



Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road

New Delhi

Weekly Media Updates **(2– 8 April, 2018)**

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Africa

- **Nigeria Assumes Chairmanship of AU Security and Peace Council**

Nigeria, assumed the one month rotational Chairmanship of the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC). The Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the AU, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, takes over from Ambassador Zackariaou Maiga, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Niger, who held the Chairmanship for the month of March, 2018.

Crucial in Nigeria's Chairmanship of the African Union Peace and Security Council for the month of April will be focus on the addressing the threats posed by Nuclear Weapons and the imperative of preventing terrorists from accessing these weapons of mass destruction, and their control regimes, including the urgent need for the promotion of peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy. Importantly, the PSC will consider the nexus between Corruption & Conflict Resolution and the Imperative of promoting good economic policies in the context of Nigeria's Championing of the 2018 AU annual theme on anti-corruption under the leadership of H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari.

Under the Nigerian chairmanship, PSC will explore strategies towards "Saving the Lake Chad" by Enhancing Environmental Sustainability & Human Security in West & Central Africa and undertake a prospective analysis of Africa's peace and security landscape by 2023 (End of First Ten Year Plan of AU Agenda 2063). Similarly, it will engage on fashioning a comprehensive approach towards the prevention of the ideology of hate, genocide and hate crimes on the continent.

Nigeria as chairperson of the Council will prioritize the operationalization of the African Standby Force, which is a key element of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Sustainable Financing of the African Union Peace Support Operations with particular emphasis on the African Peace Fund.

The Peace and Security Council is the standing decision-making organ of the African Union, which is patterned along the United Nations Security Council to enforce Union Decisions, particularly in matters relating to the maintenance of regional and continental peace and security.

- **Talks in Sudan over controversial Nile dam fail¹**

A new round of talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan in the Sudanese capital Khartoum over Addis Ababa's massive hydroelectric dam project along the Nile have failed to achieve a breakthrough, Sudan's minister of foreign affairs said early Friday. Addressing the media after more than 12 hours of meetings, Ibrahim Ghandur admitted that the three countries had failed to achieve any significant results, adding that the ministries of irrigation in the three countries will meet to look into the technical disagreements. The talks resumed Thursday after a two-year suspension.

In 2011, the Ethiopian government began construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile (a tributary of the Nile River) near the border with Sudan. In the seven years since, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have held several rounds of talks on the dam's anticipated impact on Nile water resources. Addis Ababa says electricity generated by the

¹ 6, April 2018 ,<https://aa.com.tr/en/africa/talks-in-sudan-over-controversial-nile-dam-fail/1109953>

dam -- which was originally slated for completion this year -- will help eradicate poverty and contribute to the country's development. Egypt, however, fears the dam could adversely affect its historical share of Nile water as defined in a colonial-era water-sharing treaty.

- **Israel Suspends Plan to Deport Thousands of African Migrants²**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday, 2 April 2018 that he was putting on hold an agreement with the U.N. refugee agency to relocate thousands of African migrants to Western countries. Hours after announcing the deal Netanyahu posted a message on his Facebook page saying he was putting it on hold until further review.

Under the agreement some 16,250 migrants would have been resettled in Western nations, including Canada, Italy and Germany. The same number will be given residency in Israel. But soon after the announcement, officials at the German Interior Ministry and Italian Foreign Ministry said they were unaware of any plans to resettle African migrants in their countries. Jean-Nicolas Beuze of the UNHCR in Ottawa told that Canada has not made any formal commitment but things are "being discussed."

Israel is home to roughly 35,000 African migrants, most of them from Eritrea, which has one of the world's worst human rights records, or war-torn Sudan. The migrants say they are asylum-seekers fleeing danger and persecution, while Israeli leaders have claimed they are merely job seekers. Netanyahu's right-wing government rejects claims by the Africans that they are refugees, describing them as "infiltrators" and economic migrants.

- **China Writes Off Zimbabwe's Debt³**

China has reportedly written off Zimbabwe's debt to the Asian giant's institutions, paving the way for more funding to the southern African country whose ability to access new funding has been crippled by among other things, huge debt. This is according to local radio station, ZiFM Stereo, owned by Zimbabwe's ICT Minister Supa Mandiwanzira, who also accompanied President Emmerson Mnangagwa on a state visit to China. Mnangagwa is understood to have been instrumental in helping Chinese companies obtain vast diamond mining concessions in Zimbabwe

- **U.S. Extends Emergency Declaration Over Somalia Piracy, Terrorism⁴**

U.S President Donald Trump has signed an executive order extending a national emergency declaration for Somalia, which had been slated to expire in May, the White House said in a statement on Wednesday.

It also cited the nation's continued threat to U.S. national security and foreign policy. "For this reason, the national emergency declared on April 12, 2010, and the measures adopted on that date and on July 20, 2012, to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond April 12, 2018." It said the emergency was first declared in 2010 and had been

² Voice of America , 3 April 2018,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201804030103.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt

http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00060067.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Agroup%3Aabqps

⁴ Shabelle Media Network, 5 April 2018,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201804060369.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt

extended several times due to piracy off the Somali coast and internal attacks by al-Shabab, a terrorist group affiliated with al-Qaeda (both are banned in Russia).

- **South Africa's Zuma Proclaims Innocence after Court Appearance⁵**

Former South African president Jacob Zuma appeared in court on Friday to face corruption charges relating to a US\$2.5 billion arms deal, later telling a crowd he would be proven innocent in the long-running case that resurfaced after his fall from power. Zuma's transition from "Mr. President" to "Accused Number One" in less than two months is a significant setback for the 75-year-old, whose nine years in office were marked by economic stagnation and credit downgrades. He faces 16 charges including fraud, racketeering and money laundering. In a procedural appearance that lasted less than 15 minutes, state prosecutors and Zuma's lawyers asked the Durban High Court to adjourn the case until June 8 so both sides could prepare submissions. Judge Themba Sishi approved the request. A potential trial would take several more months to prepare. Zuma later made a rousing speech from a podium outside the Durban court, telling thousands of supporters that his opponents were telling lies and the judiciary and politicians believed that he did not have rights.

- **Anti-Apartheid Icon Nelson Mandela's Ex-Wife Winnie Mandela Dies⁶**

Winnie Mandela, the ex-wife of late South African anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, has died at the age of 81. A veteran herself of the anti-apartheid struggle, Winnie Mandela died on Monday afternoon, her personal assistant said. "She died after a long illness, for which she had been in and out of hospital since the start of the year," Victor Dlamini, a family spokesperson, said in a statement on Monday. "She succumbed peacefully in the early hours of Monday afternoon surrounded by her family and loved ones." Born in the Eastern Cape's Bizana town in 1936, Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela moved to Johannesburg in 1953 to pursue studies in social work before meeting Nelson Mandela, her future husband, who was then an anti-apartheid campaigner. Winnie developed a reputation as an uncompromising opponent of South Africa's racial segregation system.

- **Tanzania's US\$344 Million Natural Gas Plant is A Game Changer⁷**

This week Tanzania opened a brand new US\$344 million, 167.82-megawatt natural gas power plant outside of the nation's commercial capital, Dar es Salaam, marking a turning point in the nation's push toward industrialisation. The plant, already running at full capacity, is just one part of Tanzanian President John Magufuli's initiative to transform the Sub-Saharan country's economy – the third biggest in Africa – into an industrial powerhouse by 2025. Up until this point, Tanzania has been the furthest thing from an energy frontrunner, with a population of 54 million, skyrocketing demand for power, and just 1,400 MW of installed grid capacity. In the past, the majority of Tanzania's energy has come from hydropower, leading to frequent shortages in a region with persistent droughts. The inauguration of the new Kinyerezi II natural gas plant will be an undeniable game-changer for the East African nation.

⁵ Reuters, 6 April 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-politics-zuma/south-africas-zuma-proclaims-innocence-after-court-appearance-idUSKCN1HD00Y>

⁶ Al Jazeera, 3 April 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/winnie-mandela-dies-age-81-180402141618513.html>

⁷ Oil Price, 7 April 2018, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/Tanzanias-344M-Natural-Gas-Plant-Is-A-Game-Changer.html>

- **Tanzania Builds wall to Protect Gemstones⁸**

Tanzania's President John Magufuli has officially inaugurated the Great Mirerani Wall, built in the north of the country to prevent the theft of tanzanite, a rare gemstone. In September, Mr. Magufuli ordered the military to build the wall, which is 24km (15 miles) long, in order "to control illegal mining and trading activities". The blue-violet tanzanite gemstone is found only in the East African state. This is the first time Tanzania has built a wall to protect its mines, and some believe that other countries grappling with smuggling may also build them.

- **Tanzania Opposition Leaders Granted Bail⁹**

Seven opposition leaders in Tanzania were freed on bail on Thursday following their arrest last week.

The Chadema party politicians are facing charges of sedition and incitement to violence and will reappear in court on 16 April. They were also charged with taking part in an illegal demonstration in Dar es Salaam in February that led to the death of a student, who was allegedly killed by a stray bullet while police engaged in a street battle with rioters. The opposition leaders, four of whom are members of parliament, had been detained at a remand prison before the Kisutu Resident Magistrate Court granted them bail. As part of the bail conditions, the seven opposition politicians have to report to the central police station in Dar es Salaam every Friday. The politicians include the Chadema chairperson, Freeman Mbowe, the party's secretary general and the chairperson of the women's wing.

- **Zambia's 'Unknown' Debts Face Scrutiny after Mozambique Scandal¹⁰**

Zambia is facing tough questions over its foreign-debt levels from investors who think the real number may be more than double what the government says it is. Lenders including Nomura Holdings Inc. believe the state hasn't come completely clean on how much external borrowing it's undertaken. This is a situation to neighboring Mozambique, where hidden debts led to default and the government is seeking to restructure.

- **Members of Zambia's Ruling Party to Vote Against Lungu¹¹**

Members of Zambia's ruling Patriotic Front (PF) have resolved to vote against President Edgar Lungu in the forthcoming impeachment motion in an effort to "teach" him a "life lesson", the *Zambian Observer* reported on Monday. Sixteen parliamentary members mostly from Luapula, Northern, Muchinga and Copperbelt complained of Lungu's unreasonable behaviour and how they were being sidelined during a meeting Sunday night. However, the PF members also asserted that some members of the opposition were working in cahoots with State House to prevent the impeachment motion proceeding and that Haikende Haichilema, the leader of the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND), needed to know that not all of his parliamentary members could be trusted.

