of violating democracy and human rights in the oil-producing nation, which is in the grip of a major economic and social crisis with millions suffering food and medicine shortages. Venezuela's pro-government Supreme Court late on Thursday (January 25, 2018) excluded the opposition coalition from registering for this year's presidential election, possibly splintering Maduro's foes by pushing political parties to put forward competing candidates. "Sadly things are going in the wrong direction," Macron told a joint news conference with the visiting president of Argentina, Mauricio Macri.⁶⁴

Russia

- **Russia and It's Economy**

In an interview on 30 January, Kristin Lindow, a senior vice president at Moody's Investor Service, said that Russia's economy has gained enough resilience to withstand new Western sanctions and the country's sovereign rating may be upgraded by the end of the year. This year, Moody's expects Russia's economy to grow by 1.6 percent, inflation to accelerate back to the central bank's target of 4 percent, and international reserves to grow by another \$40 billion.⁶⁵

The Russian Finance Ministry drafted a new bill on cryptocurrency on 26 January in hopes the state Duma will ultimately sign it into law, moving Russia further ahead in the world of digital currency trading. The bill legalizes the term "digital financial asset" as a security in electronic form, "created using encryption methods, of which the legal title of ownership is verified by making a digital record in the register of digital transactions," also known as a blockchain. The bill states that cryptocurrencies are not an authorized means of payment in Russia. Therefore,

⁶³ "Venezuela Sets Petros Value at \$60; Pre-Sale Starts on February 20," February 1, 2018, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2018/02/01/venezuela-sets-petros-value-at-60-pre-sale-starts-on-february-20/>, Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁶⁴ "Macron Calls on the EU for More Sanctions on Venezuela," January 30, 2018, <http://en.mercopress.com/2018/01/30/macron-calls-on-the-eu-for-more-sanctions-on-venezuela>, Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁶⁵ Andrey Ostroukh, "Russia Can Withstand New Sanctions, Rating May Be Upgraded: Moody's", *US News*, January 30, 2018. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-01-30/russia-can-withstand-new-sanctions-rating-may-be-upgraded-moodys> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

cryptocurrency -- based on this draft -- is not money. Russia's government promised legislation to regulate cryptocurrency this year. Under the draft law, private individuals would have to open special accounts and wallets with operators similar to brokerage accounts.⁶⁶

- **Russia and the United States**

The Trump administration on 29 January said it would not immediately impose additional sanctions on Russia under a new law designed to punish Moscow's alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. election, insisting the measure was already hitting Russian companies. The administration faced a deadline till 29 January to impose sanctions on anyone determined to conduct significant business with Russian defense and intelligence sectors, already sanctioned for their alleged role in the election. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement that if the law is working, sanctions on specific entities or individuals will not need to be imposed because the legislation is, in fact, serving as a deterrent. The administration said it would release at least some of that information to Congress, but it was not immediately clear whether it would be made public, or kept classified.⁶⁷

The United States notes with the highest level of concern the latest incident of unsafe Russian military practices, over the Black Sea on January 29. While the U.S. aircraft was operating under international law, the Russian side was flagrantly violating existing agreements and international law, in this case the 1972 Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas (INCSEA). This is but the latest example of Russian military activities disregarding international norms and agreements. The United States called on Russia to cease these unsafe actions that increase the risk of miscalculation, danger to aircrew on both sides, and midair collisions.⁶⁸

House Republicans have voted to release a controversial secret memo on 29 January that has become a rallying point for allegations of bias in the Trump-

⁶⁶Kenneth Rapoza, "Russia's Newly Drafted Cryptocurrency Bill: 'Crypto Not Cash'", *Forbes*, January 29, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2018/01/29/russias-newly-drafted-cryptocurrency-bill-crypto-not-cash/#24ac4900646e> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁶⁷"White House tells Congress: We're not going to apply new Russia sanctions yet", *CNBC*, January 29, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/29/white-house-tells-congress-were-not-going-to-apply-new-russia-sanctions-yet.html> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁶⁸"Unsafe Russian Military Practices", Press Statement: US Department of State, January 29, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/01/277753.htm> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

Russia investigation. The Justice Department and House Democratic colleagues have objected on this move.⁶⁹

In an interview with *BBC* on 29 January, **CIA Director Mike Pompeo said that** that he expects Russia to try to meddle in the 2018 midterm elections. He said that despite some cooperation on anti-terrorism efforts, he views Russia as an adversary, stressing that they are still trying to influence the US and Europe.⁷⁰

Russian ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov on 30 January said that the director of Russia's foreign intelligence SVR, Sergey Naryshkin, has visited the United States for consultations with US counterparts on the struggle against terrorism.⁷¹ The visit of Mr. Naryshkin is in focus because he has been on a individuals" for involvement in the situation in Ukraine" since 2014, when he was chairman of the Duma.⁷²

In an interview with a TASS correspondent by an official of the US State Department, the diplomat said that the US is going to continue to fully adhere to the provisions of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), despite the continuing tension in Russian-American relations.

