

Weekly Media Updates
(26 February - 04 March, 2018)

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Africa

- **Planned Indian military base in Seychelles**¹

A plan for India to build a military base on an outlying Seychelles island has won favour among the archipelago nation's politicians, but some hostility from its people. The base on Assumption Island is to be funded by India and shared by the two countries' militaries. The deal was struck in principle in 2015 during a visit to the Seychelles by India's prime minister Narendra Modi, but progress since has been slow. The government of the Seychelles India plans to invest \$550 million dollars (446 million euros) in building the base to help it ensure the safety of its vessels in the southern Indian Ocean. It also says the base will be a resource for other shipping nations. India's ambassador in Victoria, Ausaf Sayeed, has said that "Assumption is very close to the Mozambique Channel where much of the international trade is transiting, and not just for India but for other countries as well, and our interest is that our trading vessels are safe".

India has had a military cooperation agreement with the Seychelles since 2003 and the deal would give it use of the Assumption base for up to 30 years. Indian soldiers would be deployed on the island and help train Seychelles' troops. But ratification of the 2015 agreement has been slow with a new, amended pact only signed between the two countries on January 27. Frank Ally, the Seychelles' attorney general has said that in relation to the first agreement some points that could give rise to litigation have been clarified. These included a prohibition on any nuclear uses of the island or weapons storage. India is also not allowed to use Assumption in war.

Seeking to allay fears the government has made available to the public some details of the classified defence agreement. Despite some dissenting voices, Ausaf Sayeed remains positive that parliament will ratify the new agreement when it reopens this month.

- **.Ghana Backs Germany for UN Security Council Seat During Berlin Talks**²

Calling for reform of the UN Security Council, President Nana Akufo Addo said he supported Germany's claim for a permanent seat, after meeting Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on 28 February 2018, Wednesday.

The UN's top council for international peace and security has retained the same form it had after World War Two and does not reflect today's reality, Akufo Addo said at a joint press conference with Merkel.

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

² Deutsche Welle, 28 February 2018, http://allafrica.com/stories/201803010001.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aacblp

Merkel said the federal government would back an application from Ghana for one of the non-permanent seats. She further said the two countries would work together to develop a way for Ghanaians who were not entitled to asylum in Germany to return to their homeland and also to develop economic opportunities in the West African state.

Up to 50,000 people of Ghanaian origin are believed to be living in Germany; the second largest of the country's diaspora populations in Europe, after the UK. The Volta Region of Ghana was part of the German colony of Togo before World War One. German and Ghanaian authorities opened a migration center in Accra last December in an effort to facilitate legal migration for study and training in Germany.

Ghana is part of the G20 "Compact with Africa" initiative for investment in African countries. Akufo-Addo said his government aimed to avoid dependence on foreign aid.

In December, Berlin announced a further €100 million (\$122 million) in funding for Ghana and earlier this week, the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry called for more federal government support for business with Africa. Merkel offered Ghana Germany's help in finding investors, so long as the country created the necessary conditions for it.

- **South Africa Votes to Seize Land from White Farmers without Compensation³**

South Africa's parliament has passed a motion to seize land from white farmers without paying them compensation. Passed by an overwhelming majority of 241 votes to 83 votes against, the proposal to amend Section 25 of the constitution would allow expropriation of land without any financial recompense. It was put forward by the radical left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party, whose leader Julius Malema told the country's parliament: "We must ensure that we restore the dignity of our people without compensating the criminals who stole our land." The ruling African National Congress (ANC) amended but supported the motion. South Africa's new president, Cyril Ramaphosa, said he would speed up the transfer of land from white to black owners after his inauguration two weeks ago. But he stressed it must be conducted in a manner which preserved food production and security. He said, "There is no need for any one of us to panic and start beating war drums". The official opposition, the Democratic Alliance party (DA) opposed the motion, arguing changes to Section 25 will undermine property rights and scare off potential investors. The DA's Thandeka Mbabama told parliament expropriation without compensation was a way to divert attention from the failure by successive ANC-led governments to get to grips with the issue.

- **US\$50-million Cryptocurrency Scam Cripples South African Investors⁴**

³ Independent, 1 March 2018, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/south-africa-white-farms-land-seizure-anc-race-relations-a8234461.html>

More than 27,500 people, including South Africans, Americans and Australians have been duped by the one of biggest bitcoin scams to hit South Africa. Hawks spokesman Captain Lloyd Ramovha on Thursday confirmed that the serious commercial crimes unit was investigating complaints against BTC global, a company in which thousands invested cryptocurrency valued at over US\$50-million by transferring bitcoins into an online wallet address. The amount could rise as more victims come forward. It was not clear if the scam artists were South Africans. Numerous victims from across the country told Times LIVE that they had invested between R16,000 and R1.4-million with BTC Global as forex and commodities trader “Steve Twain” was a “master trader”. They received inconsistent weekly payouts until “Twain” disappeared two weeks ago. They now believe that “Twain” did not exist.

- **Kenyan Conservationists Protest as Chinese Company Starts Work on Railway⁵**

Kenyan conservationists have expressed outrage at the construction of a railway line inside Nairobi’s famed national park, saying this defied a court order halting the project. A proposed extension of the Chinese-built railway – Kenya’s biggest infrastructure project since independence – through the vast wildlife reserve on the outskirts of Nairobi has been tied up in legal battles since 2016. However last week, cranes, heavy machinery and scores of workers from the China Road and Bridge Corporation set up inside the park borders, working furiously inside an area cordoned off and protected by armed rangers. A small group of activists held a protest on Thursday to demand that the government comply with court orders stopping construction. “It is very disappointing. The government is openly breaking the law,” said one protester, Catherine Chumo. A first 483km (300-mile) railway line from Mombasa to a terminal east of the Nairobi national park was completed in 2017. The second phase through the park is being portrayed as vital to Kenya’s ambitions to eventually link to its regional neighbours. While the protesters insist the stop order is still in place, Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) insists construction is taking place legally.

- **Ethiopia’s Ruling Party to Choose New Leader as Protests Rage⁶**

Ethiopia’s ruling party will soon meet to elect a new leader, two weeks after Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned amid the worst anti-government protests in a quarter century. The choice of a new chairman of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front is likely to demonstrate the party’s commitment to political reform as it seeks to reassert control over one of Africa’s fastest-growing economies and second-most populous nation, according to analysts including Ahmed Salim at Teneo Intelligence in Dubai. The EPRDF may select its leader from either the Oromo or Amhara communities, whose members make up more than half of the

⁴ Sunday Times, 1 March 2018, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-03-01-50-million-cryptocurrency-scam-cripples-south-african-investors/>

⁵ The Guardian, 1 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/01/kenyan-conservationists-protest-as-chinese-company-starts-work-on-railway>

⁶ Bloomberg, 2 March 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-02/ethiopia-s-ruling-party-to-choose-new-leader-as-protests-rage>

population of 105 million and have demanded greater political representation since 2015 in sporadic, often deadly protests. The party has been dominated by minority ethnic Tigrayans, who have held key economic and military positions since it overthrew the country's military junta in 1991.

- **Ethiopia to Join Somaliland, UAE Port Development Venture⁷**

Dubai's state-owned DP World said that the Ethiopian government had taken a 19 per cent stake in Somaliland's Port of Berbera. The port operator said it would retain a 51 per cent stake in the port and that Somaliland would retain 30 per cent. DP World took a 65 per cent stake in the port in 2016 as part of a joint venture with the government of Somaliland under a 30-year concession. Financial details were not disclosed but the statement said the Ethiopian government would invest to develop the Berbera Corridor, a road from the border with Ethiopia to Berbera.

- **Rio Tinto's Mozambique Woes Mount as Australian Watchdog Takes Company to Court⁸**

Australia's corporate watchdog said on Friday it has launched court action against global miner Rio Tinto and two former executives for misleading investors about the coal reserves it reported in a US\$4 billion acquisition in Mozambique. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission said the company and its former Chief Executive Tom Albanese and former Chief Financial Officer Guy Elliott had made deceptive statements in their 2011 annual report, published in 2012. Rio Tinto had no immediate comment on ASIC's action, but has previously denied any wrongdoing in a similar case brought by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Rio Tinto now faces court cases in the United States and Australia over the disastrous acquisition of Riversdale in Mozambique, with the US SEC having charged the company, Albanese and Elliott with fraud. The SEC alleges that the company and executives inflated the value of coal assets in Mozambique and concealed critical information while tapping the market for billions of dollars.

- **IMF Expects Mozambique to Default on Foreign Debt Until 2023⁹**

Mozambique won't make payments for at least five more years on about US\$2 billion of loans that led to a default last year, according to the International Monetary Fund. The government has amassed US\$710 million of arrears on the debt, most of which it previously hid from the Washington-based lender, according to an Article IV report and an associated Debt Sustainability Analysis to be submitted to the fund's board on March 2, 2018. The documents were shown to Bloomberg by two people who declined

⁷ Al Jazeera, 1 March 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/ethiopia-join-somaliland-uae-port-development-venture-180301151054778.html>

⁸ Today Online, 2 March 2018, <https://www.todayonline.com/world/australia-watchdog-takes-rio-tinto-former-executives-court-over-mozambique-losses>

⁹ Bloomberg, 28 February 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-28/imf-expects-mozambique-to-default-on-external-debt-until-2023>

to be identified because they've not been published yet. The IMF report and its assumptions are likely to play a key role in the debt restructuring discussions Mozambique plans to hold with its commercial creditors. "It is staff's understanding that the authorities plan to hold off on making payments on the defaulted loans," the fund said in the report. Arrears are expected to accumulate until 2023, when Mozambique will start producing gas from large offshore deposits, the IMF said.

- **Mozambique and Switzerland Sign Framework Agreement for Development Cooperation¹⁰**

The Mozambican and Swiss governments on Wednesday, at the end of an official visit to Switzerland by President Filipe Nyusi, signed an institutional framework agreement for development cooperation. The document was signed after official talks in Bern between delegations of the two countries, led by Nyusi and his Swiss counterpart, Alain Berset. Nyusi told reporters that the agreement will be the basis for driving cooperation between the two countries. Despite the issue of the "hidden debt" between the two countries, Swiss project aid to Mozambique has continued. Berset said this aid is concentrated on the three northern provinces (Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado), in the areas of health, education, water supply and infrastructures. This project aid is budgeted at seven million Swiss francs (4.4 million US dollars), for the period 2017-2020. Berset added that Switzerland would be willing to help the Mozambican government renegotiate its public debt with the creditors.

- **Tanzania opposition MP Jailed Five Months for Insulting Magufuli¹¹**

A court in Tanzania sentenced two opposition leaders to five months in prison on Monday for insulting President John Magufuli. The decision is likely to fuel criticism that authorities are undermining democracy and stifling free speech. The court in the southern highlands convicted Joseph Mbilinyi, a lawmaker from the main opposition Chadema party, and local leader for the party Emmanuel Masonga for using abusive language against the president at a public rally in December. Court documents seen by Reuters show that Mbilinyi was accused of associating Magufuli with an alleged assassination attempt on vocal opposition MP Tundu Lissu, a fierce critic of Magufuli's government, last year. Magufuli had condemned the attack on the opposition lawmaker and called for a swift investigation. More than 10 people, including university students and a lecturer, have been charged in court over the past two years with insulting the President via social networking platform like Whatsapp. Insulting the President on social media was made a criminal offence under a cyber crimes law passed in 2015 before Magufuli came into office.