⁸ The Star, 6 April 2018, https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/04/06/tanzania-builds-wall-to-protect-gemstones_c1739923

⁹ Africa News, 4 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/04/tanzania-opposition-leaders-granted-bail/>

¹⁰ Bloomberg, 6 April 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-06/zambia-s-unknown-debts-face-scrutiny-after-mozambique-scandal>

¹¹ IOL, 2 April 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/members-of-zambias-ruling-party-to-vote-against-lungu-14195401>

- **Mozambique Seeks Private Investment in Renewable Energies¹²**

The Mozambique Electric Company (EDM) said at a workshop in Maputo on Thursday that one of the strategies to improve the country's energy supply is to encourage private investment in the sector of renewable energies. "We believe that renewable energies play an important role to help us reach the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 agenda. Currently, it's not possible to supply electric power to the entire country using the national grid, we need to use several isolated systems," said Miserio Banze, head of the department for energy efficiency at EDM. Mozambique is a signatory for the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7), aiming to secure access to a reliable, sustainable, modern and affordable energy to all. The country has been investing in the generation of renewable energy through solar power particularly for health unities, schools and other institutions in rural areas.

- **Kenya Launches First Satellite¹³**

Kenya's first Satellite, a Cube Satellite (CubeSat) has been launched into the International Space Station. The launch which occurred on Monday this week at 16:30 hrs (Eastern USA local time) has been hailed as a milestone in Kenya's exploration into space by CS Monica Juma. The Cube Satellite was developed by the University of Nairobi in collaboration with the University of Rome. The selected team was first announced during the TICAD VI, as a beneficiary of the first round of the KiboCUBE Programme. KiboCUBE is an initiative that offers educational and research institutions from developing countries, the opportunity to deploy cube satellites (CubeSats) from the Japanese Kibo module of the International Space Station (ISS). The Kenyan CubeSatellite developed under the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), which is Japan's National Aero-space agency programme was delivered to JAXA on January 16, 2018 in preparation for its deployment into space. A team from the University of Nairobi, handed over to JAXA the Satellite it had developed known as "First Kenya University Nano Satellite-Precursor Flight" (1KUNS-PF) at the JAXA Tsukuba Space Centre. The deployment of the satellite into space will take place late next month.

- **Kenya's High Court Directs that Deported Opposition Figure Must be Present in Court on May 18¹⁴**

Kenya's high court has directed that the deported lawyer, Miguna Miguna be allowed back into the country to face his accuser in person. The court through its judge Justice Chacha Mwita said Miguna must physically be present in court on May 18 to give oral evidence against a petition accusing the Kenyan government for stripping off his citizenship. "I expect Miguna to be in court on the next hearing which will proceed by way of oral evidence," said Chacha. The controversial lawyer was flown back to Canada when he flew to Nairobi airport on March 26. The Kenyan government through its immigration officers claimed the adamant lawyer had no proper documents that could have allowed him to be allowed through. Kenyan authorities initially deported Miguna in February, saying he had rescinded his Kenyan citizenship when he acquired Canadian nationality but a court ruled he should be allowed back.

¹² Xinhua Net, 6 April 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/06/c_137091120.htm

¹³ KBC, 6 April 2018, <http://www.kbc.co.ke/kenya-launches-first-satellite/>

¹⁴ Africa News, 7 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/07/kenya-s-high-court-directs-that-deported-opposition-figure-must-be-present-in/>

- **Namibia-China Relations Undergo Major Boost¹⁵**

The out come of the Namibian President's recent seven-day visit to China are as following: exports of meat and seafood to mainland China, Namibia to participate in Chinese space programme, N\$5.6 billion grant to Namibia agreed, construction of Namibia's space data receiving station, and Ease of access to funding. Namibia's international relationship with China has now been elevated to the engagement level China has with the European Union. Prior to the visit, whispers in the Namibian corridors of power thundered around the highly ambiguous cliché of "all-weather friends", as the two nations called each other, saying the phrase lacked modernity, energy and swag. Nandi-Ndaitwah, International Relations Minister of the country says that for Namibia the meaning of a "comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership with China will become more clear to ourselves and citizens as time goes on". But, the new engagement encompasses economic, political, cultural and other exchanges of ideas aimed at development in both countries, she says.

- **'India's Day With Windhoek' Celebrated¹⁶**

The Indian High Commission in Namibia and the City of Windhoek last week hosted the 'India's Day with Windhoek', aimed at promoting awareness and cooperation at local government level between India and the City of Windhoek. Windhoek mayor Muesee Kazapua said during the formal proceedings that the event is a stepping stone for municipal partnership and "people to people relationship". The event, which will henceforth be observed annually, will further cement the cordial relations that exist between India and Namibia, Kazapua believes. "Promoting arts and culture is at the top of our agenda and it is, therefore, no coincidence that we agreed without hesitation to partner with the High Commission of India in organising this important event," added Kazapua.

- **DR Congo Wants UN Mission to Leave in 2020: Foreign Minister¹⁷**

The Democratic Republic of Congo wants the UN mission to leave the country in 2020, Foreign Minister Leonard She Okitundu said on Tuesday, following a UN Security Council vote last week extending the peacekeepers' mandate for another year. "We have let the Security Council know that the current mandate is considered to be the penultimate one, before the force leaves our county definitively after 20 years," She Okitundu told a press conference in the capital Kinshasa. The United Nations has warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis in the DR Congo, with at least 13.1 million Congolese in need of aid, including 7.7 million who are severely food insecure.

- **UN Deactivates Maximum Emergency Level for Congo Crisis¹⁸**

The United Nations is downgrading Congo from its highest level of humanitarian emergency after the arrival of aid - and an outcry from government officials who say the focus on such woes is deterring investment. It activated a so-called Level 3 emergency for Democratic Republic of Congo in October, putting on the country on the same footing as Syria and Yemen. But, that is due to be deactivated this month, a senior UN official said in a statement on Thursday. Congo's government also rejects that the humanitarian situation is getting worse. It says it only recognizes about 231,000 internally displaced Congolese

¹⁵ New Era, 6 April 2018, <https://www.newera.com.na/2018/04/06/namibia-china-relations-undergo-major-surgery/>

¹⁶ All Africa, 3 April 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201804030614.html>

¹⁷ Daily Maverick, 3 April 2018, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-04-03-dr-congo-wants-un-mission-to-leave-in-2020-foreign-minister/>

¹⁸ Reuters, 5 April 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-violence/u-n-deactivates-maximum-emergency-level-for-congo-crisis-idUSKCN1HC2G0>

compared with U.N. estimates of around 4.3 million - 19 times higher. The government is also shunning a conference this month in Geneva organised by the United Nations and other donors in an effort to raise US\$1.7 billion for Congo, saying the focus on humanitarian woes is deterring investment.

- **South Sudan, Somalia and Iran Excluded from One of Australia's Refugee Programs¹⁹**

Humanitarian migrants from eight countries will be prioritised under one of Australia's refugee resettlement programs, with other nationalities told their applications are highly unlikely to be accepted. The Guardian understands the priority countries are: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Bhutan, Syria and Iraq. Nationals of several other specific countries that were previously considered for resettlement, such as South Sudan, Somalia and Iran, are now excluded and will not be able to access the program. The move has been condemned by some community leaders as "clear discrimination".

- **Kenyan Forces are Allowing Money to Flow to a Terrorist Group in Somalia²⁰**

The Kenyan Defense Forces have been deployed in Somalia conducting counterterrorism operations since 2011. Yet a recent United Nations report accuses the Kenyans of continuing their yearslong practice of enabling the trade of charcoal in Somalia—a trade banned by the UN in 2012 because it profits al-Shabab, the Islamist terror group with which Kenya is ironically locked in a bitter struggle. Since its rise to prominence in 2006, al-Shabab (an al-Qaeda affiliate) has launched hundreds of attacks inside Somalia, earning the State Department's designation as a terror organization in 2008. In October 2017, it launched one of the deadliest terror attacks in history when two of its truck bombs killed more than 500 people in Somalia's capital city, Mogadishu. The Kenyan forces' cupidity allows al-Shabab to rake in charcoal profits. The U.N. conservatively estimates that the terror group makes approximately US\$10 million dollars a year from the 4.5 million to 6 million bags of charcoal exported annually. Al-Shabab benefits primarily by taxing vehicles ferrying charcoal to port cities such as Kismayo for export.

- **30 al-Shabab Fighters Killed in Somalia Attack²¹**

African Union troops in Somalia killed at least 30 al-Shabab fighters as they repulsed an attack by the armed group on their base, the AU mission said. Heavily armed al-Shabab fighters attacked the base belonging to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) early on Sunday, blowing up two vehicles and engaging the African troops in a gun battle that lasted several hours. "The militants were dealt a heavy blow, with at least 30 of them put out of action, following intense fighting," AMISOM said in a statement on Monday.

- **Ethiopia's New Prime Minister Sworn in this Morning²²**

Ethiopia's new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) was sworn in this morning. "We need to clean ourselves from revenge, hate and racism," Prime Minister Abiy said,

¹⁹ The Guardian, 4 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/apr/05/south-sudan-somalia-and-iran-excluded-from-one-of-australias-refugee-programs>

²⁰ The Daily Signal, 3 April 2018, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2018/04/03/kenyan-forces-allowing-money-flow-terrorist-group-somalia/>

²¹ Al Jazeera, 2 April 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/african-union-30-al-shabab-fighters-killed-somalia-attack-180402063208401.html>

²² New Business Ethiopia, 2 April 2018, <https://newbusinessethiopia.com/ethiopias-new-prime-minister-sworn-in-this-morning-what-change-can-he-bring/>

indicating that the people of Ethiopia have already made enough sacrifices in their lives to bring the country where it is today. Ethiopia's ruling coalition the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) last week on Tuesday evening revealed its new chairman. The 180 members' council of the party which has been conducting a closed-door meeting for over a week has elected Dr. Abiy Ahmed. In addition to EPRDF's chairmanship, Dr. Abiy replaced Hailmariam Desalegn, who announced his intent to resign weeks ago. The election of Dr. Abiy Ahmed who represents one of the four member parties of the coalition – the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO), is considered by many people as a positive step the party has taken in its recent history. His appointment is also welcomed by the opposition parties.