On 2 February, the Trump administration announced it will continue much of the Obama administration's nuclear weapons policy, but take a more aggressive stance toward Russia. It said Russia must be convinced it would face "unacceptably dire costs" if it were to threaten even a limited nuclear attack in Europe. The sweeping review of U.S. nuclear policy does not call for any net increase in strategic nuclear weapons — a position that stands in contrast to President Donald Trump's statement, in a tweet shortly before he took office, that the U.S. "must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes." In his State of the Union address on 30 January, he made no mention of expansion, though he said the arsenal must deter acts of

⁶⁹Jen Kirby, "House Republicans voted to release a controversial memo on the Trump-Russia probe", *Vox News*, January 29, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/1/29/16948382/house-vote-trump-russia-release-the-memo> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁷⁰Daniel Brown, "CIA Director Pompeo: 'I have every expectation' Russia will try to meddle in the 2018 midterm election", *Business Insider*, January 30, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.in/CIA-Director-Pompeo-I-have-every-expectation-Russia-will-try-to-meddle-in-the-2018-midterm-election/articleshow/62702304.cms> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁷¹Russian intelligence chief visits US to discuss war on terror — ambassador", *TASS*, January 30, 2018. <http://tass.com/politics/987568> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁷²Scott Nueman, "Russian Spy Chief Reportedly Met With U.S. Intelligence Officials Despite Sanctions", *NPR*, January 30, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/31/582059134/russian-spy-chief-reportedly-met-with-u-s-intelligence-officials-despite-sanctio> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

aggression.⁷³ Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a commentary on 3 February the content of the United States' new nuclear doctrine released on 2 February causes deep disappointment in Moscow. Russia's Foreign Ministry pointed out that the eagerness to resort to nuclear weapons declared by the United States in order to discourage Russia's employment of its nuclear arsenal "means an attempt to cast doubt on Russia's right to self-defense in repelling any aggression in situations critical for the state's existence."⁷⁴

- **Russia and Syria**

Russia has launched a series of air attacks in the area where one of its fighter jets was shot down by Syrian rebels on 3 February, leaving dozens of fighters and civilians dead. The pilot of the Sukhoi was killed after being ejected from the aircraft by rebel fighters, including members of the Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham group, commonly known as Tahrir al-Sham.⁷⁵

- **Russia and North Korea**

Alexander Matzegora, Russia's ambassador to North Korea said that delivery of oil and oil products to North Korea should not be reduced adding that a total end to deliveries would be interpreted by North Korea as an act of war.⁷⁶

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **MoD To Step Up Fight Against The Taliban**

Following US President Donald Trump's remarks on closing the doors to peace talks with the Taliban, the Afghan defense ministry said that it will step up campaigns against the group in the coming weeks. Defense ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said they will increase the number of military operations against the Taliban and only the anti-government groups not involved in killing civilians and

⁷³Robert Burns, "Trump nuclear doctrine takes tougher stance on Russia", *Fox News*, February 4, 2018. <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/02/trump-nuclear-doctrine-takes-tougher-stance-on-russia.html> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

⁷⁴"Russia's Foreign Ministry notes anti-Russian focus of US nuclear doctrine", *TASS*, February 3, 2018. <http://tass.com/politics/988376> Accessed on February 5.

⁷⁵"Russia steps up Idlib strikes after Sukhoi jet downing", *Aljazeera*, February 3, 2018.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/russia-retaliates-idlib-sukhoi-jet-downed-180204064444409.html> Accessed February 5, 2018.

⁷⁶"Ending North Korea oil supplies would be seen as an act of war, Russia warns", *CNBC*, January 31, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/31/ending-north-korea-oil-supplies-would-be-seen-as-an-act-of-war-russia-warns.html> Accessed on February 5, 2018.

interested in joining the peace process will escape unharmed. But in response to Trump's comments, the Taliban hit back in a statement and said the group will increase its activities against the Afghan security forces and foreign troops. Meanwhile, a number of security force members who are in strongholds fighting the Taliban said they welcome the transition in Washington and Kabul's stances against the Taliban.⁷⁷

- **Sayyad Elected As New IEC Chief**

Gulajan Abdulbadi Sayyad has been elected as the head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in a poll on 31 January 2018 that was carried out by the seven member commission. Sayyad was previously the spokesman for the IEC. According to the source, Wasima Badghisi has been appointed as the operational deputy of the commission and Maazullah Dawlati as the financial and administrative deputy of the IEC. The former head of the election commission, Najibullah Ahmadzai, was sacked by President Ashraf Ghani in November.⁷⁸