¹⁰ Club of Mozambique, 2 March 2018, <http://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-and-switzerland-sign-framework-agreement/>

¹¹ The Star, 26 February 2018, https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/02/26/tanzania-opposition-mp-jailed-five-months-for-insulting-magufuli_c1721104

- **Tanzania Omits Kenya from Preferential Transport Deal¹²**

Kenya has been left out of a new deal brokered by Tanzania that seeks to lower cross-border charges on trucks ferrying goods across the borders. The deal announced by the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency (CCTTFA) will see Ugandan and Burundian trucks that cross Tanzanian borders charged US\$152 from US\$500 that was charged before. Kenyan trucks have been excluded from the deal. CCTTFA Executive Secretary Dieudonne Dukundane said during a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) capacity building workshop in Arusha that cross-border charges have been a huge impediment to free flow of trade and need to be harmonised. “The three countries of Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi have agreed to lower these charges,” Mr, Dukundane told Tanzanian daily, The Citizen.

- **AMISOM Heads Meet amid Security Concerns about Somalia, Plan to Withdraw Troops¹³**

Officials from countries that contribute to AMISOM, the African Union force in Somalia, are meeting this week in Uganda to discuss a transitional security plan for the troubled country. While AMISOM has made gains in Somalia, the risks still presented by militant group al-Shabab remain vivid due to inadequate funding and troop numbers. Over the past few years, AMISOM has pushed al-Shabab away from major cities, and the federal government of Somalia has taken steps toward stability. With foreign help, the Somali security forces have grown stronger, and political leaders are aiming to hold nationwide elections in 2020. These gains, however, are being undermined by inadequate troop numbers and lack of predictable and sustainable funding to fight al-Shabaab and a small faction of Islamic State fighters in the north. The AMISOM troop contributing countries are planning to start a drawdown of their troops in Somalia this year, and withdraw all of them by the end of 2020. Ugandan Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa says it is essential that the Somali government intensify its effort to provide security for its people.

- **Djibouti Ruling Party Claims Landslide Parliamentary Win¹⁴**

President Ismael Omar Guelleh's ruling party claimed a resounding victory in Friday's parliamentary elections in Djibouti, taking nearly 90 per cent of seats after the opposition largely boycotted the poll. Mohamed Abdallah Mahyoub, a senior member of Guelleh's UMP party and campaign spokesman, told AFP late Sunday that the party had won 58 out of 65 parliamentary seats, an increase of three since the last vote in 2013. There was no immediate figure for turnout among the tiny Horn of Africa nation's 194,000 registered voters. Guelleh has ruled Djibouti since 1999 and was last

¹² Standard Digital, 3 March 2018, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2001271778/tanzania-omits-kenya-from-preferential-transport-deal>

¹³ Voice of America, 1 March 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/amisom-heads-meet-amid-security-concerns-about-somalia/4276205.html>

¹⁴ eNCA.com, 26 February 2018, <http://www.enca.com/africa/djibouti-ruling-party-claims-landslide-parliamentary-win>

re-elected in 2016 with 87 per cent of the vote. The UMP's victory has helped by the badly-divided opposition with two parties - MRD and RADDE and a faction of a third party, ARD - refusing to put forward any candidates, saying the elections would neither be fair nor transparent while others accused the election commission of bias.

- **Ghana's UN Peacekeepers Recalled in South Sudan over Sex Claims¹⁵**

A United Nations spokesman said on Monday that 46 police sent from Ghana had been confined to barracks in Juba on Saturday after a preliminary probe showed they had been "engaging in sexual activity with women" living at a UN site to protect civilians in South Sudan. "The information received indicates that some members of police unit FPU (Formed Police Unit) allegedly engaged in transactional sex," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. The UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan has a "zero tolerance, no excuses, and no second chances approach to sexual exploitation and abuse," he said. There was no indication that the behaviour was more widespread than within the site. Ghana is cooperating with the UN to carry out a full investigation of the complaint received on February 8, the spokesman added.

- **Sudan to Return Ambassador to Cairo: Foreign Minister¹⁶**

Sudan will send its ambassador back to neighbouring Egypt on Monday, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said, two months after withdrawing him amid heightened tensions. Khartoum has not explained why it recalled Abdel Mahmoud Abdel Halim early in January. But disputes over the ownership of the Halayeb Triangle border area and Egyptian suspicion of a Sudan-Turkey naval agreement have strained ties. A committee including the foreign ministers and heads of intelligence from both countries met in Cairo last month in an attempt to cool tensions. Sudan has accused Cairo of political meddling and banned imports of Egyptian agricultural products last year.

- **Kenya Denies Fuelling South Sudan Conflict¹⁷**

Kenya has denied a UN claim it was fuelling conflict in South Sudan by allowing the flow of weapons, even as Juba defended its right to buy arms. In what looked like another tiff with the UN, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma Monday rejected claims by UN Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng. Mr. Dieng had claimed Kenya and Uganda were adding fuel to the chaos in South Sudan. "The allegations by the senior UN official insinuating Kenya's complicity in trafficking large quantities of weapons and ammunition into South Sudan, are not only unfortunate, but also lack facts," Monica Juma said, accusing the official of frustrating efforts by regional countries to bring parties to peace talks.

¹⁵ Deutsche Welle, 26 February 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/ghanas-un-peacekeepers-recalled-in-south-sudan-over-sex-claims/a-42750817>

¹⁶ Reuters, 3 March 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-egypt/sudan-to-return-ambassador-to-cairo-foreign-minister-idUSKCN1GF06W>

¹⁷ Daily Nation, 27 February 2018, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Kenya-denies-fuelling-S-Sudan-conflict/1056-4320972-mo1f6pz/index.html>

- **Zimbabwe Elections Window Announced¹⁸**

Zimbabwe's 2018 harmonised elections will be held between July 21 and August 21, the country's electoral body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has said. ZEC chairperson Justice Priscilla Chigumba said on Monday that while it is the prerogative of the President to proclaim the election date, it is done within the confines of the Constitution. Section 158(1)(a) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe "outlines (that) a general election must take place not more than 30 days before the expiry of the five year period". "The last general elections were held on July 31, 2013 and the President-elect was sworn and assumed office on August 22," Chigumba, who was appointed new ZEC chair on January 31, said. Zimbabwe will go to elections for the first time since the coming to the fore of main opposition party MDC-T without Robert Mugabe, who was deposed in November 2017 during a military takeover, and Morgan Tsvangirai, who died on February 14 after battling colon cancer for about two years.

- **Angola's Sonangol Prepares Sale of Oil-Block, Bank Stakes¹⁹**

Angola's Sonangol plans to sell stakes in oil blocks and several local banks as the state-owned company seeks to recover from the crude-market slump that began in 2014. Chairman Carlos Saturnino is trying to reduce debt and bolster revenue at a company that's a key economic driver for the southern African nation: oil accounts for more than 90 per cent of Angola's exports. Sonangol will open a tender for possible bidders to study its stakes in Blocks 21/09 and 20/11 off the coast of Angola, Saturnino told reporters in the capital, Luanda, on Wednesday. Sonangol's debt declined to US\$4.8 billion in 2017 from US\$9.8 billion a year earlier after the government provided the company with US\$10 billion in financing, the chairman said.

North Africa

- **Israeli Airways Company Seek Permission to Use Saudi Air Space²⁰**

According to an Israeli Daily, Israeli Airways Company, El-Al, the largest air enterprises in the country, has contacted the international civil aviation organization to help it get permission from the Saudi Arabia to use its air space for flying to India. It is also learnt that the company has made similar request to Prime Minister Netanyahu. The sources made it clear that it is merely a commercial demand and if permitted, the travel time between India and Israel would be reduced by two hours and eventually will reduce the travel cost as well. This will also rescue the company

¹⁸ eNCA.com, 27 February 2018, <https://www.enca.com/africa/2018-zimbabwe-election-date-confirmed>

¹⁹ Bloomberg, 28 February 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-28/angola-s-sonangol-prepares-sale-of-stakes-in-oil-blocks-banks>

²⁰ Rail Youm, An Arabic Daily <https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%91%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8B%D8%A7-%D8%B1/>

from going bankrupt because in recent months the company has been facing tough competition from other foreign airways companies. It is worth mentioning here that this particular issue of air services between Israel and India had come for discussion when Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu had visited India two months ago. It was only then decided that Israel would make request to the Saudi authority to allow its air space for Israeli company and they are still waiting for the words from Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Suleiman.

The sources also mentioned that the historic visit of Netanyahu paved the way for laying down the new template of relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel and if the Israel Company gets their nod to fly over the Saudi Arabia, the ties between two would reach a new height. Any permission in this regard would help Israel to smooth its bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia through India. The officials at India Airways have also confirmed to the Israel sources that they would also make the similar request to the Saudi authority to allow it to use their air space to fly to Tel Aviv. In a related development, the former chief of Mossad said that there is nothing common between Israel and Saudi Arabia except the satanic Iran which are equally hostile to both otherwise Saudi Arabia is a conservative and backward nation while Israel is secular and progressive country.

Central Asia

- **India's Medical Assistance to Benefit Kyrgyz People**

The National Oncology Centre at Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan held a ceremony to launch a new Bhabhatron-II radiotherapy device. The equipment has been donated by India.²¹ The Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Sapar Isakov was present at the ceremony. He said that during his meeting with Prime Minister Modi in Davos he had sought one more such device for the oncological centre in Osh, located in the country's south. The event was also attended by Indian Ambassador Ms. L. Savithri and Minister of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic Talantbek Batyraliev.

Cooperation in healthcare sector has been growing between India and Kyrgyz Republic. The availability of telemedicine linkage with India has been popular in Kyrgyzstan. During the Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kyrgyzstan in 2015, a medical facility was inaugurated. It connects the medical facilities in different parts of Kyrgyzstan with highly specialized hospitals in India. This has been the first tele-medical link between India and Central Asia.