Ethiopia Closes Maekelawi Prison, Restores Internet Across the Country²³

Ethiopia announced the closure of a notorious detention and investigation centre, commonly known as Maekelawi, which is located in the capital Addis Ababa. State-linked Fana Broadcasting reported that the last detainees in the center have been transferred to another correctional facility. The closure was part of the commitment made by the ruling EPRDF coalition last December as it tried to end anti-government protests. The prime minister at the time, Hailemariam Desalegn had announced that the Maekelawi prison would be converted into a museum, and that a new center compliant with the national parliament's guidelines on human rights and international standards would replace it. Human rights groups consistently described Maekelawi as a torture chamber. The closure comes just days after Abiy Ahmed took over as Ethiopia's new prime minister following the abrupt resignation of his predecessor. Meanwhile, mobile internet services that had been blocked for months in many areas of Ethiopia outside the capital were restored on Friday.

- **Boko Haram Kills 15, Wounds 83 in Attack in Northern Nigeria²⁴**

Nigeria's Boko Haram extremists attacked two villages on the outskirts of the northeastern city of Maiduguri late Sunday, killing at least 15 people, the military said Monday. The militants tried to enter the center of Maiduguri, the provincial capital of Borno state, but army soldiers repelled them, gunning down six armed insurgents and seven suicide bombers, said army spokesman Col. Onyema Nwachukwu. At least 83 people were injured and are receiving medical attention, he said. Residents of Maiduguri retreated to their homes Sunday night during hours-long battle marked by thunderous explosions and gunfire heard until the early hours of Monday. Troops prevented the insurgents from entering the center of Maiduguri, but they detonated their bombs in the outlying villages of Bille Shuwa and Alikaranti, with one soldier among the 15 casualties, said Nwachukwu.

Central Asia

- **Uzbekistan, Tajikistan Resume Energy Supplies**

The Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have resumed the supply of gas and electricity to each other after a gap of nine years. After a gap of eight years, electricity supply from Tajik side resumed on April 2 through the transmission line from Regar

²³ Africa News, 7 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/07/ethiopia-closes-maekelawi-prison-restores-internet-across-the-country/>

²⁴ CBS News, 2 April 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/boko-haram-attack-kills-15-wounds-83-in-northern-nigeria/>

substation in the country to the Gulcha substation in Uzbekistan.²⁵ Tajikistan has surplus hydropower potential and exports electricity to Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan had formally left the Soviet-period regional power grid in December 2009 in that linked it with three Central Asian neighbours. However, the prospects of cooperation increased since Shavkat Mirziyoyev became President of Uzbekistan in September 2016 and the signing of agreements during the visit of Uzbekistan President to Tajikistan in March 2018. In another development in, Uzbekistan has restarted supply of gas Tajikistan through the Muzrabad-Dushanbe main gas pipeline.²⁶ The agreement on natural gas export to Tajikistan was signed during the Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's visit to Tajikistan in March.

China

- **Foreign Secretary's meeting with Vice Foreign Minister of China**

Foreign Secretary Shri Vijay Gokhale met with Vice Foreign Minister of China Mr. Kong Xuanyou in New Delhi on April 6, 2018 as part of regular diplomatic consultations between India and China. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed recent developments in bilateral relations and discussed the agenda for bilateral engagement, including high level exchanges, in the coming months. The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest. During the visit, Vice Foreign Minister Kong also called on the National Security Advisor Shri Ajit Doval on April 6, 2018.²⁷

- **China, Austria agree to establish friendly strategic partnership**

Chinese President Xi Jinping and visiting Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen agreed on 8 April to establish a Sino-Austrian friendly strategic partnership and advance bilateral pragmatic cooperation. Invited by Xi, Van der Bellen headed a large delegation on his state visit to China, including Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, four cabinet ministers, and members of the business community.

Calling Austria an important cooperative partner of China in Europe, Xi said the Austrian new government has written into its working program the contents of enhancing relations with China as well as the Belt and Road Initiative. He expressed appreciation for that.²⁸

- **China's 5G goal: Running in 2019**

China aims to have commercial use of 5G technology up and running in 2019, according to a senior official from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Qiao Yueshan, Deputy Director of the Ministry's Information Technology department, said telecom carriers - including China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom - will

²⁵ Asia-Plus, "Tajikistan reportedly begins supplying electricity to Uzbekistan," 3 April 2018, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/economic/20180403/tajikistan-reportedly-begins-supplying-electricity-to-uzbekistan>

²⁶ The Tashkent Times, "Uzbekistan resumes gas supplies to Tajikistan," 8 April 2018, <http://tashkenttimes.uz/economy/2231-uzbekistan-resumes-gas-supplies-to-tajikistan>

²⁷ Press Releases by MEA available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29789/Foreign+Secretarys+meeting+with+Vice+Foreign+Minister+of+China>

²⁸ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/09/c_137096222.htm

start to install medium and low-frequency bands in 2019 and 2020, while some regions are expected to test high-frequency bands in 2022 at the earliest.

Qiao said he also expects that manufacturers will launch commercialized 5G production by the end of this year, including base station equipment and terminal devices.²⁹

- **Xi Jinping Holds Talks with President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe**

On April 3, 2018, President Xi Jinping held talks with President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe in Beijing. The two heads of state jointly agreed to elevate position of China-Zimbabwe relations to the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership to promote bilateral relations for better development.

The two heads of state jointly witnessed the signing of bilateral cooperation documents in such areas as economic technology, agriculture, science and technology and human resources development.³⁰

- **BFA holds Press Conference**

Zhou Wenzhong, Secretary General of Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), held a press conference in BFA Media Centre, Seagull Hall, ahead of the annual conference's opening in Hainan on April 8. Some flagship reports of the BFA were released at the press conference of the BFA annual conference.

The report, titled "the BFA Asian Competitiveness Annual Report 2018", suggested that with the continuing integration of Asian economies, the Asian economic competitiveness had gone through a steady development in 2017, which led the world economy with its strong economic growth.

The major emerging market economies, defined by the forum as "E11", refer to the 11 major economies in the Group of 20, namely, Argentina, Brazil, and the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. E11 has performed a stable economic growth over the past years. It can be predicted that the E11 will achieve a growth at approximately 5.1% in the upcoming year, according to the Development of Emerging Economies Annual Report 2018.³¹

- **China's bomber H-6K designed to fly beyond island chains**

China's bomber H-6K is designed to fly beyond the island chains, said He Shengqiang, leader of H-6K's research and development team, during a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency in Xi'an, capital of China's Shaanxi province. The aircraft has been improved for longer range, payload capacity and precision. He said that bombers are vital for aviation power and they are important weapons for world-class armies and air forces.³²

- **Chinese scientists discover large area of REE-rich sediment in SE Pacific Ocean**

A Chinese research team has discovered a large area of rich sediment of rare earth elements (REE) in the southeast Pacific Ocean. On March 30, 2018, Shi Xuefa, chief scientist of the mission, reported that the team conducted marine geological and

²⁹ <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201804/09/WS5acabe18a3105cdcf6516d7b.html>

³⁰ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1548854.shtml

³¹ <http://english.boaoforum.org/2018nnews/37944.jhtml>

³² "China's bomber H-6K designed to fly beyond island chains", *The People's Daily*, April 2, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0402/c90000-9444833.html>, Accessed on April 9, 2018.

comprehensive investigation within a 2.6 million square kilometre area in the southeast Pacific Ocean.³³

- **China's Foreign Minister meets DPRK counterpart in Beijing**

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with the Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Ri Yong Ho in Beijing on April 3, 2018. He emphasised development of the friendship for both the countries and the region. While supporting the summit between DPRK and Republic of Korea (ROK) and summit between DPRK and US, the Chinese side warned of disruptive forces. Ri assured China that Pyongyang will maintain close strategic communication with China and expressed Pyongyang's readiness to implement the consensus reached between the two leaders.³⁴

- **China advocates dual-track approach to solve Korean Peninsula nuclear issue**

On April 5, 2018, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a news conference in Moscow that the Korean Peninsula should be denuclearised and a peace mechanism established to resolve the issue. Wang emphasised denuclearisation as the key to many problems and the path to peace and stability. He said nuclear issue is closely connected to the DPRK's security threat perception. He said China and Russia have made unremitting efforts together for a peaceful settlement and to create a feasible roadmap. Again, he said China and Russia will coordinate and communicate with other stakeholders.³⁵

- **Senior Chinese official voices confidence in China-Russia ties**

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Russia from April 4 to 5 as the special envoy of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Wang said that China-Russia relations will contribute better to global strategic stability and world peace. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the ties serve as a model of cooperation between major countries and help maintain global stability. The two sides exchanged views on the Korean Peninsula, Syria and Afghanistan.³⁶

- **Carrier-based attack drones to enter service with PLA Navy**

The PLA Navy conducted tests for carrier-based drone which is capable of synchronised operations with manned aircraft. The vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) drone is designed to operate on destroyers as well. Shi Wen, chief engineer and designer of Caihong attack drones, told a press conference in Beijing on April 2, 2018 that joint operation of manned aircraft and drones is the future of air power. He expressed China's efforts to promote use of artificial intelligence (AI) for UAVs to allow manned aircraft to co-pilot UAVs. Beijing plans to deploy the drones in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.³⁷

³³ "Chinese scientists discover large area of REE-rich sediment in SE Pacific Ocean", *The People's Daily*, April 2, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0402/c90000-9444482.html>, Accessed on April 5, 2018.

³⁴ "China's Foreign Minister meets DPRK counterpart in Beijing", *The People's Daily*, April 4, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0404/c90000-9445426.html>, Accessed on April 6, 2018.

³⁵ "China advocates dual-track approach to solve Korean Peninsula nuclear issue: FM", *Xinhuanet*, April 5, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/05/c_137090767.htm, Accessed on April 9, 2018.

³⁶ "Senior Chinese official voices confidence in China-Russia ties", *Xinhuanet*, April 6, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/06/c_137091784.htm, Accessed on April 9, 2018.

³⁷ "Carrier-based attack drones to enter service with PLA Navy", *The Asia Times*, April 4, 2018, <http://www.atimes.com/article/carrier-based-attack-drones-enter-service-pla-navy/>, Accessed on April 5, 2018.