- **Peace in Afghanistan Long-Term Objective: EU**

The European Union, commending Pakistan's role in the fight against terrorism, says Islamabad needs to do more to make the region secure and prosperous. Jean-François Cautain, EU ambassador to Pakistan, supported efforts at stabilising the region -- more particularly the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The war on terror and an inclusive reconciliation process would pave the way for the region's economic development, believed Jean, who has also served as head of operations in the EU Delegation to Afghanistan. The envoy urged Pakistan to make the best use of its capacity to reach out to relevant stakeholders within and outside its territory to contribute to peace and stability in the region.⁷⁹

Bangladesh

- **BNP conditions unconstitutional**

The ruling Awami League has rejected its arch-rival BNP's six-point poll conditions including the holding of the next general election under a neutral non-party election-time government. Terming Khaleda Zia's conditions as illogical, undemocratic and unconstitutional, AL leaders said the country's people had no

⁷⁷ Tamim Hamid, "MoD To Step Up Fight Against The Taliban", *Tolonews*, 30 January 2018. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mod-step-fight-against-taliban> accessed on 31 January 2018.

⁷⁸ "Sayyad Elected As New IEC Chief", *Tolonews*, 31 March 2018. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/sayyad-elected-new-iec-chief> accessed on 02 February 2018.

⁷⁹ "Peace in Afghanistan Long-Term Objective: EU". *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 30 January 2018. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20052 accessed on 02 February 2018.

interest in listening to such conditions from a party whose chief is an accused in graft cases.⁸⁰

- **Delhi lauds Dhaka's support for addressing insurgency**

Terror activities in northeast India have been checked due to Bangladesh's great help and support, India's union home minister Rajnath Singh said on Sunday (February 4). "Bangladesh's immense help and support facilitated India to tame the terrorist activities in north-eastern states. Our relation with Bangladesh is now at best place," he said while addressing election rallies in Agartala.⁸¹

- **Our voices gagged, mouths shut, pens stuck: Ershad**

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad has observed that journalists no longer enjoy freedom of expression in Bangladesh, in what appeared to be a criticism of the draft Digital Security Act 2018. "Such a law has been formulated that journalists are now unable to write and express opinions independently. Our voices gagged, mouths shut, writings stopped, pens stuck – everything has come to a halt," he said while addressing a rally at the Dak Bungalow premises in Pirganj upazila, Thakurgaon on Saturday (February 3).⁸²

- **Lower courts under grip of govt: Khaleda**

Khaleda Zia on Saturday (February 3) said country's lower courts are now under the grip of the government and they do not have the power to deliver proper judgements. "The Supreme Court said that the lower courts are under the grasp of the government. They can't work independentlycan't deliver proper verdict," the BNP chief said. "We have seen the consequences of delivering proper judgements. A Chief Justice had to leave the country for delivering the right verdict in Taeique Zia's case," she said. "They are holding the trial to keep BNP out of election."⁸³

- **Myanmar turns down UN Security Council visit**

Myanmar's government has told the Security Council that this month was "not the right time" for a visit by the top UN body to see first-hand the Rohingya refugee crisis, the council president said on Thursday (February 1). Kuwait's Ambassador Mansour al-Otaibi said Myanmar authorities were not opposed to such a visit,

⁸⁰ Abu Zakir, "BNP conditions unconstitutional," *The Independent*, February 4, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/135771>, accessed on February 4, 2018.

⁸¹ "Delhi lauds Dhaka's support for addressing insurgency," *Prothom Alo*, February 4, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/170584/Delhi-lauds-Dhaka-s-support-for-addressing>, accessed on February 4, 2018.

⁸² Zakir Mostafiz MiluThakurgaon, "'Our voices gagged, mouths shut, pens stuck'," *Dhaka Tribune*, February 4, 2018, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2018/02/04/voices-gagged-mouths-shut-pens-stuck/>, accessed on February 4, 2018.

⁸³ "Lower courts under grip of govt: Khaleda," *The Independent*, February 3, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/135652>, accessed on February 3, 2018.

which could take place in March or April. "They just think that this is not the right time for a visit," Otaibi told reporters at UN headquarters.⁸⁴

नेपाल

- ओली और स्वराज के मध्य संबंधों को मजबूत करने पर चर्चा:

भारत की विदेश मंत्री सुषमा स्वराज ने दो दिवसीय नेपाल भ्रमण के दौरान एमाले अध्यक्ष के पी शर्मा ओली के साथ मुलाकात की स्वराज के साथ नई ओली जो कि संभावित रूप से अगले प्रधानमंत्री होंगे . विदेश .सरकार बनने के बाद भारत और नेपाल के रिश्तों को प्रगाढ़ करने पर बैठक में व्यापक चर्चा हुई .मंत्री स्वराजने चुनावों में बड़ी जीत के लिए ओली को बधाईयाँ दी और कहा कि नेपाल में अब स्थिर सरकार बनने जा रही है 74 स्वराज ने यभी कहा कि भारत सरकार अगले वित्तीय वर्ष नेपाल को .प्रतिशत आर्थिक अनुदान वृद्धि करेगी जिससे संघीय ढांचे को उन्नत करने में मदद मिलेगी⁸⁵

- स्वराज के वचनों से नई सरकार को मदद मिलेगी:

भारत की विदेश मंत्री ने अपनी नेपाल यात्रा के दौरान विभिन्न दलों के नेताओं से मिली और केंद्र और प्रान्तों में जनता के अध्यादेश से मिली जीत में सभी को शामिल होने की बात कही स्वराज ने प्रांत दो .में मधेश सांसदों से देश के विकास हेतु वाम गठबंधन की सरकार के साथ सहयोगात्मक रूप से कार्य करने की बात कही.⁸⁶

- ओली के प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद मोदी नेपाल आयेंगे ग्यावली :

एमाले के सचिव प्रदीप ग्यावली ने कहा कि के पी शर्मा ओली के प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी नेपाल की यात्रा कर सकते हैं ग्यावली ने कहा कि भारत सरकार की नेपाल की .नई सरकार के साथ कार्य करने की इच्छा से यह लगता है कि ओली के प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद मोदी .नेपाल की यात्रा करेंगे⁸⁷

⁸⁴ "Myanmar turns down UN Security Council visit," *Prothom Alo*, February 2, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/international/news/170459/Myanmar-turns-down-UN-Security-Council-visit>, accessed on February 2, 2018.

⁸⁵ Anil Giri, "Oli and Swaraj discuss ways to further India Nepal ties", *The Kathmandu Post*, 2 February 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-02-02/3>

⁸⁶ Anil Giri, "Swaraj pledges help for new govt", *The Kathmandu Post*, 3 February 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-02-03/1>

⁸⁷ "Modi visit likely after Oli becomes PM: Gyawali", *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 February 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-02-05/1>

Pakistan

- **11 Pakistanis dead in boat capsized off Libya**

At least 90 people, including 11 Pakistani nationals, were feared dead on February 2nd in the latest migrant tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya. Foreign Office (FO) spokesman Dr Mohammad Faisal told The Associated Press that Pakistani diplomats had reached Libya's coastal area to collect more details. He said that Pakistani authorities will try to bring back the bodies of Pakistanis killed in the tragedy.⁸⁸

- **Chinese business in Pakistan**

A much delayed Rs3 billion strategic project to secure the Balochistan capital from terrorism and smuggling appears to have become a turf war between two Chinese contractors and their influential supporters. The provincial bureaucracy sat on the approval for around two weeks and is reported to have persuaded new Chief Minister, Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, to overturn the decision and has issued a letter of intent (LoI) to the 'bidder with lowest price' — ZTE consortium. The two parties, vested interests, bureaucracy and political leadership have been fighting over the project since 2016, causing an inordinate delay and a series of security incidents in Quetta over the last year. The bidding result might be published by this week.⁸⁹

Sri Lanka

- **Seventieth Independence Day celebrated**

The 70th Independence Day celebrations were held under the patronage of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, at Galle Face Green, on 4th February. Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and the Countess of Wessex, representing the Queen, were the special guests⁹⁰.

- **Sri Lanka apparel exports hit USD 4.8 billion in 2017**

Sri Lanka's apparel exports has recorded the highest annual export revenue this year, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said. According to the Apparel export revenue data issued by both Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) and Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association (SLAEA), the total Sri Lankan apparel exports for

⁸⁸ "11 Pakistanis among 90 migrants feared dead in boat capsized off Libya", *Dawn*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1386867> accessed on February 5, 2018

⁸⁹ Khaleeq Kiani, "Chinese bidders fight over Quetta safe city project", *Dawn*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1387420/chinese-bidders-fight-over-quetta-safe-city-project> accessed on February 5, 2018

⁹⁰ Seventieth Independence Day celebrated, 5th January 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/19453-seventieth-independence-day-celebrated>

Year 2017 was USD 4.818 billion, an increase of 3.06% from USD 4.67 billion recorded in 2016.⁹¹

- **Modi wants to take relationship with Sri Lanka to higher levels**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to take the relationship with Sri Lanka to higher levels. Modi said this in a statement extending warm felicitations to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the independence of Sri Lanka. “Relations between our two countries, anchored in our shared history and culture, have grown over the years to become truly multifaceted. It is our shared responsibility and aspiration to further strengthen these bonds,” he said⁹².