²¹ Maria Orlova, 24.kg, "New Radiotherapy device launched in Kyrgyzstan," 24.kg, 26 February 2018, https://24.kg/english/77076_New_radiotherapy_device_launched_in_Kyrgyzstan/

European Union

- **SPD Members Approved Coalition Deal in Germany**

Members of Social Democratic Party (SPD) have approved the coalition deal with the Conservatives. 64 percent of party members who voted supported a continuation of the grand coalition with Chancellor Merkel Party - CDU, while 34 percent opposed it. As reported, more than 450000 members of SPD had been called upon to cast their votes in a mail-in ballot. Acting party Chairman, Olaf Scholz said, "This wasn't an easy decision for the SPD." He also said, "In the discussion [about the deal], we've come closer together. That gives us the strength for the process of renewal we are embarking upon."²²

- **Italy Elections**

Exit polls predict that Italy's election would result in a hung parliament and a right-of-center alliance led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia has the best chance of leading Italy's next government. According to a Rai exit poll, as reported, Forza Italia along with Northern League and 'Brothers of Italy' would be in the lead.²³

- **French Foreign Minister Visits Iran**

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian arrived in Tehran on 5 March 2018. He will hold talk with Iran on the regional and global issues as well as bilateral relations between the two countries.²⁴ Ahead of the visit to Iran, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said, "There are programmes for missiles that can travel several thousand kilometres, which are not compatible with UN Security Council resolutions and which exceed the needs of defending Iran's borders."²⁵

²² Jefferson Chase, Germany's SPD members approve coalition with Angela Merkel's conservatives, DW, March 5, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/germanys-spd-members-approve-coalition-with-angela-merkels-conservatives/a-42803601>

²³ Italy election to result in hung parliament: exit polls, DW, March 4, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/italy-election-to-result-in-hung-parliament-exit-polls/a-42823814>

²⁴ French foreign minister in Tehran for talks with Iranian officials, IRNA, March 5, 2018, <http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82851606>

²⁵ Iran risks new sanctions over its missile programme, says France's Le Drian, France 24, March 4, 2018, <http://www.france24.com/en/20180304-france-iran-ballistic-missile-programme-concern-le-drian-visit-tehran>

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Abe withdraws key element of labor reforms**

On March 1, 2018, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledge to delete a key part of planned labor reform. Abe's decision to retract the introduction of the "discretionary working system" to more work sectors was announced at an Upper House Budget Committee session after weeks of attacks in the Diet from the opposition bloc about a dubious labor ministry survey cited by the prime minister. The deletion represents a major defeat for his administration in its plan to submit and pass eight labor-related bills in the current Diet session. In general, people under discretionary labor contracts perform specialist jobs and do not work normal hours. They are paid a predetermined amount that assumes they will put in a certain amount of overtime. They are not paid for extra hours worked beyond the assumed time.²⁶

- **LDP settling on Abe's idea to revise Article 9 of Constitution**

On February 28, 2018, during a meeting of the LDP's constitutional reform promotion headquarters, Chairman Hiroyuki Hosoda indicated that a draft proposal related to Article 9 would be put together by mid-March and to follow the direction laid out by Abe. Abe in May 2017 proposed that new wording be added to clearly define the existence of the Self-Defense Forces while also leaving intact the two present paragraphs of Article 9. Under the plan up for party debate, a new clause will be added to Article 9 as "Article 9-2" to provide for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) as "an organization with force existing at the minimum necessary level," while retaining the article's second paragraph, which bans Japan from possessing any war potential.²⁷

- **South Korea to send special envoys to Pyongyang**

On March 2, 2018, South Korean President Moon Jae-in announced that he will send a special envoy to North Korea. A 10-member delegation of South Korean officials led by Chung Eui-yong, head of the National Security Office in the Blue House, will visit North Korea during March 5-6, 2018, to discuss improvement of South-North relations and the "preconditions for a North Korea-U.S. dialogue aimed at the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." Other members of delegation are; Suh Hoon, director of the National Intelligence Service (NIS); Chun Hae-sung, vice minister of unification, which oversees inter-Korean ties; Kim Sang-gyun, second

²⁶ "Under criticism, Abe withdraws key element of labor reforms", The Asahi Shimbun, March 1, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201803010057.html

²⁷ "LDP settling on Abe's idea to revise Article 9 of Constitution", The Asahi Shimbun, March 1, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201803010029.html

deputy director of the NIS; and Yun Kun-young, a senior Blue House official in charge of monitoring state affairs.²⁸

- **US-North Korea dialogue possible 'only under right conditions': President Trump**

On February 26, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump said that talks with North Korea are possible only under the right conditions. His remark comes after the North Korea twice stated its willingness to hold dialogue with Washington. "They want to talk. And we want to talk also, only under the right conditions. Otherwise, we're not talking," Trump said. He did not elaborate on what the conditions would be, but slammed previous U.S. administrations for failing to tackle the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.²⁹

- **Open to dialogue with US: Says North Korea**

On February 26, 2017, South Korea's Presidential office announced that North Korea repeatedly stressed that it is open to dialogue with the United States. "We have revealed multiple times that we are willing to talk to the United States," a senior official quoted Kim Yong-chol, the senior North Korean official who visited the South for the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics, as saying. Kim Yong-chol, vice-chairman of the Party Central Committee and the head, North Korean delegation to the closing ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, made the remark during his meeting with Chung Eui-yong, chief of South Korea's National Security Council and the top security advisor to President Moon Jae-in.³⁰

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Thailand thinking on joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership**

Thailand is considering applying for the 11-nation trade known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which was initiated by former US President Obama. Negotiations over the deal were concluded in January by the countries which include; Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Australia, Mexico, Canada, Peru, Chile, Japan, and New Zealand. These countries account for 13% of global gross domestic product, and the members are expected to sign the text of the agreement next month in Chile. According to Somchai Swangkarn, the government's chief whip in the National Legislative Assembly, the issue on whether to or not to join the TPP is being discussed within the government. He further adds that the Thai government had initially

²⁸ "Moon sends five special envoys to Pyongyang today", Korea JoongAng Daily, March 5, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3045201&cloc=joongangdaily|home|top

²⁹ "Trump says US-North Korea possible 'only under right conditions'", The Korea Times, February 27, 2018, www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/03/103_244818.html

³⁰ "North's delegates insist they want talks with U.S.", Korea JoongAng Daily, February 27, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3044974

intended to sign the TPP, but withdrew as a consequent of the US withdrawal under the Trump administration.³¹

- **President Duterte on Joint exploration with China in the South China Sea**

President Duterte during the inauguration of new housing units in Marawi City on February 28, 2018 stated that, Beijing has recognized that it is a “co-owner” with the Philippines with regard to disputed areas in the South China Sea. Duterte said China has offered the Philippines joint exploration of the South China Sea after he opted to shift foreign policy in favor of Beijing – a 180-degree turn from the stance of the previous Aquino administration. Recalling his conversations with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Duterte said more substantial things are accomplished when communication lines are open. He stressed that no positive development could be reached by the two countries if he kept spewing expletives at the Chinese leaders. Duterte said that President Xi knew beforehand that his government would have to recognize the Philippines’ rights over the disputed areas to make it work. In the same event, Duterte also addressed the concerns over Chinese incursion at the Philippine Rise, previously known as Benham Rise. He said that unlike in the South China Sea, the Philippines have sovereign rights over the Philippine Rise. He said that he is ready to fight it out with any country claiming it, as it is within their economic zone and territory.³²

- **Vietnam’s State President Visit to India, March 2-4, 2018**

Vietnamese State President Tran Dai Quang as part of his state visit to India from March 2 to 4, had joined talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Saturday. During their conversation, the two leaders praised the development of the Vietnam-India relationship in the past 45 years while agreeing to fully implement the high-level political commitments and the approved documents on political ties, increasing mutual visits at all levels and enhancing cooperation between Parties, states, governments, parliaments, and localities. Both sides have sought towards establishing the goal in order to reach \$15 billion worth of bilateral trade turnover by 2020. They agreed to carry out breakthrough solutions, including diversifying export goods, minimizing trade barriers, improving trade policies, and expanding aviation and navigation connectivity. Focus will also be directed to cooperation in infrastructure, human resources, and science and technology. The Vietnamese leader expressed his appreciation for India’s contribution to defense ties and support for Vietnam in United Nations peacekeeping operations. President Quang and PM Modi consented to underline the importance of maintaining peace and stability, and peaceful solutions of disputes, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They also underscored the need to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the

³¹“Thailand again ‘thinking’ about joining TPP”, *Bangkok Post*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/1420010/thailand-again-thinking-about-joining-tpp>, accessed on March 1, 2018.

³² [Christina Mendez](#), “Duterte: Philippines co-owns West Philippine Sea with China”, *Phil Star Global*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/03/01/1792498/duterte-philippines-co-owns-west-philippine-sea-china>, accessed on March 1, 2018.

Conduct of Parties in the East Vietnam Sea (DOC) and the establishment of a Code of Conduct (COC) for the maritime area.³³

North America

Canada

- **Morneau says Canada 'prepared to react' against U.S. tariffs if necessary**

After U.S. President Donald Trump announced a proposal to slap hefty tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, Finance Minister Bill Morneau says Canada is ready to retaliate if necessary. Trump announced the proposed tariffs, outlining a 25 per cent tariff on imported steel and a 10 per cent tariff on imported aluminum. Canada is the top supplier of both metals to the U.S., with \$15 billion a year in combined sales. Morneau said the Liberal government's first approach is to make its position on the issue known. If that fails to sway the Trump administration, Morneau added, "We've clearly said that we're prepared to react." Morneau offered no specifics regarding potential retaliatory trade measures. He also rejected the U.S. government's national security rationale for imposing tariffs, saying that they would "harm" both Americans and American businesses.³⁴

- **Trudeau government reveals the 2018 federal budget**

The document, which details a \$18.1-billion deficit, including a \$3-billion adjustment for risk, also shows the Liberal government is doubling down on the idea that spending money — even borrowed money — is good for the long-term future of Canadians. The budget, as expected, puts a large emphasis on gender equality, particularly with efforts to increase the participation of women in the workforce as part of a longer-term plan to grow the economy and prepare for the consequences of an aging population. The budget also announced the creation of an advisory council — to be chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins, who resigned Monday as Ontario health minister — to begin exploring options for a national pharmacare plan, although Morneau did not promise that would be ready in time for the 2019 vote. That will be one way for Trudeau to try to outflank NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, who has made bringing Canadians universal access to affordable prescription drugs a top priority.³⁵

³³Duy Khang, "Vietnam, India strive for \$15bn bilateral trade turnover by 2020", *Tuoi Tre News*, March 4, 2018, <https://tuoitrenews.vn/news/politics/20180304/vietnam-india-strive-for-15bn-bilateral-trade-turnover-by-2020/44351.html>, accessed on March 5, 2018.