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Prime Minister Abe announces initiative to boost security in Iraq amid arms proliferation**

On April 5, 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the launch of a Japan-led international initiative to improve security in Iraq, amid a proliferation of arms following the liberation of the Middle Eastern country from the Islamic State extremist group. The announcement was made during a multilateral meeting in Tokyo attended by Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Japan will set up a working group to help local authorities collect weapons that have spread across the country, provide vocational training, and create jobs for former fighters as well as local residents. Abe said, "by urging (former fighters and local residents) to voluntarily submit weapons to the government and reduce the number of them...we can create a safe society." Working-level officials from around 30 countries, including the United States and Britain, and international organizations such as the World Bank gathered at the meeting that was co-hosted by Japan and Iraq.³⁸

- **North Korea informed Japan that abduction issue had been resolved**

On April 7, 2018, Japanese news agency Kyodo news reported that contact through informal channels early this year North Korea reiterated its position to Japan that abductions of its citizens in the 1970s and 1980s had been resolved. Japan has informed North Korea of its desire to hold a bilateral summit through several channels since February, as Tokyo views such a meeting as essential to resolving the abduction issue.³⁹

- **Japan activates first marines since WWII to bolster defenses**

On April 7, 2018, Japan activated its first marine unit since World War II trained to counter invaders occupying Japanese islands along the edge of the East China Sea that Tokyo fears are vulnerable to attack by China. In a ceremony held at a military base near Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, about 1,500 members of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) wearing camouflage took part in the event. In front of spectators, troops conducted a 20-minute mock exercise recapturing a remote island from invaders. The formation of the marine brigade is controversial because amphibious units can project military force and could, critics warn, be used to threaten Japan's neighbors. In its post-World War II Constitution, Japan renounced the right to wage war.⁴⁰

- **Impeached South Korean President Park gets 24 years prison term for corruption**

On April 6, 2018, Former President Park Geun-hye was sentenced to 24 years in prison and fined 18 billion won (US\$16.8 million) in a ruling on a massive corruption case that led to her removal from office early last year. The Seoul Central District Court found the 66-

³⁸ "Abe unveils initiative to boost security in Iraq amid arms proliferation", The Japan Times, April 6, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/04/06/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-unveils-initiative-boost-security-iraq-amid-arms-proliferation/#.WssBLx1ua1s>

³⁹ "Via unofficial route, North Korea informed Japan earlier in year that abduction issue had been resolved: sources", The Japan Times, April 8, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/04/08/national/politics-diplomacy/via-unofficial-route-north-korea-informed-japan-earlier-year-abduction-issue-resolved-sources/#.WssEUh1ua1s>

⁴⁰ "Japan activates first marines since WWII to bolster defenses against China", The Japan Times, April 7, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/04/07/national/japan-holds-kickoff-ceremony-nations-first-full-fledged-rapid-deployment-amphibious-force/#.WssGnR1ua1s>

year-old former leader guilty on 16 charges involving bribery, abuse of power, coercion and leaking state secrets. Park took office in early 2013 as South Korea's first female president. She became the nation's first elected head of state to be ousted by the Constitutional Court in March 2017 and now the third former leader to be convicted of corruption.⁴¹

- **Two Koreas discuss establishing hotline between leaders**

On April 7, 2018, South Korea and North Korea held talks to discuss establishing a direct telephone link between their leaders and other communication issues ahead of a historic summit between them later this month. The hotline between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, if installed, will mark the first of its kind between the two Koreas that technically remain at war. Seoul and Pyongyang will hold another round of talks next week to finalize the hotline issue while the date for the two leaders' first telephone conversation will be set in a high-level meeting expected to be held on April 18 or later.⁴²

ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines

- **Cambodia's deteriorating Democracy and Economic Condition**

According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), published last week, the quality of Cambodia's democracy, market economy and governance performance has deteriorated since its 2016 report. The biennial index assesses transitioning countries and ranked Cambodia 103 out of 129, with a score of 4 out of 10. Though the latest report only covers events through January 2017 – before a widespread crackdown on the political opposition – the report's authors still found that the “government drastically increased repressive measures against critics of the government”. The report also questions the sustainability of Cambodia's economic growth. It attributes this to deep corruption, over-exploitation of natural resources, reduced *competitiveness* of the rice sector and a lack of skilled workers. The risk of a real estate bubble in Phnom Penh had increased, while growth in tourism has declined. Miguel Chanco, lead ASEAN analyst for the Economist Intelligence Unit, agreed that Cambodia's economic growth seemed unsustainable. “I certainly agree that Cambodia's current rate of economic growth is unsustainable – owing in large part to the narrowness of the economy (ie it's reliance on garment exports) and the threat posed by nearby countries that boast much lower labour costs”. Stephen Higgins, managing partner at Mekong Strategic Partners, explained that although Cambodia's growth was mainly owed to the garment industry, the sector could not support such growth long-term. “As Cambodia becomes wealthier, income expectations also increase, which will price Cambodia out of the global garment industry, along with other sectors that rely on low wage costs,” he said.⁴³

⁴¹ "Ousted leader Park gets 24 years in prison for corruption", The Yonhap News, April 6, 2018, english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2018/04/06/0301000000AEN20180406006952315.html

⁴² "Koreas discuss establishing hotline between leaders", The Yonhap News, April 7, 2018, english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2018/04/07/0301000000AEN20180407002200315.html

⁴³ Leonie Kijewski, “Cambodia's democracy, economy at risk: report”, *The Phnom Penh Post*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodias-democracy-economy-risk-report>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

- **Philippine's Defence Minister voices security concern on Beijing's claims in the South China Sea**

Philippines Defence Minister, Delfin Lorenzana, in a speech at a naval base south of the capital Manila on March 26, 2018, stated that Philippines' territorial dispute with Beijing over the South China Sea remains a security challenge despite an improvement in bilateral ties. The defence minister attending a ceremony in which he accepted three maritime surveillance planes from Japan stated that this will definitely boost the navy's capability to gather intelligence in the disputed South China Sea. He further added that "...much still has to be done to boost our military capability equipment in order to meet a number of persistent maritime security challenges...." identifying territorial disputes with China and other countries over resource-rich areas in the South China Sea. Mr Lorenzana said the Philippines was also concerned with piracy and the movement of armed insurgents in the Sulu Sea and other transnational crimes, including smuggling of illegal drugs and poaching in rich fishing grounds in its territorial waters.⁴⁴

- **Thailand's Political Parties demand for conduct of Campaigns and elections**

Thai political parties called on the government on March 28 to lift curbs on campaigning while deepening demands for the conduct of elections. This was the largest sanctioned political gathering since the coup where dozens of parties filled a vast convention centre in Bangkok to hear the Election Commission lay out ground rules related to the vote. Since seizing power in 2014 the Thai government have banned gatherings of more than five people and has repeatedly postponed the date for elections to be conducted. Last month the PM Chan-o-cha announced that elections would be held "no later" than February 2019 as he opened the door for new political parties to register. Yet the junta has refused to ease restrictions on political gatherings and has said parties cannot meet without permission or publicly discuss policy.⁴⁵

- **20th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting (AISOM)**

At the 20th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting (AISOM) held from April 5-6, 2018 at Ha Noi, Viet Nam, senior officials reaffirmed their strong commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. The Senior Officials discussed ways and means to further strengthen ASEAN-India practical cooperation as directed by the Leaders at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in January 2018. The cooperation areas include maritime cooperation, countering terrorism and violent extremism, addressing transnational crimes, cyber-security, business, trade and investment, connectivity, science and technology, agriculture and forestry, as well as climate change, environment, disaster management, education, cultural and people-to-people links. The Meeting noted the encouraging progress made in the implementation of decisions made by the Leaders at the 15th ASEAN-India Summit in November last year as well as the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2016-2020). The Officials also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. India reaffirmed the importance of and its continued support for ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "Philippine defence chief says South China Sea territorial dispute remains security challenge", *The Straits Times*, March 26, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippine-defence-chief-says-south-china-sea-territorial-dispute-remains-security>, accessed on March 27, 2018.

⁴⁵ "Thai parties call for junta to finally unshackle politics", *The Straits Times*, March 28, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/thai-parties-call-for-junta-to-finally-unshackle-politics>, accessed on March 28, 2018.

⁴⁶ "ASEAN, India to strengthen strategic partnership", *ASEAN*, April 6, 2018, <http://asean.org/asean-india-to-strengthen-strategic-partnership/>, accessed on April 9, 2018.

North America

Canada

- **National security adviser requests to brief committee on Trudeau's India trip**
National security adviser Daniel Jean has made a formal request to appear at a House of Commons committee to brief MPs on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's state visit to India. Liberal MP John McKay, who chairs the public safety and National Security Committee, says Jean wrote to the committee to ask to appear and efforts are underway to make it happen as soon as possible. The earliest date would be April 17, because the House of Commons is currently on a break. Scheer and the Conservatives have been demanding Jean give them the same briefing he delivered to reporters during Trudeau's February trip to India, when he said rogue forces in India who fear Canada was too cosy with Sikh separatists, likely conspired to get a convicted political assassin invited to receptions with Trudeau during the trip. The invitations to Jaspal Atwal — the second was rescinded after his presence at the first reception was leaked to the media — helped turn Trudeau's India visit into a fiasco. Jean gave the media briefing as an anonymous government official, but his identity was later made public by the Conservatives.⁴⁷
- **High-tech Danish Arctic ship raises questions why Canada paying 10 times the cost for similar vessel**
Danish Arctic patrol ship making a port call to Halifax has raised questions on about why the Danes were able to put to sea three highly capable Arctic ships (albeit a little smaller than AOPS) but at such an incredible savings – \$700 million vs \$70 million to \$80 million. The ship is similar in design to Canada's Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) being built by Irving but it is smaller. There hasn't been a lot of specific answers on that from the Canadian government, other than statements that the two types of ships are different and the AOPS will be more capable. Another aspect Canadian industry officials point out is that the KNUD RASMUSSEN hulls were built offshore – Poland – at less cost than if they were built domestically. Then Danish firms were awarded the real high-value work in integrating systems and providing high-tech systems for the ships.⁴⁸
- **NATO chief happy with plan to grow Canada's military, but hopes for more**
The head of NATO is praising Canada's plan to grow its military over the coming decades, which the Trudeau government promised when it rolled out its new defence policy last year.

But NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also says he still expects all members of the military alliance to spend two per cent of their GDP on defence – a figure that the Liberal policy won't meet for the foreseeable future. Stoltenberg made the comments to The Canadian Press following an address to MPs, military experts and industry representatives on Parliament Hill, where he is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

⁴⁷ Mia Rabson, "National security adviser requests to brief committee on Trudeau's India trip," <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/high-tech-danish-arctic-ship-raises-questions-why-canada-paying-10-times-cost-for-similar-vessel>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁴⁸ David Pugliese, "High-tech Danish Arctic ship raises questions why Canada paying 10 times the cost for similar vessel," <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/high-tech-danish-arctic-ship-raises-questions-why-canada-paying-10-times-cost-for-similar-vessel>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

Canada has 450 soldiers in Latvia leading a NATO battlegroup, comprised of troops from half-a-dozen other nations.⁴⁹

- **No NAFTA deal in principle to be announced at Lima summit: sources**
Talks to rework the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are not advanced enough for the United States, Mexico and Canada to announce a deal “in principle” at this month’s Summit of the Americas in Lima, according to two people familiar with matter. U.S. President Donald Trump, his Mexican counterpart Enrique Pena Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are due to attend the Lima gathering, and officials have held out hope for substantive progress on the renegotiation before the meeting. Spokespeople for the Mexican economy ministry and Canada’s foreign ministry declined to comment. A spokeswoman for the office of U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer did not respond to a request for comment. An agreement in principle could not be a partial deal, and would need to contain “everything defined in black and white” before it was reached, one of the sources said. It could not leave key issues open for discussion afterward, the source added. If negotiations continue advancing, a deal might be possible by the end of April or early May, the source said. Trump said on Thursday that the three countries were working “very hard” on NAFTA and that he expected to have “something ... fairly soon.”⁵⁰

The United States

- **N Korea-US talks: Pyongyang 'ready to discuss' nuclear programme**
North Korea has promised the US it is ready to discuss the future of its nuclear arsenal when the two nations' leaders meet, US officials say. Preparations for the summit have included secret, direct talks with North Korea, unnamed Trump administration sources said. US and North Korean intelligence officials are said to have spoken many times, and met in a third country. The unprecedented summit is slated to happen in May. It will be the first time a sitting US president has met the leader of North Korea. North Korea has already told South Korea it was prepared to address denuclearisation, but this is the first time assurances have been given to Washington directly. Details of the leaders' summit, including the location, remain unclear. News of the talks between the US and North Korea surprised many when it broke in March. It followed a year of threats, personal insults and nuclear brinkmanship between their respective leaders. The North has previously halted missile and nuclear tests during past talks, only to resume them when it lost patience or felt its demands were not being met.⁵¹
- **Trump predicts trade concessions by China, despite rising tensions**
U.S. President Donald Trump predicted on Sunday that China would take down its trade barriers, expressing optimism despite escalating trade tensions between the world’s two largest economies that have roiled global markets in the past week. The two countries have threatened each other with tens of billions of dollars’ worth of tariffs in recent days and Chinese officials have said this is not the time for negotiations. But Trump administration officials have stressed that the tariffs are not yet in place and the dispute could be resolved through talks. In a Twitter post, Trump echoed this, saying “China will

⁴⁹ The Canadian Press, “NATO chief happy with plan to grow Canada’s military, but hopes for more,” <https://globalnews.ca/news/4123098/nato-chief-canada-military/>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵⁰ Dave Graham, “No NAFTA deal in principle to be announced at Lima summit: sources,” <https://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN1HF0YD-OCATP>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵¹ BBC, “N Korea-US talks: Pyongyang 'ready to discuss' nuclear programme,” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43693528>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

take down its trade barriers because it is the right thing to do. Taxes will become reciprocal and a deal will be made on intellectual property.” He referred to his personal relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping and said the two men would always be friends, adding, “Great future for both countries!” There has been no indication that Trump and Xi have had any conversations since the trade conflict erupted last week and no formal trade talks between the United States and China have been scheduled yet.⁵²

- **US calls on Russia to end support for Syria after alleged chemical attack**

The U.S. is calling on Russia to end its support for Syrian President Bashar Assad after dozens of people were killed in an alleged chemical attack. State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said in a statement that U.S. officials are closely following the “disturbing reports ... regarding another alleged chemical weapons attack, this time targeting a hospital in Douma, Syria.” “These reports, if confirmed, are horrifying and demand an immediate response by the international community,” Nauert said. “The United States continues to use all efforts available to hold those who use chemical weapons, in Syria and otherwise, accountable,” she added. “The Assad regime and its backers must be held accountable and any further attacks prevented immediately.” Nauert also said that Russia “ultimately bears responsibility for these brutal attacks.” “The United States calls on Russia to end this unmitigated support immediately and work with the international community to prevent further, barbaric chemical weapons attacks,” she added. Damascus has denied responsibility for the attack, Reuters reported.⁵³

Mexico

- **Mexican President to Trump: 'Nothing and no one stands above the dignity of Mexico'**

After days of President Donald Trump's aggressive rhetoric against immigration via Mexico, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto delivered a stern response to his US counterpart, telling him that "nothing and no one stands above the dignity of Mexico." The five-minute-long speech was delivered in Spanish and posted in a video on the Mexican President's Twitter account. That same day, Trump detailed his plans to deploy 2,000 to 4,000 National Guard troops to the southern border until the completion of his long-promised wall. It also comes after days of tough talk on Twitter, including the threat of pulling the US out of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which Trump has called Mexico's "cash cow." In the speech, Peña Nieto addressed his American counterpart directly. Peña Nieto cited the Mexican Senate's unanimous resolution condemning Trump's rhetoric and National Guard deployment as well as Mexican presidential candidates' statements rejecting the same.⁵⁴

- **Mexico president joins political foes to blast Trump border plan**

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto sharply rebuked Donald Trump over his plan to send National Guard troops to the border, joining with opponents to tell the U.S. leader

⁵² Michelle Price, Sarah N. Lynch, “Trump predicts trade concessions by China, despite rising tensions,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/trump-predicts-trade-concessions-by-china-despite-rising-tensions-idUSKBN1HF0NE>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵³ Kyle Balluck, “US calls on Russia to end support for Syria after alleged chemical attack,” <http://thehill.com/policy/international/382137-at-least-70-dead-after-alleged-chemical-attack-in-syria>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵⁴ Jennifer Hansler, “Mexican President to Trump: 'Nothing and no one stands above the dignity of Mexico',” <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/06/politics/enrique-pena-nieto-trump-border-response/index.html>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

not to vent his domestic political “frustration” on Mexico. In an unusually combative address, a stern-looking Pena Nieto urged Trump to stop sowing discord between the two nations and demanded a more respectful tone in bilateral relations. “If your recent declarations are due to frustration over issues to do with internal policy, your laws, or your Congress, direct yourself to them, not to Mexicans,” Pena Nieto said. For months Mexico has been locked in tortuous negotiations with the United States and Canada to rework the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but hopes have risen recently that some kind of preliminary deal could be within reach. All the country’s presidential candidates on Thursday criticized Trump’s plan to militarize the border.⁵⁵

Latin America and the Caribbean

Argentina

- **Political Winds Shift in Argentina**

The governor of Buenos Aires Province, María Eugenia Vidal of the Republican Proposal Party, doesn’t quite say as much during a recent interview. But speaking at her offices in the capital city, she does argue that “the most important change Argentina is going through is not economic” but rather “cultural.” As proof Ms. Vidal cites her 2015 election, which made her the first non-Peronist in almost three decades to lead Argentina’s most populous province. That couldn’t have happened unless her constituents wanted deep change in the political culture, she says. Though she doesn’t mention it, she also is Argentina’s most popular politician, and has been for the past couple of years. Ms. Vidal declares that change in the political culture has begun. But she warns that it will “cost a lot,” mainly because backers of the status quo “are defending many privileges.”⁵⁶

Brazil

- **Ex-President ‘Lula’ of Brazil Surrenders to Serve 12-Year Jail Term**

After vowing for months that a conviction on corruption charges would not stand in the way of his bid for a third term as Brazil’s leader, former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva surrendered to the police to begin serving a 12-year sentence. His detention was also a momentous development in the coming election in Brazil, upending the race to replace President Michel Temer in October. Having carved out a sustained and ample lead in the polls, Mr. da Silva promised his followers that the Workers’ Party could once again wrest control of Brazil’s destiny, and prioritize policies to narrow the country’s steep inequality. Succeeding would have been a stunning comeback after the 2016 impeachment of Mr. da Silva’s handpicked successor, Dilma Rousseff. She was replaced by Mr. Temer, a deeply unpopular center-right politician who also stands accused of corruption. Mr. da Silva is the first former Brazilian president to be remanded into custody since democracy was restored in the mid-1980s and the first former president to have been convicted of corruption. His imprisonment represents perhaps the biggest triumph in the yearslong effort by a team of crusading judges and prosecutors to upend the endemic graft that has long been a staple of politics and deal making in Brazil.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Michael O’Boyle, “Mexico president joins political foes to blast Trump border plan,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-mexico/mexico-president-joins-political-foes-to-blast-trump-border-plan-idUSKCN1HC2QZ>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵⁶ Mary Anastasia O’Grady, “Political Winds Shift in Argentina,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/political-winds-shift-in-argentina-1522605143>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵⁷ Manuela Andreoni, Ernesto Londoño And Shasta Darlington, “Ex-President ‘Lula’ of Brazil Surrenders to Serve 12-Year Jail Term,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/world/americas/brazil-lula-surrenders-luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-.html>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

Colombia

- **Colombian former rebels shunned as critics of peace deal dominate election**

With the scars of half a century of civil war still raw, Colombians widely shunned the former guerrillas' candidates, instead favouring rightwingers who campaigned on an anti-Farc platform. The Farc, who kept their acronym when they transformed from an insurgency into a political party, took a meagre 0.33% of the vote. Meanwhile, the hardline Democratic Centre party – founded by former president Álvaro Uribe and fiercely critical of the peace deal – won 15.89%, the largest share. Other parties skeptical of the Farc accords, such as Radical Change and the Conservatives, came in second and third. Despite political irrelevance and a creeping anxiety about the glacial implementation of the accord, many rank and file Farc members remain committed to peace. President Juan Manuel Santos, who has staked his legacy on the peace deal with the Farc, lauded the vote as “the most peaceful that Colombia has had in recent history”. While there were pockets of violence on the campaign trail, there were no incidents at polling stations on Sunday, according to Colombia’s interior minister. But Santos is ineligible for re-election in May’s presidential vote and with his critics bolstered by results, it is unsure exactly what peace will look like when he leaves office. In many areas, Farc’s demobilisation has opened space for the smaller ELN guerrilla group, as well as former rightwing paramilitaries. Santos announced that peace talks with the ELN would resume, after a six-week pause marked by deaths on both sides.⁵⁸