- **China seeks to push forward development agenda with Sri Lanka**

The President of China, Xi Jinping, writing to President Maithripala Sirisena, expresses his warm congratulations to the President, Government and the people as Sri Lanka celebrates 70 years of Independence. “I attach great importance to the development of China Sri Lanka relations and would like to work together with you to push forward the greater development of China – Sri Lanka strategic Cooperative Partnership featuring mutual support and ever-lasting friendship and better serve both countries and peoples” the Sri Lankan President’s office quoted the Chinese President as saying⁹³.

- **Sri Lanka calls for peaceful solution to situation in Maldives**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Sri Lanka is observing the evolving situation in the Maldives. “We urge all parties to uphold the rule of law and the constitution, and find a peaceful solution to the current situation,” the Foreign Ministry said⁹⁴.

TNA wants solution on par with Oslo Declaration

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in its manifesto for the forthcoming local government election said that that the solution it seeks with regard to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka was similar to what was in the Oslo Declaration. This was the joint declaration by the representatives of the then UNF government and the LTTE at the third round of peace talks between the two parties in 2002. The UNF delegation headed by Professor G. L. Peiris and the LTTE delegation led by its political wing head S. P. Thamilselvan agreed in the Norwegian Capital Oslo in

⁹¹ Sri Lanka apparel exports hit USD 4.8 billion in 2017, 3rd February 2018,

<https://www.news.lk/news/world/item/19438-sri-lanka-apparel-exports-hit-usd-4-8-billion-in-2017>

⁹² Modi wants to take relationship with Sri Lanka to higher levels, 3rd February 2018,

<http://colombogazette.com/2018/02/03/modi-wants-to-take-relationship-with-sri-lanka-to-higher-levels/>

⁹³ China seeks to push forward development agenda with Sri Lanka, 4th February 2018,

<http://colombogazette.com/2018/02/04/china-seeks-to-push-forward-development-agenda-with-sri-lanka/>

⁹⁴ Sri Lanka calls for peaceful solution to situation in Maldives, 3rd February 2018,

<http://colombogazette.com/2018/02/03/sri-lanka-calls-for-peaceful-solution-to-situation-in-maldives/>

November/December, 2002 to "explore a political solution founded on internal self-determination based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka."⁹⁵

Maldives

- **Supreme Court orders Nasheed's release in landmark ruling**

The Supreme Court has ordered the immediate release of high-profile prisoners including the former president Mohamed Nasheed and former vice president Ahmed Adeen. In a landmark statement the Supreme Court said the prisoners were free until fair trials could be conducted without undue influence.

Hundreds of people poured onto the streets of the capital Malé, cheering, singing, chanting and waving flags as police started to gather near the crowds. Prayers were being recited at an opposition rally, with people saying: "The government is over Allah akbar"⁹⁶.

- **India, UK, US call on Maldives to comply with top court ruling**

Several nations have taken up the call for the government of the Maldives to abide by the landmark ruling issued by the Supreme Court on 1st February to release nine convicted political leaders and reinstate 12 disqualified lawmakers. In the unprecedented court order, the apex court ordered the immediate release of former President Mohamed Nasheed, Jumhoory Party leader Qasim Ibrahim, Adhaalath Party leader Sheikh Imran Abdulla, along with former Vice President Ahmed Adheeb, former defence minister Mohamed Nazim, Dhiggaru MP Faris Maumoon, former prosecutor general Muhthaz Muhusin, former magistrate Ahmed Nihan, and local businessman Hamid Ismail.

In a press release Friday, India's external affairs ministry stated, "In the spirit of democracy and rule of law, it is imperative for all organs of the Government of Maldives to respect and abide by the order of the apex court." Further urging the authorities to ensure the safety and security of Indian expatriates in the Maldives, the ministry said it was closely monitoring the situation and "wishes to see a stable, peaceful and prosperous Maldives"⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ TNA wants solution on par with Oslo Declaration, 2nd February 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/TNA-wants-solution-on-par-with-Oslo-Declaration-145021.html>

⁹⁶ Supreme Court orders Nasheed's release in landmark ruling, 1st February 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/supreme-court-orders-nasheeds-release-landmark-ruling-135502>

⁹⁷ India, UK, US call on Maldives to comply with top court ruling, 2nd February 20178, <http://en.mihaaru.com/india-uk-us-call-on-maldives-to-comply-with-top-court-ruling/>

- **Supreme Court order came “out of the blue”: President Yameen**

The Supreme Court’s order that freed the several opposition leaders and reinstated the expelled lawmakers came as a shock to the government, President Abdulla Yameen revealed Saturday during his first public appearance since the unprecedented ruling was issued on 1st February. The president had also announced that he would be starting his presidential re-election campaign immediately. Several ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) supporters had gathered near the party’s main hub at the western end of the capital on 4th February evening to show their support to the president. Addressing the crowd, Yameen insisted that the government should be given more time to analyse the court’s ruling, and admitted that it was not the outcome that the ruling government was expecting⁹⁸.