³⁴ CTV News, "Morneau says Canada 'prepared to react' against U.S. tariffs if necessary," <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/morneau-says-canada-prepared-to-react-against-u-s-tariffs-if-necessary-1.3827843>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

³⁵ The Canadian Press, "Trudeau government reveals the 2018 federal budget," <https://globalnews.ca/news/4051067/federal-budget-2018-canada/>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

- **Liberals pitch \$500 million cyber security plan**

The federal Liberals are committing more than \$500 million to a new cyber security strategy aimed at protecting government networks and combating cyber crime. The National Cyber Security Strategy, announced in the Liberals' 2018 budget, spreads the \$507.7 million over five years and across multiple departments and agencies with a hand in cyber defence. The budget is light on the actual details of the strategy, but it does lay out who will get increased funding. The Communications Security Establishment, the country's electronic spy agency, will play a central role in the new strategy. The Liberals are planning to consolidate the federal government's cyber defence expertise under one roof within the CSE. The new Canadian Centre for Cyber Security will be a clearing house for cyber security advice, and will be open to Canadian citizens and private businesses. CSE will receive \$155.2 million over the next five years to establish and operate the centre. CSE will also have an expanded role in the government's overall IT management, as part of a six-year, \$2.2 billion joint initiative with Shared Services Canada – although \$1.2 billion of that is repurposed money.³⁶

The United States

- **North Korea, Seeking 'Equal Footing,' Rejects Preconditions for U.S. Talks**

North Korea said that it would be willing to begin a dialogue with the United States on “issues of mutual concern” but that it would not accept any preconditions for starting such talks. The statement came days after President Trump said that his administration could enter talks with North Korea, but “only under the right conditions.” That meant North Korea must first commit to denuclearization, United States officials have said. North Korea, however, said that talks needed to be based on “an equal footing between states.” The remarks reflected North Korea's longstanding insistence that it would engage Washington only if it is treated like an equal as a nuclear power. North Korea claimed to have a state nuclear force after conducting its sixth nuclear test and test-launching intercontinental ballistic missiles last year. United States officials have said that North Korea has used past negotiations to win economic concessions while continuing to advance its nuclear weapons program. They've insisted that this time, they would not start a dialogue until the North first took steps that would convince them of its willingness to negotiate away its nuclear weapons.³⁷

³⁶ Alex Boutilier, “Liberals pitch \$500 million cyber security plan,” <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/02/27/liberals-pitch-500-million-cyber-security-plan.html>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

³⁷ Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea, Seeking 'Equal Footing,' Rejects Preconditions for U.S. Talks,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/03/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-talks.html>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

- **Trump announces steel and aluminum tariffs over objections from advisers and Republicans**

President Trump said he has decided to impose punishing tariffs on imported steel and aluminum in a major escalation of his trade offensive, disappointing Republican congressional leaders and inviting retaliation by U.S. trading partners. Speaking at the White House, the president said he has decided on tariffs of 25 percent for foreign-made steel and 10 percent for aluminum. The announcement capped an on-again, off-again episode, with the president initially expected to announce the trade action only to cancel amid fierce pushback from opponents. Trump acted following a determination by the Commerce Department earlier this month that rising import volumes threatened U.S. national security. The president's move, relying upon a little-used provision of U.S. trade law, is expected to trigger immediate legal challenges by U.S. trading partners at the World Trade Organization and invite retaliation against American exports. Trump also turned back pleas from companies that are heavy users of steel and aluminum, including automakers, who warn that higher prices will hurt their sales and potentially lead to layoffs. In 2002, the last time the United States imposed steel tariffs, steel users blamed the measures for the loss of up to 200,000 jobs.³⁸

- **India, US hold talks on defence cooperation**

India and the US discussed ways to deepen bilateral defence cooperation, including joint development of military hardware, and issues relating to technology transfer, officials said.

The issues were discussed at a meeting of the Inter Agency Task Force which is part of the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) between the two countries. The meeting was co-chaired by deputy chief of Integrated Defence Staff Vice-Admiral AK Jain and acting director of the US' International Cooperation Matthew Warren. In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner", intending to elevate defence trade and technology-sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.³⁹

Mexico

- **Mexico to retaliate if US slaps tariff on its steel**

Mexico expressly asked Washington to exclude it from any steel tariffs and will have "no option" but to retaliate with tariffs of its own if the US does not, a source close to the Mexican position said after Donald Trump announced plans to levy a 25 per cent tariff on steel imports. Ildefonso Guajardo, economy minister, held talks in

³⁸ David J. Lynch and Damian Paletta, "Trump announces steel and aluminum tariffs Thursday over objections from advisers and Republicans," Accessed on 05 March 2018.

³⁹ PTI, "India, US hold talks on defence cooperation," <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-us-hold-talks-on-defence-cooperation/articleshow/63084610.cms>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

Washington on Wednesday with Wilbur Ross, the US commerce secretary, and US trade representative Robert Lighthizer. Mexico imported \$4.45bn of steel from the US last year and exported \$2.634bn to its northern neighbour, according to Mexico's National Chamber of the Iron and Steel Industry (Canacero). "The US surplus in steel was \$3.648bn in two years," Canacero said.⁴⁰

Latin America and the Caribbean

Brazil

- **Brazil's Agriculture Minister rules out running in 2018 election**

Brazil's Agriculture Minister Blairo Maggi said that he will not run in the 2018 general election and plans to stay in his current position as long as President Michel Temer wants him to. Maggi, a key shareholder in one of Brazil's largest agricultural companies, Amaggi, was a governor of top grains producing state of Mato Grosso for two terms and is finishing a second term as senator. "I will not take part in this year's elections. This does not mean I will abandon politics, but I will not run this year," Maggi said at a press conference in Cuiaba, the capital of Mato Grosso.⁴¹

Colombia

- **Colombia's 'fake' peace in tatters**

Since 2012, Santos' government had been negotiating with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), an armed group that fought the Colombian state for over 50 years. In August 2016, negotiators announced a final agreement to end the conflict that had left 220,000 people dead and displaced millions. Last year, the rebel group relaunched as a political party, changing their logo of rifles for a red rose. But the historic deal that brought peace to Colombia is now failing. This should come as no surprise after the political gymnastics Santos was forced to perform following the Colombian public's initial rejection of the treaty in an October 2016 referendum. For Colombia, this means an uncertain and problematic presidential election later this year and, worse, a possible end to an already wobbly peace. Earlier this month, after four years of exhaustive negotiations, a disastrous referendum and an almost lame-duck president, Colombia's peace process has finally reached its limits: The FARC announced that its party would be boycotting the upcoming presidential elections, saying its candidates had been attacked and felt unsafe.

⁴⁰ Jude Webber, "Mexico to retaliate if US slaps tariff on its steel — source," <https://www.ft.com/content/a8448920-1d99-11e8-956a-43db76e69936>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

⁴¹ Reuters, "Brazil's Agriculture Minister rules out running in 2018 election," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-politics-maggi/brazils-agriculture-minister-rules-out-running-in-2018-election-idUSKCN1GA1ZN>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

Since the signing of the peace deal, part of the right's electoral strategy has been to disseminate hate to hinder political insertion of the former guerrillas into the political game. Rodrigo Londono, former leader of the FARC and its current candidate for president, recently blamed former President Alvaro Uribe's Democratic Centre Party of actively sabotaging his new-born party's electoral campaign in some regions.⁴²

Cuba

- **Cuba braced for life after the Castros**

On April 19, Raúl Castro, 86, will step down as president and is likely to be replaced by Miguel Díaz-Canel, 57, Cuba's vice-president. It is the first time in almost 60 years that a Castro brother will not hold the post, and while the presidency is a largely symbolic role, the power shift comes at a delicate moment for the communist island. Cuba's Soviet-style economy, battered by hurricanes and hurt by dwindling aid from crisis-ridden Venezuela, is on the rocks. The state has seemingly cracked down on private businesses, again. And a once-budding relationship with the US, Cuba's arch-enemy, has deteriorated after Donald Trump, the US president, partially reversed the detente launched by his predecessor. Mr Díaz-Canel is a party functionary from the provinces and little is known of what he believes — or even if he will finally be chosen as successor. Cubans will “vote” in a pre-ratified slate of candidates for the National Assembly on March 11, which will then ratify formally Mr Castro's successor in April. Mr Castro is expected to remain head of the Communist party and the armed forces when he steps down.⁴³

Venezuela

- **Venezuela presidential election postponed to May**

The snap presidential election in Venezuela scheduled for 22 April has been pushed back by a month, the National Electoral Council (CNE) has announced. The CNE said the poll would now be held on 20 May. The move came after an agreement was reached between the government and a small number of opposition parties. President Nicolás Maduro has registered to run for a second six-year term. The decision was widely interpreted by critics of the government as an attempt to steamroll the deeply divided opposition coalition and throw it into disarray. It comes amid an ever-worsening economic and political crisis which has left many Venezuelans malnourished and led hundreds of thousands to flee the country. The main opposition

⁴² Fabricio Chagas-Bastos, “Colombia's 'fake' peace in tatters,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/colombia-fake-peace-tatters-180223113348483.html>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

⁴³ John Paul Rathbone, “Cuba braced for life after the Castros,” <https://www.ft.com/content/fb7276ba-1e26-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6>, Accessed on 05 March 2018.

Democratic Unity coalition announced it would boycott the 22 April election and refused to put up any candidates to oppose President Maduro. In response to the latest announcement the coalition said it would be maintaining its boycott, saying the elections would still be fraudulent.⁴⁴

Russia

- **Russia and its Nuclear Weapons and Arms Sales**

During his Federal Assembly speech, Russian President Vladimir Putin on 1 March announced that Russia has tested an array of new strategic nuclear weapons that can't be intercepted, marking a technological breakthrough that would dramatically increase Russia's military capability and boost the Kremlin's global position. Speaking in a state-of-the-nation speech, Putin said the weapons include a nuclear-powered cruise missile, a nuclear-powered underwater drone and new hypersonic missile. He said the creation of the new weapons has made NATO's US-led missile defense "useless," and means an effective end to what he described as Western efforts to stymie Russia's development. He said that the nuclear-powered cruise missile tested last fall has an unlimited range and high speed and maneuverability allowing it to pierce any missile defense. The Russian leader said that another new weapon called Avangard is an intercontinental hypersonic missile that would fly to targets at a speed 20 times the speed of sound and strike "like a meteorite, like a fireball." Russia also tested a new heavy intercontinental ballistic missile, called Sarmat. He said the new weapons will help ensure global stability and draw a line under attempts to weaken Russia. He said that another weapons system, called Kinzhal, already has been deployed in Russia's Southern Military District. He said it's a hypersonic missile carried by an aircraft that can strike targets 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) away.⁴⁵

In the coming week, Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold a meeting of the commission for military-technical cooperation (MTC), which will sum up the official results of arms exports for 2017. This meeting will also discuss on discuss the tasks for 2018. Vladimir Kozhin, the presidential aide for the military-technical cooperation, said that the plan for arms supplies to foreign customers was fulfilled—they shipped products worth over \$ 15 billion, new contracts were signed for approximately \$ 16 billion. The total portfolio weapon orders remained at the level of \$ 50 billion (a record figure of \$ 56 billion was achieved in 2015). He said that "Since 2012, when the figure exceeded \$ 14 billion, the volume of exports remained stable, despite all the limitations and difficulties. The main goal is achieved: we managed to keep the second place in the list of world arms exporters, losing only to the United

⁴⁴ BBC, "Venezuela presidential election postponed to May," <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-43241884>, Accessed on 05 March 2018/

⁴⁵Vladimir Isachenko, "Vladimir Putin Boasts of New Russian Nuclear Weapons", *Times*, March 1, 2018. <http://time.com/5180690/putin-russia-nuclear-weapons/> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

States." According to Kommersant, the bulk of supplies in 2017 fell on traditional Russian partners—China, India (no major contract was signed with India in 2017, although some agreements for example, the delivery of 48 Mi-17V-5 units are in the final stage of agreement), Vietnam, Algeria, Egypt, CSTO partners, Kenya, Mali, Angola, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Hungary, Greece and Czech Republic.⁴⁶