Venezuela

- **The man who’s betting he will be Venezuela’s next president — if he can get people to vote**

Only one significant challenger has stepped up to run against Venezuela’s powerful president, Nicolás Maduro, and his vast political machine in elections next month. But former governor Henri Falcón’s biggest challenge may be getting people to believe that voting could make a difference. The opposition group’s leaders are criticizing Falcón, a 56-year-old politician, who was once a ruling party supporter, for participating in what they maintain is a sham vote. The polls, however, show that Falcón has a fighting chance — if he can get people to vote. A March survey by the firm Datanalisis indicated that 75 percent of the adult population rejects Maduro and that Falcón was leading him by 10 points. That same poll, however, showed that only 28 percent of the people opposing Maduro plan to vote. Other polls say Venezuelans distrust the process so much that turnout will be lower than in any other presidential vote since the election of Hugo Chávez two decades ago.⁵⁹

Russia

⁵⁸ Joe Parkin Daniels, “Colombian former rebels shunned as critics of peace deal dominate election,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/12/farc-former-colombian-rebels-cast-votes-elections>, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

⁵⁹ Rachele Krygier, “The man who’s betting he will be Venezuela’s next president — if he can get people to vote,” https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/the-man-who-would-be-venezuelas-next-president--if-he-can-get-people-to-vote/2018/04/06/eabef0a0-3474-11e8-b6bd-0084a1666987_story.html?utm_term=.2b7bcfed60d3, Accessed on 09 April 2018.

- **Russia and India**

On 6 April, India abstained from voting on a Russian proposal for a new and joint investigation into the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in England. The motion was voted down at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Russia lost the vote 6-15, with 17 abstentions. India was one of them. China, Azerbaijan, Sudan, Algeria and Iran were among the countries that backed the Russian proposal. Russia had sought the meeting to challenge the UK, which has blamed Moscow for the March 4 poisoning in Salisbury, southern England. Indian ambassador to Netherlands Venu Rajamony said: "India has taken note of the allegations about the recent use of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom. Any use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity... India is against the use of chemical weapons anywhere. India, as all other countries, should await the outcome of the investigation."⁶⁰

Joe Felter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for South and Southeast Asia, on 5 April said that the Pentagon is "very concerned" over the possible implications of Russian sanctions on defence ties between India and the US. India could face sanctions for purchasing high value military defence items, in particular state-of-the-art S-400 missile defence system, from Russia under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Section 231 of CAATSA mandates secondary sanctions on those who conduct significant transactions with the Russian defence and intelligence sectors.⁶¹

- **Russia and US**

On 6 April, US President Donald Trump's administration implemented sanctions on Russian oligarchs, government officials, and entities for their roles advancing Russia's malign activities. The sanctions target seven Russian oligarchs and the 12 companies they own or control, 17 senior Russian government officials, and a state-owned Russian weapons trading company and a bank it owns.⁶²

- **Russia and Syria**

Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in Ankara on 4 April. A joint statement by the three countries said they wanted to "speed up their efforts to ensure calm on the ground" in Syria. The three also promised that they would work towards "the **achievement** of a lasting ceasefire" there. The meeting came a day after United States President Donald Trump announced that a decision on withdrawing U.S. troops from Syria will be made soon. About 2,000 American ground troops are helping Kurdish fighters in the country's north. Their goal is to defeat supporters of the IS militant group. IS forces once controlled large areas in Syria and Northern Iraq. Speaking at the White House on 3 April, Trump said the goal of defeating the Islamic State in Syria has largely been reached. He said his

⁶⁰Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India abstains as Russia seeks vote on new probe into ex-spy's Death", *Economic Times*, April 6, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-abstains-as-russia-appeals-for-new-probe-into-ex-spys-death/articleshow/63636784.cms> Accessed on April 9, 2018.

⁶¹"US concerned over Russian sanctions' implications on India", *Economic Times*, April 5, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-concerned-over-russian-sanctions-implications-on-india/articleshow/63624177.cms> Accessed on April 9, 2018.

⁶²"President Donald J. Trump Is Standing Up To Russia's Malign Activities", *White House*, April 6, 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-standing-russias-malign-activities/> Accessed on April 9, 2018.

administration would be making a decision on the troop deployment soon “in coordination with others in the area.”⁶³

Rebel fighters began leaving the devastated Syrian city of Douma on 8 April in the first phase of a Russian-sponsored deal to evacuate thousands of rebels from the besieged enclave. Almost simultaneously, a first batch of freed hostages held by the rebels in Douma arrived at an army-controlled crossing, state television showed. Both developments were part of a Russian-sponsored deal sealed on 8 April that grants safe passage to thousands of rebels from their biggest remaining bastion near Damascus in return for rebel group Jaish al-Islam releasing hundreds of hostages and prisoners of war. Under the agreement, Jaish al-Islam fighters will evacuate Douma and move to the northern city of Jarablus, near the border with Turkey, within 48 hours.⁶⁴

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **President Inaugurates 5 Major Projects in Paktia**⁶⁵

Emphasizing on electricity as the basis of development, Afghan President inaugurated five major development projects in south eastern Paktia province in the presence of high level delegation comprising of six ministers, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) head and high-ranking officials on 1 April 2018. These five projects consisted of a 220kv electricity substation, Gardez-Zurmat road, the police headquarters building, an industrial park and a township for government officers. President Ghani said, “It is my hope to see industrial development, pine nuts processing and other developments in Paktia, this progress is possible with access to electricity, you waited more than anyone and it is the time your demands are met”. Regarding Paktia as a home of civilization, the President assured that BalaHisar, a historic castle situated in the province would be reconstructed.

- **Gen. Bajwa Stresses Regional Push for Afghan Peace**⁶⁶

At a meeting with the US Department of State’s Senior Bureau Official for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Ambassador Alice Wells at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi on 2 April 2018, the Pakistan army chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa held that Pakistan has remained committed to promote peace and stability in neighbouring Afghanistan. Promotion of regional security environment was the agenda of the meeting where Pakistan is expected to play a key role in bringing stability in Afghanistan. Apart from this,

⁶³“Presidents of Russia, Turkey, Iran Meet on Syria”, *VOA News*, April 4, 2018.

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/russia-turkey-iran-meet-on-syria/4332494.html> Accessed on April 8, 2018.

⁶⁴“Rebel Fighters Begin Leaving Syria’s Douma After Weeks-Long Military Assault”, *U.S. News*, April 8, 2018.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-04-08/negotiations-underway-between-rebel-group-and-russians-over-douma> Accessed on April 9, 2018.

⁶⁵ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 2 April 2018,

http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20570

⁶⁶ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 4 April 2018,

http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20587

Wells also discussed the US's "shared interest in building economic and commercial ties that benefit both nations."⁶⁷

- **Record Number of Afghans Reaching Turkey Without Papers⁶⁸**

According to the latest figures from the Turkish General Directorate of Security, around 20,000 undocumented Afghan migrants have arrived in Turkey from January 2018 onwards.

In the beginning of 2018, Turkish security forces captured nearly 17, 847 undocumented Afghan migrants. The report said that Afghan migrants mostly reached Turkey via Iran. It has been also been reported that human traffickers charged \$500 USD for crossing borders. Afghan migrants are involved in prostitution and illegal activities. In the Eastern province of Erzurum, a hotspot used by migrants to go to Istanbul, the Directorate of Anti-Human Trafficking had been established to monitor migration.

- **Peace in Afghanistan Key to Regional Stability⁶⁹**

On 6 April 2018, Pakistani Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi met with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah and other high-ranking Afghan officials and discussed various possibilities of creating joint efforts for peace and reconciliation process, counter-terrorism operations, issues of Afghan refugees, expansion of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Welcoming President Ghani's initiative of inviting Taliban leaders for peace talk, the Pakistani Prime Minister agreed that political solution rather than military solution would resolve Afghan problem. Both leaders regarded terrorism as their 'common enemy' and vowed not to use their soils for anti state activities. Both sides stressed on boosting of regional connectivity energy supply from Central Asia to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Regional rail road projects i.e. on the Quetta-Kandahar and Peshawar-Jalalabad railway lines, as well as the Peshawar-Jalalabad-Kabul highway were also discussed. Inviting Afghan President Ghani to visit Pakistan, the Pakistani Prime Minister assured that it would provide necessary assistance for Afghan peace process.

- **Afghanistan Could Become a New Safe Haven for IS: Russia⁷⁰**

Addressing the 7th Moscow conference on international security, Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergei Shoigu on 4 April 2018 accused that both US and NATO have failed in their efforts to bring stability in Afghanistan, stressing on deteriorating security situation of the country. Russian Defense Minister also added that US had been trying to gain a foothold in Central Asia via Afghanistan which could soon become a new safe haven for Islamic State (Daesh) militants and other terror groups.