- **Will not comply with any top court order to impeach president’**

Attorney General Mohamed Anil on 4th February revealed that he has advised security forces against complying with any order from the Supreme Court to impeach President Abdulla Yameen, to which the police and military have agreed. In a joint statement with Chief of Defence Force Major General Ahmed Shiyam and acting Commissioner of Police Abdulla Nawaz, which was delivered via state media PSM, AG Anil declared that there were rumours of the apex court preparing to order the president’s impeachment as per the opposition’s wishes which would lead to a “national crisis”.⁹⁹

West Asia

Turkey

- **Get in touch with Syrian govt, says CHP head Kılıçdaroğlu¹⁰⁰**

Ankara should immediately get in touch with the Syrian government in order to help bring the war in Turkey’s southern neighbor to an end, main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has said.

He made the call during his speech at the CHP’s 36th ordinary congress in Ankara on Feb. 3, at which he was reelected as party leader.

⁹⁸ Supreme Court order came “out of the blue”: President Yameen, 4th February 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/supreme-court-order-came-out-of-the-blue-president-yameen/>

⁹⁹ Will not comply with any top court order to impeach president’, 4th February 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/will-not-comply-with-any-top-court-order-to-impeach-president/>

¹⁰⁰ Hurriyet Daily News, 5 February 2017, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/get-in-touch-with-syrian-govt-says-chp-head-kilicdaroglu-126751>

His comments came after he told reporters on Jan. 29 that “the way to make peace between Turkey and Syria ... and to jointly focus on maintaining [Syria’s] territorial integrity is [to establish] dialogue between Turkey and Syria.”

Kılıçdaroğlu also hailed the soldiers on duty in Turkey’s ongoing cross-border operation into the northern Syrian district of Afrin against the Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG).

“Those in power are trying to represent the Afrin operation as a decision made by their party ... This struggle is for the sake of Turkey, not for [them]. They should get into contact with the Syrian government immediately. If the territorial integrity of Syria is to be guaranteed and bloodshed is to be ceased, the Syrian state and government should be contacted. The place for a solution to this is the Grand National Assembly of Turkey,” he said.

The CHP leader told delegates at the congress that “the fragile balance between the Kurdish question and the terror problem should be addressed very carefully,” while again promising to “quit politics” if he is not able to solve the Kurdish question within four years of the CHP coming to power.

Questioned about Kılıçdaroğlu’s remarks during an interview on private broadcaster CNN Türk on Feb. 4, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ stressed that Turkey has “no intention” of keeping forces in Syria over the long term.

“The steps taken by us are fulfilling serious duties with regard to accelerating a political solution,” Bozdağ said, referring to peace talks being held in Astana, Sochi and Geneva upon initiatives from Turkey, Russia, Iran and the U.S.

- **Erdoğan, Macron discuss Afrin operation, YPG rocket attacks over phone¹⁰¹**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron discussed on Feb. 3 Turkey’s ongoing “Operation Olive Branch” in Syria’s northwestern district of Afrin over the phone, state-run Anadolu Agency quoted a Turkish presidential source as saying.

Sharing information about the military operation, Erdoğan told Macron that the operation aims to clear the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), its armed wing the People’s Protection Units (YPG) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from Afrin, according to the source.

Erdoğan also said Turkey does not have any designs on the country’s territory.

¹⁰¹ Hurriyet Daily News, 5 February 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-macron-discuss-afrin-operation-ypg-rocket-attacks-over-phone-126744>

In addition, the Turkish President spoke to his French counterpart about the cross-border rocket attacks perpetrated by the YPG on Turkey's bordering Hatay and Kilis provinces.

Macron had infuriated Ankara last week when he said the operation in Afrin should not become an excuse to "invade" Syria and that he wanted Ankara to coordinate its actions with its allies.

- **Eight Turkish soldiers killed in Afrin operation in one day¹⁰²**

Eight Turkish soldiers were killed on Feb. 3 during "Operation Olive Branch," according to a Turkish General Staff statement that marked the deadliest day yet for the Turkish Army since the operation into Syria's Afrin district began on Jan. 20.

The statement said one soldier was killed in clashes with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and the other in Turkey's southern province of Kilis in an attack perpetrated by the YPG.

Later on Feb. 3, the Turkish General Staff said five more soldiers had been killed in Sheikh Haruz, northeast of Afrin, when the militants targeted a Turkish army tank.