- **Russian Protests**

On 25 February, thousands of **people marched** through the streets of Moscow in remembrance of **murdered** opposition leader **Boris Nemtsov**, three years ago. Demonstrators, who flocked central Moscow, made a plea for President **Vladimir Putin** to be removed from office. Dozhd TV reported that hundreds of people, gathered in the central square in St. Petersburg, were chanting “Russia will be free.” Russian flags, portraits of Nemtsov and chants of “Russia without Putin” featured prominently during the march. There were also other signs that reading “I am not afraid” and “We remember, we won’t forgive”. The protest took place despite the marches were banned.⁴⁷

- **Russia and the US**

Speaking at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 28 February, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [accused](#) United States of America of storing nonstrategic nuclear arms in Europe and holding “joint nuclear missions” with non-nuclear countries there. He also warned that the United States is preparing Europe to use tactical nuclear weapons against Russia,⁴⁸ violating a major nuclear arms agreement called the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁴⁹

- **Russia and Iran at the UN**

On 26 February, Russia vetoed a British-drafted UN resolution that took aim at Iran over a report by UN experts that said the country violated an arms embargo by failing to prevent missiles and drones from being supplied to Shi’ite rebels in Yemen. The

⁴⁶“Russian weapons held their place”, Kommersant, March 5, 2018. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3566087> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁴⁷“Russia: Thousands March to Remember Murdered Opposition Leader”, Telesur, February 26, 2018. <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Russia-Thousands-March-to-Remember-Murdered-Opposition-Leader-20180226-0003.html> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁴⁸“U.S. Is Preparing Europe to Use Nuclear Weapons Against Russia — Lavrov”, Moscow Times, February 28, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/us-preparing-europe-use-nuclear-weapons-against-russia-lavrov-60660> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁴⁹Holly Ellyat, “Russia's Lavrov says the US is training Europe to use nuclear weapons against it”, CNBC, February 28, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/28/russias-lavrov-says-us-breaching-nuclear-arms-agreement-ifax.html> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

vote in the Security Council was 11 in favor, Russia and Bolivia opposed, and China and Kazakhstan abstaining.⁵⁰

- **Russia, India and Bangladesh**

On 1 March, Bangladesh, India and Russia signed a trilateral agreement to cooperate in the construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna. This will be first ever nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. Rosatom is constructing the nuclear power plant in Bangladesh on a turnkey contract basis. The scope of work includes design, production and supply of equipment, construction, installation, pre-commissioning and commissioning. Nuclear Power Cooperation of India Limited (NPCIL) will play a key role in building a nuclear power plant on foreign soil with the proposed supply of equipment and material for the power station being built by Russia in Bangladesh. India is also extending support for capacity building and has been training Bangladeshi nuclear scientists for the project.⁵¹

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **President Ghani Offers Talks with Taliban ‘Without Preconditions’**

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate political group on Wednesday as part of a proposed political process that he said could lead to talks aimed at ending more than 16 years of war. The offer, made at the start of an international conference aimed at creating a platform for peace talks, adds to a series of signals from both the Western-backed government and the Taliban suggesting a greater willingness to consider dialogue.⁵²

- **Military Pressure ‘To Continue Amid Political Efforts For Peace’**

The top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, said Thursday (March 1, 2018) that military pressure on insurgents will continue amid political efforts for reaching peace and ending the Afghan war. Nicholson said that in some cases achieving a peace deal is not possible without military pressure on the enemy. According to Nicholson, they support the political efforts for ending

⁵⁰“Russia vetoes UN resolution citing Iran sanctions violation”, *China Daily*, February 27, 2018.

<https://www.chinadailyhk.com/articles/245/217/95/1519697253278.html>
Accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁵¹“Bangladesh, Russia, India sign pact for Rooppur atomic plant”, *Prothom Alo*, March 4, 2018.
<http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/171924/Bangladesh-Russia-India-sign-pact-for-Rooppur> Accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁵² “President Ghani Offers Talks with Taliban ‘Without Preconditions’”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, March 1, 2018, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20313 (accessed on March 5)

Afghanistan crisis and in the meantime will continue pressure on insurgents from a military point of view.⁵³

- **TAPI Could Offer Boundless Possibilities To West Afghanistan**

The landmark cross-Afghanistan pipeline project will pave the grounds for boundless opportunities in Western Afghanistan and help tackle the ongoing economic tantrum. Residents of Western Farah province in a ceremony declared their full support for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline project. In attendance were provincial officials, tribal elders, youth civil society and women activists, said a statement issued by Farah provincial public outreach office on Saturday (March 3).

“TAPI project will bring positive changes in lives of the people in the western provinces where the project is being implemented,” said Farah Governor Abdul Basir Salangi, calling on all people to support the project implementation.⁵⁴

- **HPC Optimistic About Govt’s Peace Offer To Taliban**

The Taliban has not yet accepted President Ashraf Ghani’s peace offer made on Wednesday (February 28) at the Kabul Process meeting but the High Peace Council (HPC) said on March 2, the proposal was “a golden opportunity” for the group.

“The ball is in the court of the Taliban. We are waiting to see whether the Taliban takes their own route or they hear their people’s call, or continue their activities which are against the Sharia,” said Sayed Ehsanuddin Taheri, head of media and strategic relations of the High Peace Council.⁵⁵

- **Badakhshan Residents Oppose New Deputy Governor Appointment⁵⁶**

The swearing in ceremony of a new provincial deputy governor, Akhtar Mohammad Khairzada in Badakhshan, situated in northeastern Afghanistan had been halted on 27 February 2018 due to its residents protest on *son of soil* issue. Residents of Badakhshan province alleged that key government posts in the region i.e. governor, deputy governor, police chief, commander of the army regiment, head of Badakhshan National Directorate of Security (NDS), security commander of Badakhshan police headquarters, head of the treasury and so forth are under officials from other provinces. Residents appealed to the central authority to appoint someone hailed from Badakhshan province.

⁵³ Karim Amini, “Military Pressure ‘To Continue Amid Political Efforts For Peace’”, *Tolo News*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/military-pressure-%E2%80%98-continue-amid-political-efforts-peace%E2%80%99> (accessed on March 5)

⁵⁴ “TAPI could offer boundless possibilities to west Afghanistan”, *Afghanistan Times*, March 3, 2018, <http://afghanistantimes.af/tapi-offer-boundless-possibilities-west-afghanistan/> (accessed on March 5)

⁵⁵ “HPC Optimistic About Govt’s Peace Offer To Taliban”, *Tolo News*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/hpc-optimistic-about-govt%E2%80%99s-peace-offer-taliban> (accessed on March 5)

⁵⁶ Tolo News, 27 February 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/badakhshan-residents-oppose-new-deputy-governor-appointment>

- **CEO Announces New Policy To Protect Civilians During Operations**⁵⁷

On 26 February 2018, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdulalh at the 37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council held in Geneva stated that the country would join hands with international collaborators to strengthen human rights situation. Focussing on drafting of a new policy for security condition, Abdullah Abdulalh mentioned, “The National Policy on Prevention and Mitigation of Civilian Harm under draft will soon provide specific guidelines to be undertaken during security operations to prevent civilian casualties and damage to their property”. An atmosphere of peace and reconciliation as a necessary condition for Afghanistan’s prosperity, the CEO talked about series of unfortunate events grappling the country since 2001 that weakened its institutional structures and there was an urgent need to address this issue. Abdullah Abdulalh also raised concerns over vulnerability of children in many war torn provinces who are subject to numerous forms of violence.

- **100,000 Herat Children Drop Out of School in Last Year**⁵⁸

On account of rising number of students leaving schools, Abdul Razaq Ahmadi, chairman of Herat education department on 3 March 2018 in an official statement had asked parents, tribal and religious leaders to encourage their children to attend schools. It had been reported that in the year 2017, nearly 100,000 students especially girls had stopped attending schools due to traditional norms and rising insurgency in western Herat province. Ahmadi appealed to public and said,” All of our teachers, directors, school councils, influential people, tribal elders and Ulemas (religious scholars) must take part in efforts to encourage our children to go to school. The office of Governor of Herat province also expressed serious anxiety on dropping out of children from schools and called for improvement in quality education.

- **India to Boost Assistance to Afghan Forces: Gokhale**⁵⁹

The foreign secretary of India, Vijay Gokhale on 1 March 2018 met NSA Hanif Atmar and promised to boost India’s support to Afghan security and defense forces. While attending the Kabul Process Conference, India’s foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale praised Afghan people’s commitment towards peace process and assured India’s constant support for Afghanistan’s development in particular infrastructural development in the country. Both countries recognised their collaboration for counterterrorism activities and education and military purpose.

⁵⁷ Tolo News, 28 February 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/ceo-announces-new-policy-protect-civilians-during-operations>.

⁵⁸ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 5 March 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20345

⁵⁹ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 3 March 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20320

- **Govt Closer To Reaching Final Settlement With Balkh: MoI⁶⁰**

On 4 March 2017, Minister of Interior Wais Ahmad Barmak stated that tensions between the central government and ousted provincial governor of Balkh's province Atta Mohammad Noor would be resolved in few days. The minister added, "Consultations have been done, we are in touch with Ustad Atta, it will be resolved soon and there will be no crisis, agreements are closer, and they will provide an outcome in the next few days," Respecting government's decision, on the other hand, Atta Mohammad Noor viewed, "We accept them and respect them and consider them as our brothers and countrymen and endorse their presence in power, but we will not give them the right to remove us from power, we strongly support national unity, but real national unity," Earlier Atta Mohammad Noor challenged President's Ashraf Ghani's attempt to remove him from the post of Governor and appoint Engineer Mohammad Dawood as the new governor for Balkh.

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh, India, Russia sign MoU**

Bangladesh, India and Russia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on implementing the Rooppur nuclear power plant. Under the deal, Indian companies can be involved in construction and installation works, supply of materials and equipment of a non-critical category in the interests of the project, the statement said. This is the first instance of a third country (India) being involved in the construction of the Rooppur power plant in Bangladesh for which the first agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Russia in November 2011.⁶¹

- **Trump's aide for inclusive polls in Bangladesh**

The US has said again that it wants to see inclusive polls in Bangladesh. Deputy assistant to the US president and senior director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council, Lisa Curtis discussed the issue during a meeting with foreign minister AH Mahmood Ali at the latter's office on Sunday (March 3). Responding to a query of Curtis, the foreign minister said that the Bangladesh government is committed to a free, fair and participatory election.⁶²

- **India to help Rohingyas during cyclone season**

⁶⁰ Tolo News, 4 March 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/govt-closer-reaching-final-settlement-balkh-moi>

⁶¹ "Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant: Bangladesh, India, Russia sign MoU, *Dhaka Tribune*, March 3, 2018, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/rooppur-nuclear-power-plant-bangladesh-india-russia-sign-mou-1542811>, accessed on March 3, 2018.

⁶² "Trump's aide for inclusive polls in Bangladesh," *Prothom Alo*, March 4, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/172036/Trump's-aide-for-inclusive-polls-in-Bangladesh>, accessed on March 4, 2018.

Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Sunday (March 3) said his country will extend supports to Bangladesh to help the Rohingyas during the upcoming cyclone season. Shringla gave this assurance when he called on Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya at the secretariat here, said an official release.⁶³

- **Myanmar again builds up troops on Bangladesh border**

Myanmar on Sunday (March 3) again built up troops on Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Bandarban district where thousands of Rohingyas took shelter, officials and witnesses said. This is the second deployment of troops on the borders in the last few days. Nearly 500 Myanmar army men along with members of Border Guard Police were deployed near the no man's land of Konarpara area of Naikhyangchhari in Bandarban. BGB officials said that this is a breach of international law and BGB members in the area are put on alert.⁶⁴

- **Dhaka, Riyadh mull military agreement**

Bangladesh and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are contemplating a deal to enhance cooperation between the militaries of both the countries which will feature all the aspects of collaboration including joint exercises and training, officials concerned have said. But, they said that it is yet to be decided whether the bilateral instrument will be signed in the shape of a full-fledged agreement or a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which is of non-binding in nature.⁶⁵

नेपाल

दहाल ने कुछ मंत्रियों के नाम प्रधानमंत्री को सौंपे:

माओवादी केंद्र के अध्यक्ष पुष्प कमल दहाल ने प्रधानमंत्री आवास बालूवाटर जाकर प्रधानमंत्री ओली को कुछ और मंत्रियों के नाम दिए. हालाँकि केबिनेट के मंत्रियों पर अंतिम निर्णय लिया जा चुका है. लेकिन सूत्रों के मुताबिक ओली कुछ मंत्रियों के नामों को लेकर गंभीर है. ओली इन नामों को लेकर एमाले के वरिष्ठ नेता झालानाथ खनाल और माधव नेपाल से चर्चा करेंगे.⁶⁶

नेपाल बांग्लादेश संबंधों को मजबूत करने के लिए संपर्कता जरूरी:

⁶³ "India to help Rohingyas during cyclone season," *The Independent*, March 4, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/139880>, accessed on March 4, 2018.

⁶⁴ "Myanmar again builds up troops on Bangladesh border," *Prothom Alo*, March 4, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/172032/Myanmar-again-builds-up-troops-on-Bangladesh>, accessed on March 4, 2018.

⁶⁵ "Dhaka, Riyadh mull military agreement," *The Independent*, March 5, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/139986>, accessed on March 5, 2018.

⁶⁶ "Dahal in Baluwater to submit names of ministers", *The Kathmandu Post*, 26 February 2018, <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-02-26/maoist-centre-chair-dahal-in-baluwater-to-submit-name-list-of-ministers.html>

काठमांडू में नेपाल बांग्लादेश के बिजनेस फोरम का दूसरा सम्वाद आयोजित किया गया जिसमे 'द्विपक्षता से आगे: समृद्धि के लिए सहयोग' विषय पर चर्चा हुई. जिसमे राजनयिकों और विशेषज्ञों ने कहा कि नेपाल और बांग्लादेश के मध्य कनेक्टिविटी पर बल देकर व्यापार और निवेश को अधिकतम किया जाना चाहिए.⁶⁷

संघीय समाजवादी फोरम ने सरकार से जुड़कर संशोधन की बात कही:

संघीय समाजवादी फोरम अध्यक्ष उपेन्द्र यादव ने वर्तमान सरकार से जुड़कर एक निश्चित समय में संविधान में संशोधन करने की मांग की. यादव लगातार ओली और दहाल से सरकार में शामिल होए के लिए चर्चा कर रहे है और संविधान में संशोधन की मांग को भी उठा रहे है लेकिन शासकीय दल के नेता संशोधन पर कोई ठोस जवाब नहीं दे रहे है.⁶⁸

भारत नेपाल के साथ रेल लिंक चाहता है: कोशियारी

काठमांडू में एक बैठक के दौरान ई पी जी के भारत की तरफ से अध्यक्ष और बी जे पी नेता भगत सिंह कोशियारी ने रेल लिंक की बात पर कहा कि भारत चाहता है कि दिल्ली और काठमांडू के मध्य रेल लिंक स्थापित हो. उन्होंने आगे कहा कि आने वाले समय में भारत और नेपाल के द्विपक्षीय संबंधों का ध्यान विकास और समृद्धि के मुद्दों पर ही केन्द्रित रहेगा.⁶⁹

Pakistan

• Pakistan and the United States

Pakistan Foreign Secretary (Ms Tehmina Janjua) met Ms Lisa Curtis, the Senior Director for South and Central Asia at the NSC of US, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Islamabad on February 26th. The meeting was seen as efforts aimed at fixing the strains in ties to avoid a complete breakdown of relationship.⁷⁰ Lisa Curtis on February 27th stated that the Trump administration wanted a “new relationship” with Islamabad, urging the government of Pakistan to address the continuing presence of the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups within its territory, and reiterated the international community’s long-standing concern about ongoing deficiencies in Pakistan’s implementation of its anti-money laundering/counterterrorism finance regime.⁷¹ However, while inaugurating a seminar in Islamabad on March 1st, Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated that Pakistan’s interests could not be

⁶⁷ “Calls for strong Nepal Bangladesh ties, connectivity”, The Kathmandu Post, 26 February 2018, <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-02-26/calls-for-strong-nepal-bangladesh-ties-connectivity.html>

⁶⁸ “SSF-N seeks amendment deal to join coalition govt”, The Kathmandu Post, 27 February 2018, <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-02-27/ssf-n-seeks-amendment-deal-to-join-coalition-govt.html>

⁶⁹ “Delhi wants rail link with Kathmandu: Koshiyari”, The Kathmandu Post, 27 February 2018,

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-02-27/delhi-wants-rail-links-with-kathmandu-koshiyari.html>

⁷⁰ Baqir Sajjad Syed, “Top US official on quiet Pakistan visit to improve ties”, *Dawn*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1391942> accessed on March 5, 2018

⁷¹ “Senior Trump aide calls for ‘new relationship’ with Pakistan”, *Dawn*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392186> accessed on March 5, 2018

sacrificed for the sake of American interests, and would not act as a US proxy.⁷² Pakistan's Foreign Secretary will be visiting Washington DC on March 6th for a two day visit. Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana W. White stated to improve ties, the Pentagon reminds Islamabad that war against terrorism in the South Asian region has reached an inflection point and it should use this opportunity to defeat terrorists.⁷³

- **Pakistan and Iran**

The top commander of Iran's air force, Brig Gen Hassan Shahsafi, on February 26th met Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa at the General Headquarters, and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman at the Air Headquarters. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, Gen Bajwa and Gen Shahsafi discussed matters of professional interest. The PAF's media wing did not release any statement.⁷⁴ It can be noted here that on February 28th, a Pakistani Navy ship, who was conducting maritime security operations, received a distress call from an Iranian fishing vessel which needed medical attention which was provided by the Pakistani Navy ship. On February 27th, two Iranian fishing boats had engine failures, which were also assisted by a nearby passing Pakistani Navy ship.⁷⁵

- **Pakistan Turkey Free Trade Area**

The Pakistani commerce ministry has asked the government for clearance to take a long dispute with Turkey to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) after prolonged discussions on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries have hit an impasse. At issue is grant of GSP+ status by Turkey that Pakistan argues is an obligation given that Turkey and the European Union are part of a customs union. The ministry is arguing that out of the countries that enjoy GSP+ status with the EU, Turkey has extended the same status to all except Armenia and Pakistan. Also, Pakistan has asked for a reversal of a set of additional duties that the Turkish government imposed on Pakistani products having high export potential in the Turkish market back in 2011.⁷⁶

⁷² Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan won't act as US proxy, says Asif", *Dawn*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392692> accessed on March 5, 2018

⁷³ Anwar Iqbal, "Pentagon urges Pakistan to avail new opportunities for defeating terrorism", *Dawn*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1393247/pentagon-urges-pakistan-to-avail-new-opportunities-for-defeating-terrorism> accessed on March 5, 2018

⁷⁴ "Iranian air commander meets Army, PAF chiefs", *Dawn*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1391949/iranian-air-commander-meets-army-paf-chiefs> accessed on March 5, 2018

⁷⁵ Navy responds to distress call by Iranian vessel, *Dawn*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392473> accessed on March 5, 2018

⁷⁶ Khurram Husain, "Pakistan's free trade agreement talks with Turkey nearing collapse", *Dawn*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392850> accessed on March 5, 2018

Indian Ocean Region

- **Seychelles protects huge area in Indian Ocean in debt swap deal**

Seychelles has announced a marine conservation deal that will allow the island country to swap millions of dollars debt deal with creditors for protecting nearly one third of its ocean area.⁷⁷ The agreement is described as the first of its kind. "Seychelles is clearly breaking new grounds and with it, it has positioned itself as a world leader in ocean governance and management," Seychelles vice president Vincent Meriton said in remarks announcing the marine conservation deal.⁷⁸ The government of Seychelles has signed a bill restricting human activity in the waters around Aldabra and declaring about 210,000 square kilometres as protected areas.⁷⁹ The government will ban all extractive uses such as fishing and petroleum around Aldabra. This plan will be completed by 2021.⁸⁰

- **Bilateral Military Exercise between India and Seychelles**

The eighth joint military exercise between the Indian Army and Seychelles People's Defence Forces concluded on March 4, 2018 at Mahe Island, Seychelles.⁸¹ The exercise, named "Lamitye", is the eighth in the series of bilateral exercises being conducted between the two countries in Seychelles.⁸² The two countries are conducting this joint bilateral military exercise since 2001. "Enhancing military cooperation and interoperability between the armies of the two countries" is the aim of the exercise.⁸³

- **Planned military base stirs Seychelles controversy**

A plan for India to build a military base with Seychelles on Seychelles Assumption Island getting some hostility from the people of Seychelles, although, getting favour from the politicians.⁸⁴ The base on Assumption Island is funded by India and will be shared by both India and Seychelles⁸⁵. According to media report, the government of

⁷⁷ Seychelles Finds A Novel Way To Swap Its Debt For Marine Protections, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/23/588273709/seychelles-finds-a-novel-way-to-swap-its-debt-for-marine-protections> (accessed on March 05, 2018).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Seychelles protects huge area in Indian Ocean in debt swap deal, <https://www.independent.ie/world-news/seychelles-protects-huge-area-in-indian-ocean-in-debt-swap-deal-36634266.html> (accessed on March 05, 2018).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ 8th Indo- Seychelles Army exercise starts, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/8th-indo-seychelles-army-exercise-starts/articleshow/63061277.cms> (accessed on March 05, 2018).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Planned Indian military base stirs Seychelles controversy, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/planned-indian-military-base-stirs-seychelles-controversy/articleshow/63144088.cms> (accessed on March 05, 2018).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Seychelles says the base at Assumption will help coastguard to its exclusive economic zone for illegal fishing, drug trafficking, and piracy.⁸⁶

India plans to invest \$550 million dollars for building of base to ensure the safety of its vessels in this region. India's ambassador to Seychelles Ausaf Sayeed said "Assumption is very close to the Mozambique Channel where much of the international trade is transiting, and not just for India but for other countries as well, and our interest is that our trading vessels are safe"⁸⁷ (as quoted in Economic Times).