⁶⁷ Tolo News, 4 April 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistan-can-play-role-achieving-peace-alice-wells>

⁶⁸ Tolo News, 5 April 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/record-number-afghans-reaching-turkey-without-papers>

⁶⁹ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 7 April 2018 http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20615

⁷⁰ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 7 April 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20612

- **Iran Eying Transmission of Electricity to Afghanistan, Pakistan⁷¹**
 Iran has become a regional hub in power generation and supply and the country is expected to export electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan. On 7 April 2018, Deputy Executive Director of Iran Power Generation Distribution and Transmission Company Davoud Manzour said, “Given the fact that the neighboring countries, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan, need electricity, necessary measures should be adopted to link Iran’s power grid to them”. Earlier in January 2018, Iranian Deputy Energy Minister Alireza Daemi stated that Iran is planning to boost power exchanges with regional countries like Russia, Tajikistan and the Persian Gulf littoral states and stressed, “The current power grid network and the exchanges of electric power enable Iran to be connected to Georgia via Armenia’s power grid and to Slovenia and Europe via Turkey.”
- **Turkey Urges Taliban to Join Afghan Peace Process⁷²**
 Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim visited Kabul on 8 April 2018 and met with Afghan Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. He regarded Afghan government’s offer of peace talks to Taliban as a brave step and urged Taliban to take advantage of this ‘historic opportunity’. Underling the importance of Pakistani Prime Minister’s recent visit to Afghanistan, the Turkish Prime Minister added that Turkey would provide all possible assistance to Afghanistan to curb terrorism and would boost bilateral trade and defense, strengthening cooperation between both nations.
- **Rabbani Meets Ecuadorian, Venezuelan FMs⁷³**
 During mid-term ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on 5-6 April at Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani met his Ecuadorian and Venezuelan counterpart Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda and Jorge Arreaza respectively. Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda asked for Afghanistan’s support to get her candidacy for chairwomanship of United Nations General Assembly session along with her discussing ways to bolster bilateral cooperation between both countries. On the other hand, Afghanistan and Venezuela agreed to cement ties between the two countries.

Bangladesh

- **First freight train from India reaches Bangladesh**
 The first freight train from India reached Darshana International Railway Station in Chuadanga yesterday (April 3). Starting from Kolkata, the train carrying 60 containers arrived at Darshana around 6:00pm, said Liakat Ali, station master of the railway station. This is pursuant to the signing of a MoU between the Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR) and Container Company of Bangladesh Limited (CCBL) for starting the container services between the two countries in April 2017.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 8 April 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20624

⁷² Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 9 April 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20638

⁷³ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 9 April 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20633

⁷⁴ “First freight train from India reaches Bangladesh,” *Daily Star*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/first-freight-train-india-reaches-bangladesh-1557835>, accessed on April 4, 2018.

- Economy marches towards record 7.65pc growth**
 The Bangladesh economy is charging towards record growth figure for the second consecutive year, driven by double-digit growth in manufacturing and construction sectors. GDP growth in fiscal 2017-18 is likely to be 7.65 percent, up from 7.28 percent a year earlier, as per the estimate of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. This is the third consecutive year that the economic growth was above 7 percent after years of languishing in the neighbourhood of 6 percent.⁷⁵
- India to provide Tk 640m as grants: ERD official**
 India will provide a sum of around Tk 640 million as grant to Bangladesh for the implementation of three small projects in primary education, CHT region and for improvement of road infrastructures. "India will provide Taka 64 crore grant assistance to Bangladesh against three projects and the grant agreements are likely to be signed on Monday (April 9)," BSS quoted an official at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) as saying on Sunday (April 8).⁷⁶
- Myanmar not ready for Rohingya repatriation: UN, April 9**
 Myanmar is not ready for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, said the most senior United Nations official to visit the country this year, after Myanmar was accused of instigating ethnic cleansing and driving nearly 700,000 Muslims to Bangladesh. "From what I've seen and heard from people - no access to health services, concerns about protection, continued displacements - conditions are not conducive to return," Ursula Mueller, UN's assistant secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said after a six-day visit to Myanmar.⁷⁷
- CEC prefers army in nat'l polls**
 Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda supports army deployment in the upcoming 11th parliamentary election, but not in local government polls. "In past general elections, the army was deployed. Personally, I too think it should be so in this general election. But I cannot take the decision alone because the Election Commission (EC) constitutes of five members," the CEC said yesterday (April 8) at a roundtable discussion.⁷⁸

Pakistan

- Pakistan and the state of Minorities**
 Four members of a Christian family were gunned down in Quetta on April 2nd. The family was travelling in a rickshaw when armed men on a motorcycle intercepted them and opened fire in Quetta city. This has been called as an act of terrorism by the provincial

⁷⁵ "Economy marches towards record 7.65pc growth," *Daily Star*, April 4, 2018, <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/gdp-growth-in-bangladesh-economy-marches-towards-record-7.65-percent-in-2018-1557706>, accessed on April 4, 2018.

⁷⁶ "India to provide Tk 640m as grants: ERD official," *Prothom Alo*, April 8, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/173846/India-to-provide-Tk-640m-as-grants-ERD-official>, accessed on April 8, 2018.

⁷⁷ "Myanmar not ready for Rohingya repatriation: UN," *Prothom Alo*, April 8, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/173836/Myanmar-not-ready-for-Rohingya-repatriation-UN>, accessed on April 8, 2018.

⁷⁸ "CEC prefers army in nat'l polls," *The Independent*, April 9, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/145091>, accessed on April 9, 2018.

police.⁷⁹ While such killings take place, it can be noted that a sub-committee of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Religious Affairs was informed on April 2nd that the legal status of the National Commission for Minorities, which was established in 1990, was not clear nor had any rules been framed for it by the government.⁸⁰

- **Milli Muslim League (MML) and the United States**

The US Department of State amended its designation of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) on April 2nd, identifying Milli Muslim League (MML) and Tehreek-i-Azadi-i-Kashmir (TAK) as LeT affiliates, which makes it impossible for them to register as political parties. The US Treasury Department also updated its list of individual terrorists, naming seven members of the MML leadership as LeT activists who were acting in MML on behalf of LeT.⁸¹

- **Pakistan and Afghanistan**

Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua visited Kabul on April 2nd for continuing negotiations on a bilateral engagement plan — Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity — and held meetings with President Ashraf Ghani and other senior Afghan officials.⁸² Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi travelled to Kabul on April 6th for a daylong visit. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to finalise their bilateral dialogue framework, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), as the former reaffirmed support for the Afghan government's offer of peace dialogue to the Taliban and urged the militant group to join the reconciliation process without any delay.⁸³ The agreement also states that Pakistan and Afghanistan will undertake effective actions against fugitives and the irreconcilable elements posing security threats to either of the two countries.⁸⁴

- **Pakistan and China**

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi arrived in the Chinese city of Sanya on April 8th to attend the Boao Forum's Annual Conference for Asia to be held in Boao (Hainan). The main theme of this conference is "An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity". According to a statement issued by the Foreign Office here on April 8th, the prime minister would be one of the keynote speakers at the opening session of the forum along with Chinese President Xi Jinping, and other leaders attending the forum.⁸⁵

नेपाल

भारत के विपक्ष ने कहा कि नेपाल का सम्मान होना चाहिए:

⁷⁹ Muhammad Akram, "Four members of a Christian family among nine killed in Quetta attacks", *The Express Tribune*, April 2, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1675555/1-five-killed-quetta-tribal-clash/> as accessed on April 09, 2018

⁸⁰ Kalbe Ali, "Status of commission for minorities still unclear, NA panel told", *Dawn*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399256> as accessed on April 9, 2018

⁸¹ Anwar Iqbal, "US undermines MML effort to register as political party", *Dawn*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399259> as accessed on April 9, 2018

⁸² "Janjua holds talks on bilateral engagement plan in Kabul", *Dawn*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399247> as accessed on April 9, 2018

⁸³ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Islamabad, Kabul to reframe terms of engagement", *Dawn*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400104> as accessed on April 09, 2018

⁸⁴ "Accord with Kabul on action against 'irreconcilable elements'", *Dawn*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400479/accord-with-kabul-on-action-against-irreconcilable-elements> as accessed on April 9, 2018

⁸⁵ "PM arrives in China to attend Boao conference", *Dawn*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400491/pm-arrives-in-china-to-attend-boao-conference> as accessed on April 9, 2018

भारत के विपक्षी दलों के नेताओं ने प्रधानमंत्री मोदी को सुझाव दिया कि भारत को नेपाल को एक संप्रभु देश मानते हुए नेपाल के आंतरिक मामलों में दखल नहीं देना चाहिए. यह भी कहा कि नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री ओली की भारत यात्रा के दौरान मोदी को उदार हृदय दिखाना चाहिए. कांग्रेस के नेता मणि शंकर अय्यर ने कहा कि नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री ओली के भारत भ्रमण के दौरान भारत को स्वयं को विवेक पूर्ण तरीके से प्रस्तुत करना चाहिये और भारत इस देश के लोगों का दिल तभी जीत सकता है जब वह उसे एक संप्रभु देश की तरह जैसा वह करना चाहता है, करने दे.⁸⁶

भारत और नेपाल के मध्य कोई गलतफहमी नहीं है: ओली

नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री ओली ने शुक्रवार शाम को नेपाल दूतावास में पत्रकारों को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि भारत और नेपाल के बीच किसी भी प्रकार की गलतफहमी नहीं और इस तरह सभी मुद्दों को सुलझा दिया गया है. उन्होंने कहा कि चर्चा का मुख्य मुद्दा होगा कि कैसे भारत नेपाल के बीच रिश्तों को कैसे मजबूत किया जाये.⁸⁷

सहयोग के नए चैनल खुले:

नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री ओली की यात्रा के दौरान दोनों देशों के मध्य सहयोग के नए रास्तों पर समझौते हुए, जिन पर दोनों देशों ने सहमती प्रकट की, इनमे रेल कनेक्टिविटी और नौपरिवहन मार्ग पर बात हुई. इसके अतिरिक्त कृषि के क्षेत्र में भी आपसी सहयोग के लिए समझौते हुए. हैदराबाद हाउस में हुई बैठक के दौरान भारत के प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा कि भारत हमेशा नेपाल के आर्थिक विकास में सहयोग करेगा और सहयोग के इन क्षेत्रों का निर्धारण भविष्य में नेपाल की प्राथमिकताओं के आधार पर होगा.⁸⁸

Indian Ocean Region

- **India- Korea Coast Guards Exercise at off the Chennai Coast**

Indian and Korean Coast Guards hold joint anti- piracy, search and rescue exercise 'SAHYOG-HYEOBLYEOG 2018' off the Chennai coast on 05 April 2018.⁸⁹ The Korean ship 'BODARO', Indian Coast Guard ships and an aircraft took part in the exercise.⁹⁰ Quoting an official release PTI News mentioned, "as part of the exercise, ships of the Indian Coast Guard and the Korean vessel undertook tactical manoeuvres and "drills" to counter piracy and carry out maritime law enforcement tasks off Chennai coast."⁹¹ "The exercise demonstrated a scenario in which RECAAP -- a focal point in Korea -- reported loss of communication with cargo vessel South Korean flag -- MV Hyun Tau and it was indicated that the vessel has been hijacked by pirates"⁹², referring the same source PTI News further mentioned. The exercise was reviewed by Director General of Indian Coast Guard Rajendra Singh and Commissioner of Korean Coast Guard General Park Kyung.⁹³