Immediately after the attack at Sheikh Haruz, an air operation targeting shelters, hideouts and weapon emplacements in the area was launched at 5.52 p.m. local time.

- **Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu re-elected as Turkey's main opposition CHP chair¹⁰³**

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was re-elected for a 5th term as chair of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) late on Feb. 3. Voting was held in the capital, Ankara, at the party's 36th ordinary congress chaired by Yılmaz Büyükerşen, mayor of the Central Anatolian province of Eskişehir.

Kılıçaroğlu won 790 votes while his main challenger, Muharrem İnce, a deputy from northwestern province of Yalova, secured 447 votes. Thirteen delegates abstained from voting.

İnce had run for the leadership against Kılıçdaroğlu in the party's 2014 congress, in which 740 delegates voted for Kılıçdaroğlu and 415 for İnce. Earlier in the day, confusion broke out in the congress as 49 delegates backed both Kılıçdaroğlu and İnce, putting İnce's nomination at risk.

¹⁰² Hurriyet Daily News, 5 February 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/two-soldiers-killed-in-attacks-in-syrias-afrin-turkeys-kilis-126739>

¹⁰³ Hurriyet Daily News, 5 February 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/kemal-kilicdaroglu-re-elected-as-chp-chair-126734>

Officials from the CHP stated that Kılıçdaroğlu asked for the 49 signatures to be counted for İnce, criticizing the nomination process during his speech at the congress. İnce, however, said the CHP administration is trying to undermine support for him with such an argument.

- **Turkish troops 'getting close' to Afrin city: Erdoğan¹⁰⁴**

Turkish troops are getting closer to Syria's Afrin city center, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Feb. 3. Turkey's ongoing Operation Olive Branch in Afrin is now in its third week.

Speaking at an ordinary congress of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the eastern province of Bitlis, Erdoğan said: "We are advancing into Afrin [city center]. We are close." Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch on Jan. 20 along with Free Syrian Army (FSA) to clear YPG and ISIL militants from Afrin, northwestern Syria.

- **Erdoğan to visit Vatican and Rome to discuss Jerusalem, terrorism, Islamophobia¹⁰⁵**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will travel to Vatican City on Sunday evening to meet with Pope Francis. During a news conference at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport State Guest House, Erdoğan called the visit a "significant opportunity" to convey messages of peace. "I see this visit as a significant opportunity in terms of drawing attention to common human values, friendship and peace messages," the president told reporters.

"We will discuss Palestine, Jerusalem, Syria, Iraq, the fight against terrorism, the problems of refugees, humanitarian aid and the fight against rising Islamophobia and cultural racism in the West," he said, referring to his meeting with Pope Francis.

Erdoğan added that the visit would include discussion on bilateral steps toward increased economic cooperation. "The bilateral trade volume [between Turkey and Italy] last year neared \$20 billion, but the potential of the two countries it is more than that. We aim to reach \$30 billion by 2020," he said, noting that Italy is Turkey's third biggest trading partner.

Speaking early in the day in an exclusive interview with the Italian daily La Stampa, Erdoğan touched on the the Jerusalem issue, which is expected to top the Vatican meeting. "Pope Francis conveyed the right message to the Christian world because Jerusalem is not the only issue of Muslims. We both advocate the status of Jerusalem and will have to protect it," he noted.

¹⁰⁴ Hurriyet Daily News, 5 February 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-troops-getting-close-to-afrin-city-erdogan-126736>

¹⁰⁵ Daily Sabah, 5 February 2017. <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/02/04/erdogan-to-discuss-jerusalem-terrorism-islamophobia-with-pope-francis-on-vatican-visit>

- **US military convoy passes through KRG-controlled Fishabur border crossing into PYD-held Qamishlo¹⁰⁶**

A U.S. military convoy passed through Fishabur border crossing, which sits on the border between Syrian territory controlled by PYD terrorists and Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a reporter from K24 news website said in a tweet late Sunday.

In the video-attached tweet, military vehicles belonging to the U.S. military are seen passing through the border in single file. The U.S. has long ignored its NATO ally Turkey's repeated warnings against aiding and abetting a terrorist group. Turkey has been fighting PKK, the PYD's affiliate operating in Turkish and Iraqi territories and recognized globally as a terrorist group, for over 40 years.

On Jan. 20, the Turkish army launched Operation Olive Branch to remove PYD/PKK and Daesh terrorists from Afrin. According to the Turkish General Staff, the operation aims to establish security and stability along Turkey's borders and the region as well as protect Syrians from terrorist oppression and cruelty.