- **Kenya for enhanced maritime security to develop blue economy**

According to Kenyan government source, Kenya's defence forces are planning to enhance surveillance along its coastline to ensure the development of blue economy.⁸⁸ The development of blue economy is imperative for country's food security should not be interrupted by security threats like piracy, the official said on March 1, 2018.⁸⁹ "A vibrant blue economy falls squarely within our government's big four agenda especially food security and manufacturing. Our blue economy strategy seeks to harness locally available marine resources to create wealth and new jobs,"⁹⁰ said Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Defence.

Sri Lanka

- **OMP does not aim to benefit one community says Minister**

The Office on Missing Person (OMP) does not aim to benefit only one community and does not threaten another. It is merely a truth-seeking mechanism. It aims to investigate and find out the truth about those identified as "missing" or who have disappeared during conflict says Minister of Finance Mangala Samaraweera. Issuing a statement on appointments of Members of the OMP minister says that its mandate cuts across all ethnic and religious boundaries. It seeks to investigate persons missing in connection with the conflict of the North and East and its aftermath⁹¹.

- **SLNS Samudura and Suranimila leave to attend MILAN 2018**

Sri Lanka Navy Ship (SLNS) Samudura and SLNS Suranimila on 2nd Mar left for India from the port of Trincomalee to attend a congregation of littoral navies; popularly

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kenya pledges enhanced maritime security to develop blue economy, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/01/c_137006710.htm (accessed on March 05, 2018).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹¹ OMP does not aim to benefit one community says Minister, 4 March 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/19684-omp-does-not-aim-to-benefit-one-community-says-minister>

known as MILAN conducted biennially by Indian Navy. The two ships set sail from the home port having performed formalities in accordance with naval traditions⁹².

- **India to build 10,000 houses for plantation community**

Sri Lanka will sign an agreement with the government of India to construct 10,000 houses for the plantation community in the central hills under the Indian Government Grant assistance. The Government of India has already granted funding to construct 4,000 houses for the estate community living in the Nuwara Eliya and Badulla Districts, and 1,136 houses are already near completion. The construction of another 2,836 houses was started in January 2018. During his visit to Sri Lanka in May 2017, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to fund construction of 10,000 housing units for the plantation community⁹³.

- **GSLF wants Dr.Nimalka Fenando removed from OMP**

The Global Sri Lankan Forum (GSLF) vehemently condemned the appointment of Dr. Nimalka Fernando as one of the Commissioners to the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) and requested the President to remove her from the OMP. In a statement addressed to President Maithripala Sirisena, it said they condemned the appointment of Dr. Fernando on behalf of all Sri Lankan patriots living across the world. "In order to preserve the dignity of the country, we request the President to conduct a proper investigation and to remove people like Dr. Fernando whose actions had only brought disrepute to the Sri Lankan Government," it said⁹⁴.

- **PM orders to probe Ampara incident**

Prime Minister and Minister of Law and Order Ranil Wickremesinghe has ordered another inquiry into the recent clashes in Ampara, as the initial report already submitted by the police is said to be incomplete. A release from the Ministry of Law and Order said there were evidence to suggest that there had been lapses in enforcing law and order during the clashes. The release added that arrangements had been made to pay compensation to those who were affected during the clashes⁹⁵.

Maldives

- **VTV fined US\$26k for speech defaming president**

The broadcasting regulator has slapped Villa Television and sister station VFM with a fine of MVR400,000 (US\$26,000) over a speech by an opposition lawmaker in

⁹² SLNS Samudura and Suranimila leave to attend MILAN 2018, 3rd March 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/19680-slns-samudura-and-suranimila-leave-to-attend-milan-2018>

⁹³ India to build 10,000 houses for plantation community, 2nd March 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/business/item/19673-india-to-build-10-000-houses-for-plantation-community>

⁹⁴ GSLF wants Dr.Nimalka Fenando removed from OMP, 5 March 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/GSLF-wants-Dr-Nimalka-Fenando-removed-from-OMP-146766.html>

⁹⁵ PM orders to probe Ampara incident, 4 March 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/PM-orders-to-probe-Ampara-incident-146738.html>

December last year. Following a defamation inquiry, the Maldives Broadcasting Commission found that MP Mohamed Musthafa used vulgar language to defame President Abdulla Yameen during a live event. Both VTV and VFM – owned by the Island Broadcasting Company affiliated with exiled Jumhooree Party leader Gasim Ibrahim – denied breaching the broadcasting code of conduct, MBC noted in its investigation report that was made public on 1st February⁹⁶.

- **Maldives vows ‘aggressive action’ over use of flag by North Korea-supplying tanker**

An oil tanker suspected of illegally supplying North Korea was not registered by Maldivian authorities to sail under the national flag, the government said after Japan notified the UN Security Council of the incident. According to Japan’s foreign ministry, a military aircraft spotted the Maldivian-flagged tanker Xin Juan 18 lying alongside a North Korean-flagged tanker on February 24. The Maldives president’s office said an investigation is underway and vowed to “pursue aggressive action against any such acts which affects the national identity in such a detrimental manner.” It condemned “the use of our national flag in a manner so as to tarnish the good standing and reputation of our nation and that of our people” and assured support for implementing security council resolutions⁹⁷.

- **Chief justice accused of obstructing governmental functions**

Police are accusing arrested Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed of obstructing the functioning of the government, revealed his lawyer Hisaan Hussain. In a tweet, she announced that the police have already launched an investigation. Saeed is accused of obstructing governmental operations for shutting down the e-government system after the President’s Office sent four letters to the Supreme Court. Hisaan stated that her client had denied the accusation, and further noted that “there is no law that obligates SC to use e-govt system”⁹⁸.

- **Police seek charges against ex-pres Maumoon, top court judges**

Police sought to charge former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, and Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and Judge Ali Hameed of the Supreme Court, with destroying evidence needed for investigations. Maldives Police Service announced that the cases against the three, who were arrested February 5 for allegedly attempting to stage a coup, were forwarded to the Prosecutor General’s Office⁹⁹.

⁹⁶ VTV fined US\$26k for speech defaming president, 1st March 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/vtv-fined-us26k-for-speech-defaming-president-136165>

⁹⁷ Maldives vows ‘aggressive action’ over use of flag by North Korea-supplying tanker, 28th February 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/aggressive-action-vowed-over-use-of-maldives-flag-by-north-korea-supplying-tanker-136129>

⁹⁸ Chief justice accused of obstructing governmental functions, 2 March 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/chief-justice-accused-of-obstructing-governmental-functions/>

⁹⁹ Police seek charges against ex-pres Maumoon, top court judges, 1st March 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/police-seek-charges-against-ex-pres-maumoon-top-court-judges/>

- **Maldives declined India’s invite for Naval exercise due to SOE:**

Embassy

Maldives on 27th refuted media reports that Maldives declined Indian invitation for Naval exercise due to the current tensions between the two countries. Some Indian newspapers had made reference to the Indian Navy Chief Admiral Sunil and reported that even though Maldives was extended an invitation to participate in the naval exercise, the reason for the decision to decline had not been divulged by the Maldives. The reports had alleged that the reason Maldives declined to be a part of the naval exercise named “Milan” was the flourishing relationship between Maldives and China¹⁰⁰.

Countering the media reports the statement released by the Maldives Embassy in India had stated that the reason Maldives decided to decline India’s invitation was the current developments in the country that had lead to a State of Emergency. It also added that the situation required that all security personal are at a heightened stance of readiness.

West Asia

GCC & Saudi Arabia

- **Military shakeup in Saudi Arabia (26 February 2018)**

In a series of late-night royal decrees on Monday, Saudi Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman replaced several top military commanders, including the chief of staff, as well as the heads of the ground forces and air defenses.¹⁰¹ Although no specific reason was given for the sackings, a couple of issues such as Yemen crisis, reforming of military and approaching to the Western countries to modernize its armed forces are guessed to be the factors behind this tremor. Almost three years of Yemen war is going to complete but there is no sign of its winding up. Evidence shows that Saudi Arabia was under preparation of a major reform in the armed forces. In an interview in 2016, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS) said that Saudi Arabia is the third or fourth largest arms importer in the world but its military counts among twenties.¹⁰²

Saudi Arabia has also opened military services to the Saudi women. Recently it has invited job applications for 12 military positions, including signal, office work and around 150 applicants have been received.¹⁰³ Besides, the government has also planned

¹⁰⁰ Maldives declined India’s invite for Naval exercise due to SOE: Embassy, 1st March 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-declined-indias-invite-for-naval-exercise-due-to-soe-embassy/>

¹⁰¹ <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/03/01/opinion-whats-behind-saudi-arabia-military-shake-up/>

¹⁰² <https://www.ft.com/content/6c1d473a-1ba9-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6>

¹⁰³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43197048>

to promote defence-led diversification in the Kingdom. For instance, Saudi side has signed an agreement with Lockheed Martin to manufacture 150 Black hawks locally and generate job opportunities along with increasing the local content in defence manufacturing. Increasing local content is one of the objectives of the Vision 2030.

Israel

- **Prince William to Israel**

Prince William will travel to Israel this summer, in the first-ever official visit by the British royal family to the Jewish state, his residence declared March 1st. While royals have traveled to Israel in the past, no member of the British monarchy has ever come to country on an official tour. Prince William will also visit Palestine and Jordan during the visit.¹⁰⁴

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	February 28	Balochistan	Two Police officials were killed when unidentified armed assailants opened fire at the vehicle of Deputy Superintendent Police (DSP) Hameedullah Dasti on Samungli Road. However, the DSP narrowly escaped the attack while the two Policemen guarding Dasti and identified as Muhammad Tahir and Ayub Shah died on the spot. ¹⁰⁵	2	0
2	February 28	Balochistan	Four soldiers of the Frontier Corps (FC) were killed while seven others were injured in a suicide attack on a	5	7

¹⁰⁴ Michael Bachner and Raoul Wootliff, "Prince William to visit Israel this summer, in first official trip by UK royal", *The Times of Israel*, March 1, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/prince-william-to-visit-israel-this-summer-in-first-official-royal-visit/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=3182fe22ea-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-3182fe22ea-55556173 accessed on March 5, 2018

¹⁰⁵ Syed Ali Shah, 2 policemen martyred as assailants open fire on DSP's vehicle in Quetta, *Dawn*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392262/2-policemen-martyred-as-assailants-open-fire-on-dsps-vehicle-in-quetta>, accessed on March 5, 2018

			check-post in Nosahar area, 30 kilometres from Quetta. The bomber blew himself upon reaching the spot. ¹⁰⁶		
3	March 1	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	The voluntary repatriation process for Afghan refugees resumed in Peshawar after a three-month winter break. Over 1.4 million registered refugees have the option to go back to their homeland. The process resumed at the Voluntary Repatriation Centre at Azakhel, in Nowshera District. ¹⁰⁷	Voluntary repatriation resumed	
4	March 2	FATA	Army captain Maqbool and soldier Naik Barat Khattak were seriously injured in a roadside Improvised Explosives Device blast Paindee Cheena area near Zakhakhel bazaar of Tirah valley in Khyber Agency. ¹⁰⁸	0	2
5	March 4	Washington	The Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana W. White during a news briefing on March 4 reminded Islamabad that war against terrorism in the South Asian region has reached an inflection point and it should use this opportunity to defeat terrorists. "With respect to Pakistan we believe that Pakistan can do more to combat terrorism," she said. ¹⁰⁹	Statement	
6	March 4	Balochistan	A Shia Hazara, identified as Naiz Ali (22), was shot dead by unidentified arms assailants on Ali Bhai Road area in provincial capital Quetta. Police termed it a case of targeted killing and started investigation. No outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹¹⁰	1	0

¹⁰⁶ Saleem Shahid, Six security men martyred in Quetta attacks, *Dawn*, March 1, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392477/six-security-men-martyred-in-quetta-attacks>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹⁰⁷ Process for Afghan displaced persons' return resumes, *Dawn*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392683/process-for-afghan-displaced-persons-return-resumes>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹⁰⁸ Ibrahim Shinwari, Captain, soldier injured in blast, *Dawn*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1392918/captain-soldier-injured-in-blast>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹⁰⁹ Anwar Iqbal, Pentagon urges Pakistan to avail new opportunities for defeating terrorism, *Dawn*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1393247/pentagon-urges-pakistan-to-avail-new-opportunities-for-defeating-terrorism>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁰ Hazara man shot dead in Quetta, *Dawn*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1393252/hazara-man-shot-dead-in-quetta>, accessed on March 5, 2018

Afghanistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	March 4	Kabul	<p>In response to accusations of Russia, Iran and Pakistan during the Kabul Process Conference that was held on February 28 regarding Afghanistan's failure in countering terrorism, especially Daesh, the National Security Adviser Haneef Atmar offered a joint intelligence interrogation from the militants of Islamic State imprisoned by Afghanistan.</p> <p>Representatives from 20 countries participated in the conference in which President Ashraf Ghani unfolded a comprehensive and precondition offer of Talks to Taliban.¹¹¹</p>	Kabul Process Conference	
2	March 2	Kabul	At least one person was killed and 22 others were wounded in a suicide bombing targeting a vehicle belonging to foreign forces in the eastern part of Kabul. The Interior Ministry confirmed the attack saying it was a suicide bombing against "foreign forces." ¹¹²	1	22
3	March 2 & 3	Ghazni	<p>Hundreds of people blocked the Highway connecting two biggest cities of Kabul and Kandahar expressing their protest against an attack on civilians in Ghazni.</p> <p>Earlier on March 2, several unidentified armed assailants, who allegedly wore uniform of the</p>	2	2

¹¹¹ Afghanistan calls for intelligence probe into Daesh, *Afghanistan Times*, March 4, 2018, <http://afghanistantimes.af/afghanistan-calls-intelligence-probe-daesh/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹² Afghanistan: Suicide car bomber hits Kabul, *Al Jazeera*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/explosion-heard-afghan-capital-kabul-180302051324535.html>, accessed on March 5, 2018

			Afghan security forces, killed two civilians, injured two women and kidnapped two more persons in the Qarabagh district of the province. ¹¹³		
4	March 4	Kabul	A group of 70 Taliban militants are ready to join the peace process in support of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. Herat Provincial Council chairman Kamran Alizai said they held negotiations with the group of Taliban, which numbers 70. According to him, the militants are prepared to join the peace process. ¹¹⁴	Taliban ready to join peace process	
5	March 4	Kabul	According to Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG) report, at least 202 civilians suffered casualties in February with 113, including 16 women and 17 children killed, and 89 others injured, including 20 children. ¹¹⁵	CPAG Report	

Iraq

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	February 28	Kirkuk	At least 8 Islamic State (IS) militants, including a suicide attacker, were killed in a face-off with paramilitary forces in Kirkuk. Ali al-Husseini, a spokesman for al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) northern axis, said "During a military operation to hunt for Islamic State militants in	8	0

¹¹³ Kabul-Kandahar Highway Blocked: Hundreds Demand Justice for Killed Civilians, *Sputnik International*, March 4, 2018, <https://sputniknews.com/asia/201803041062202906-afghanistan-kabul-kandahar-highway-protests/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁴ Taliban Group Ready To Join Peace Process, *Tolo News*, March 4, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/taliban-group-ready-join-peace-process>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁵ 202 civilians killed, wounded in February: CPAG, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, March 4, 2018, https://www.pajhwok.com/en/subscription-required?redirect_from=508318, accessed on March 5, 2018

			Kirkuk, paramilitary troops of al-Hashd al-Shaabi found a hideout that was used by the militant group at al-Aziziyah village in southern Kirkuk.” “The troops immediately stormed the hideout and killed eight Islamic State militants, including a suicide bomber,” Hussein said. ¹¹⁶		
2	March 2	Mosul	A mass grave with remains of forty Christians was found in Mosul. “Al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) along with security troops in Halila region, near Badush in west of Mosul, ran into a mass grave of Christians who were kidnapped from the region,” a source from the Syriac Orthodox Church said. ¹¹⁷	Mass grave unearthed	
3	March 2	Mosul	Iraqi troops killed and three IS militants and leaders in al-Rayhaniya village. Separately, the troops arrested 17 IS militants and seized weapons from their possession in Badush. ¹¹⁸	3	0
4	March 4	Mosul	A policeman was killed and three others were injured after a bomb targeting a security patrol exploded at the entrance of Tel Kaif town. ¹¹⁹	1	3

¹¹⁶ Mohammed Ebraheem, Eight IS militants killed in clashes with paramilitary troops in Iraq’s Kirkuk, *Iraqi News*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/eight-militants-killed-clashes-paramilitary-troops-kirkuk/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁷ Nehal Mostafa, Mass grave with remains of 40 Christians found in west of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/mass-grave-remains-40-christians-found-west-mosul/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁸ Nehal Mostafa, 25 Islamic State members killed, arrested in wake of attack, west of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/25-islamic-state-members-killed-arrested-wake-attack-west-mosul/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹¹⁹ Mohammed Ebraheem, Four policemen killed, injured in bomb attack in Iraq’s Mosul, *Iraqi News*, March 4, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/four-policemen-killed-injured-bomb-attack-iraqs-mosul/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

Syria

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	March 4	Aleppo	Al Qaeda affiliate militia Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham (also known as Jabhat al-Nusra) attempted to overrun positions of rival Islamist group Jabhat Tahrir Souriya in Dart Izza' town. Jabhat Tahrir Souriya's tank hunter teams knocked out no less three main battle tanks belonging to Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham during the fighting. ¹²⁰		Nusra defeated
2	March 4	East Ghouta	The SAA led by their Tiger Forces seized the important East Ghouta town of Al-Shifouniyah after several days of fighting with Jaysh Al-Islam. ¹²¹		SAA seizes town
3	March 4	East Ghouta	The UN says "collective punishment of civilians is simply unacceptable" as the Syrian forces continue their military offensive in the rebel-held area of Eastern Ghouta. The UN said in a statement on Sunday that it was "deeply concerned" for the safety and protection of millions of civilians across Syria, a week after the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for a 30-day ceasefire. ¹²²		UN statement on civilian killing in Syria
4	March 4	East Ghouta	Syrian President Bashar al-Assad declared that military operations in the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta would continue as the		Statement on continuation of

¹²⁰ Andrew Illingworth, Nusra suffers brutal defeat after 3 tanks get knocked out by rival Islamists in west Aleppo, *Al Masdar News*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/video-nusra-suffers-brutal-defeat-3-tanks-get-knocked-rival-islamists-west-aleppo/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹²¹ Leith Aboufadel, Syrian Army releases first footage of newly captured town in East Ghouta, *Al Masdar News*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-releases-first-footage-newly-captured-town-east-ghouta/>, accessed on March 5, 2018

¹²² UN on Syria: Collective punishment of civilians unacceptable, *Al Jazeera*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/eastern-ghouta-residents-dire-situation-stop-bombing-180304064141621.html>, accessed on March 5, 2018

			<p>bombardment of the area moves into its third week. The offensive was launched on February 18, 2018.</p> <p>“The operation in Ghouta is a continuation of combating terrorism in different places,” Assad said.¹²³</p>	<p>operation in Ghouta</p>
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International Economic Issues

- **AIIB plans to invest \$200 million in India’s National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)**

On February 28, 2018, the Indian Express reported that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is set to substantially increase its investment commitments in India, with officials stating that the bank has already approved \$1.5 billion in loans for projects in India and that it might invest \$200 million (around Rs 1,300 crore) in India’s first sovereign wealth fund — the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).

Delivering the Inaugural Address at a Curtain Raiser Ceremony for the 3rd Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on February 27, 2018, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley sought more investment from the Beijing-headquartered multi-national body, stating that multilateral lending is needed to bridge the infrastructure gap in the Asian region.

During his address, Jaitley stated that India aspires to not only conventional infrastructure creation “but also rural infrastructure so that the quality of life, for those people can improve effectively”. With India being an active participant in the AIIB, Jaitley pointed out that the bank has started working effectively in less than three years.

“The bank has come of age within a limited period. There is a pipeline of many projects and the bank has been at a forefront of some of these active projects,” he said. “Asia needs to grow faster to bring up the standard of living of its own people and cover for the infrastructure deficit that they have,” said Jaitley.

¹²³ Jamie Tarabay, Syria’s Assad: Operations in Eastern Ghouta will continue, *CNN*, March 5, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/05/middleeast/syria-assad-ghouta-operations-intl/index.html>, accessed on March 5, 2018

Following Jaitley's address, two separate AIIB officials stated that India will get increased support from the AIIB going forward, with one possible investment set to come in the NIIF at around \$200 million, according to AIIB president Jin Liqun, who also pointed out that the bank has committed over \$1 billion in five infrastructure projects in India and proposes to take up 12 more, envisaging assistance of \$3.5 billion.

Meanwhile, D J Pandian, the AIIB's chief investment officer stated that they have already approved \$1.5 billion in loans to India in 2018. These funds are set to be used for investment in India's energy, roads and urban development projects.¹²⁴

- **The 4th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Intersessional Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore**

The Ministers from the 16 RCEP Participating Countries (RPCs) attended the 4th RCEP Intersessional Ministerial Meeting held on 3 March 2018 in Singapore. The Ministers noted the progress made since the Preparatory RCEP Ministerial Meeting for the 1st RCEP Summit on 12 November 2017, Manila, Philippines, including the outcomes of the 21st round of negotiations held on 2-9 February 2018 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and the corresponding intersessional meetings of select working groups and sub-working groups. The Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to meet the Leaders' instruction to intensify efforts in 2018 towards the conclusion, and welcomed the Work Plan presented as part of the RCEP Trade Negotiating Committee Report to the Ministers.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank plans to invest \$200 million in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund", The Indian Express, February 27, 2018, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2018/feb/28/asian-infrastructure-investment-bank-plans-to-invest-200-million-in-indias-national-investment-and-1780000.html> (accessed on March 1, 2018)

¹²⁵ "Joint Statement of The Fourth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Intersessional Ministerial Meeting", <http://asean.org/joint-statement-of-the-fourth-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership-rcep-intersessional-ministerial-meeting/> (accessed on March 5, 2018)