Cyber Security

- **Assam to become digital hub: Prasad¹⁰⁷**

On 4 February 2018, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shanker Prasad at the valedictory session of global investors' summit 'Advantage Assam' declared that Assam would soon be the digital hub of the country. The summit witnessed presence of internationally well-known IT companies such as Microsoft, IBM, C-DACT. The main motive behind the summit is to bring together all the states of North East on a common platform, sending out a strong message to the ASEAN. The IT minister further added to make Guwahati, the capital of Assam as the gateway to ASEAN countries by launching a number of IT based projects and digitally laid the groundwork for tech City Electronic Manufacturing Cluster. The minister said, "Speaking about the Rs 119.89 crore Tech City Electronic Manufacturing Cluster on 100 acres in Guwahati projected to employment opportunities to 8000 people". The summit established National Internet Exchange of India point (NIXI) and NIC Excellence Cyber Security centre near Guwahati, making internet more efficient in the region.

¹⁰⁶ Daily Sabah, 5 February 2017. <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/02/05/us-military-convoy-passes-through-kr-g-controlled-fishabur-border-crossing-into-pyd-held-qamishlo>

¹⁰⁷ <https://news.webindia123.com/news/Articles/India/20180204/3268761.html>, 4 February 2018.

- **Digital India to push AI, ML, blockchain, doubles allocation to Rs 3,073 crore¹⁰⁸**

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley allocated Rs 3,073 crore for digital India program in the current budget with more stress to bring competence in the education sector by bringing deeper technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, robotics and blockchain. The Finance Minister said, “NITI Aayog will initiate a national programme to direct our efforts in the area of artificial intelligence, including research and development of its applications. Technology will be the biggest driver in improving the quality of education. We propose to increase the digital intensity in education and move gradually from blackboard to digital board. Technology will also be used to upgrade the skills of teachers through the recently launched digital portal Diksha”. The government is hopeful that it would bring upsurge of development in the country.

- **Hacking threats loom over 2018 Olympics¹⁰⁹**

At the outset of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea on 9 February 2018, there has been high alert with regard to cyber security due to increasing fear among masses for phishing scams, hacking and other cyber challenges on part of criminals and cyber warriors. Paul Martini, CEO of iboss, network Security Company said, “It’s growing at an exponential rate. The accessibility to technology to enable criminal activity is just easier and easier.” Mark Nunnikhoven, vice president of cloud research at Trend Micro, also added, “Behind the scenes, there’s a significant increase in attacks around Olympic supporting systems and the games themselves”. It was earlier reported that Fancy Bear, a cyber espionage group, alleged to have links with Russian government, targeted organisers of the game and hacked emails and documents from the International Olympic Committee. Therefore, cyber security became the main concern at the game and all travellers had been warned that criminals could steal their personal information to gain financially.

¹⁰⁸ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/trend-tracking/digital-india-to-push-ai-ml-blockchain-doubles-allocation-to-rs-3073-crore/articleshow/62750007.cms>, 2 February 2018.

¹⁰⁹ <http://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/371883-hacking-threats-loom-over-2018-olympics>, 3 February 2018.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Sr. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	January 30	Mosul	A policeman was killed in a bomb explosion targeting their vehicle in Hammam al-Alil, south of Mosul. ¹¹⁰	1	0
2	January 31	Kirkuk	Security forces killed two Islamic State (IS) suicide bombers and arrested three others during a military operation in Hawija. ¹¹¹	2	0
3	January 31	Diyala	The Iraqi army destroyed two IS hotbeds and an explosive-laden vehicle during a military operation in al-Nada area.	operation	
4	February 1	Anbar	One of the border guards was killed, while four others were wounded in an explosion near al-Waleed border crossing. ¹¹²	1	4
5	February 4	Baghdad	Three people, including a colonel, were seriously injured as a bomb exploded in Sabaa al-Bour city. ¹¹³	0	3

¹¹⁰ Nehal Mostafa, Policeman killed in bomb explosion, U.S-Coalition bombards Islamic State locations in Mosul, *Iraqi News*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/policeman-killed-bomb-explosion-u-s-coalition-bombards-islamic-state-locations-mosul/>, accessed on February 5, 2018

¹¹¹ Mohammed Ebraheem, Two Islamic State suicide bombers killed in Kirkuk military operation, *Iraqi News*, January 31, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/two-islamic-state-suicide-bombers-killed-kirkuk-military-operation/>, accessed on February 5, 2018

¹¹² Nehal Mostafa, Border guards personnel killed, injured in bomb explosion, west of Anbar, *Iraqi News*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/border-guards-personnel-killed-injured-bomb-explosion-west-anbar/>, accessed on February 5, 2018

¹¹³ Mohammed Ebraheem, Three people, including colonel, injured in Baghdad bomb blast, *Iraqi News*, February 4, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-people-including-colonel-injured-baghdad-bomb-blast/>, accessed on February 5, 2018