⁸⁶ Suresh Raj Neupane, "Respect Nepal, says Indian opposition", The Kathmandu Post, 5 April 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-04-05/1>

⁸⁷ Chandra Sekhar Adhikari, "No misunderstanding between Nepal, India", The Kathmandu Post, 7 April 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-04-07/1>

⁸⁸ Chandra Sekhar Adhikari, "New Channels of cooperation open", The Kathmandu Post, 8 April 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-04-08/1>

⁸⁹ Indian, Korean coast guards hold joint exercise off Chennai coast, April 06, 2018, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/indian-korean-coast-guards-hold-joint-exercise-off-chennai-coast-118040600013_1.html (accessed on 09 April 2018)

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

- **Sagarmala will Reduce the Logistic Cost**

Kailash Kumar Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Shipping, Government of India said that the ongoing Sagarmala project would drastically reduce the logistics cost in the country and make the industry competitive.⁹⁴ The logistic cost in India is high (between 14-16 per cent) in comparison to many other countries (between 8-10 per cent).⁹⁵ "Port modernisation and capacity augmentation, port connectivity (including coastal shipping and inland waterways), port-led industrialisation and development of coastal communities such as fishermen are four main components of the Sagarmala,"⁹⁶ he said. "A total of 112 port projects have been taken up, of which 50 have been completed and the rest are in various stages of implementation. The total estimated cost of these projects is Rs 70,000 crores,"⁹⁷ further he said. Sri Aggarwal was speaking at a seminar on enhancing port and coastal infrastructure, organised by the Union Ministry of Finance, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Visakhapatnam on 03 April 2018.⁹⁸

- **"Maldives had Refused to Renew the LoE for One of the 2 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH)"⁹⁹**

According to a media report, "Maldives had refused to renew the LoE for one of the 2 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) which India had gifted to Male." Quoting a top Maldives official Times of India mentioned, "Male had not renewed the LoE because it wanted a Dornier from India."¹⁰⁰

Quoting the official source, Times of India further mentioned, "the Yameen government had not just refused to renew the LoE for the ALH operating from Addu atoll but had also not responded to an advance offer by India to renew the LoE for the other ALH based in Laamu atoll. This effectively means that Male wants both Indian choppers out."¹⁰¹

West Asia

GCC & Saudi Arabia

- **Bahrain discovers large oil and gas deposits**

Bahrain's news agency, BNA, informed that in *Khaleej Al Bahrain* (Gulf of Bahrain) large discovery of oil and gas reserves have been made.¹⁰² This has been the largest discover since Bahrain started producing oil in 1932. According to one estimate the estimated reserves of oil holds more than 80 billion barrels, gas of 17.6 trillion cubic feet (tfc).¹⁰³

⁹⁴ 'Sagarmala project will reduce logistics lost drastically', April 04, 2018, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/sagarmala-project-will-reduce-logistics-lost-dramatically/article23431738.ece> (accessed on 09 April 2018)

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ After 'gift' return, India calls Maldives' bluff on Dornier, April 09,, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/stunned-by-gift-return-india-calls-males-dornier-bluff/articleshow/63672101.cms> (accessed on 09 April 2018)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-oil/bahrain-discovers-largest-oilfield-in-decades-idUSKCN1H8170>

¹⁰³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2018/04/04/why-bahrains-huge-oil-discovery-might-not-provide-the-windfall-it-is-hoping-for/#43640af4128f>

Bahrain is in touch with some western oil companies. Halliburton is doing some negotiation for developing the oil and gas fields. It is likely to drill two more wells to confirm the size of the reserves. The scale of discoveries is very large, more information is needed to establish how much of the resource is commercially recoverable, said one expert.

However, there are experts who believe that commercially recoverable reserves may not be equal to the claimed deposits. This is because these reserves are found in 'tight reservoir', which means, according to Tom Quinn, senior analyst for Middle East upstream at consultants Wood Mackenzie, "a low recovery factor and only a fraction of the 80-plus billion barrels is likely to be recoverable. The oil will also be technically challenging and potentially high cost to develop".¹⁰⁴ Sale energy is also found in tight reservoirs, which demands more investment and low chances of recovery.

Bahrain has been the first country in the region to commercially produce oil. In 1932, it discovered oil and established BAPCO Company in association with British. However, over the period, its reserve and producing both shrank. Currently, it is producing only 45,000 barrels of oil per day and another 1,50,000 b/d is supplied by Saudi Arabia from the joint offshore Abu Safah oilfield. The health of Bahrain's economy is not good. Its GDP is 100 per cent indebted. This has forced the ruler to cut subsidies on socially crucial factors such as water, electricity and energy. Bahrain has been trying to diversify its economic for long. It has emphasized on finance and banking system, tourism and other recreational activities. Mostly the Gulf tourists come to Bahrain.

It is hoped that discovery of oil, which would start its production in next five years, may be in mid-2020, Bahrain may be able to manage its economy and control its social disturbances by giving more economic benefits to the citizens.

- **Opening of the First Move Theater in Saudi Arabia**

On 18 April 2018, Saudi Arabia is reopening theater exhibition in the Kingdom. This will be done after a gap of 35 years. 'Black Panther' will be the first film to be screened in Symphony hall in Riyadh's King Abdullah Financial District. It is produced by the US-based AMC Theatre. This movie has consciously been selected, both theme-wise and character-wise. Its theme is based on anti-colonialism and all the characters of the movie are female. The movie celebrates monarchy and advocates for a sophisticated law for other nations. It is believed that two themes of the movie, liberty to women and centrality of monarchy in making good relations appropriately suits to young crown prince Muhammad Bin Salman Ibn Saud. CEO of AMC Theatres Adam Aron, which screens the Black Panther, expects that male and female would sit together and watch the movie in the theater.¹⁰⁵ That would be a remarkable move for a nation where separation of men and women is common in public.

Saudi Arabia is introducing social reform at a fast pace. It has dismantled several tribal and social traditions, which have been hurdles in the way women's progress. The Kingdom has directed to issue driving licenses to women. They would be allowed to drive from June 2018. Besides, the guardianship rule has been relaxed; the power of moral police has also been restricted; females are also allowed to open their businesses, join government jobs without male permission. The Saudi Arabia has also opened itself for tourism,

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2018/04/04/why-bahrains-huge-oil-discovery-might-not-provide-the-windfall-it-is-hoping-for/#43640af4128f>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.thewrap.com/saudi-arabia-movie-theaters-not-be-segregated-by-gender-amc-ceo/>

entertainment and cultural performances, including invitation to foreign rock bands and cultural troupes. Saudi Arabia has planned to 'build 40 other theaters in the next five years and 100 by 2030 for an investment of US\$ 2 billion'.

Turkey

- **Turkey to host Syria summit with Russia, Iran on April 4**¹⁰⁶

Turkey will host a trilateral meeting on Syria, gathering leaders from Turkey, Russia and Iran next week, the Presidential Press Office said on March 31.

The meeting hosted by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on April 4 will be attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, according to a statement. Besides regional developments and the ongoing Syrian war, the Turkish and Iranian leaders are also expected to hold talks to discuss bilateral relations.

Turkey, Russia and Iran are the guarantor countries who brokered a cease-fire in Syria in December 2016, leading to the Astana talks in the Kazakh capital, which are being held parallel to United Nations-backed discussions in Geneva, to find a political solution to the conflict.

Ankara will also host the seventh meeting of the Turkey-Russia High-Level Cooperation Council with participants from Ankara and Moscow on April 3, the statement read.

During the meeting, the leaders will also exchange views on regional and international issues as well as bilateral relations. As part of his visit, the Russian president will also attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant on April 3.

- **Erdoğan to Israeli PM: You are a terrorist and an occupier**¹⁰⁷

Israel is a "terrorist state and occupier," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said, once again slamming the killing of 16 Palestinians by the Israeli army during a demonstration on March 30.

"He says our soldiers are oppressing people in Afrin. Netanyahu, you are very weak, very poor," Erdoğan said at a ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) congress in the southern province of Adana on April 1, addressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We [Turkey] are dealing with terrorists. But you are not concerned about terrorists because you are a terror state," Erdoğan said. Calling the Israeli leader "an occupier" in Palestine, Erdoğan said Netanyahu has no right to criticize Turkey.

"You are not popular. The step you took regarding Jerusalem at the United Nations is out in the open. The answer you received is out in the open. Stop bragging about owning nuclear weapons. The time may come when those weapons don't work," Erdoğan added.

"You are also a terrorist. History is recording what you have done to all those oppressed Palestinians," Erdoğan said, adding that he believes Israelis too are disturbed by Netanyahu's misdeeds.

¹⁰⁶ Hurriyet Daily news, 31 March 2018, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-host-syria-summit-with-russia-iran-on-april-4-129583>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/israel-is-a-terror-state-president-erdogan-129613>

His harsh language came after thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel on March 30 and at least 16 Gazans were killed and hundreds of other were injured when Israeli forces opened fire on protesters marking "Land Day."

Land Day is an annual Palestinian commemoration of the deaths of six Arab citizens of Israel killed by Israeli forces in 1976 during demonstrations over government land confiscations in northern Israel.

- **US military buildup in Manbij amid Turkey's offensive signal¹⁰⁸**

The U.S. is intensifying its military presence in northern Syria's Manbij district, controlled by the PKK's Syrian affiliate, where Ankara said it will launch an offensive to eliminate terrorists posing a threat to Turkey, if they continue to stay in the region. Approximately 300 U.S. soldiers arrived in Manbij, west of the Euphrates River, in a convoy which included many armored vehicles and construction machines, Anadolu Agency (AA) reported, citing local sources. As Operation Olive Branch in Syrian northwestern Afrin, launched on Jan. 20, is coming to a completion, Turkey has vowed to take unilateral action against the terrorist PKK-linked People's Protection Units (YPG) if they continue to remain in Manbij and the eastern parts of the Euphrates River.

On March 18, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and Free Syrian Army (FSA) liberated the town of Afrin, a major hideout for the terrorist organization since 2012. However, the clearing of explosives in the province is currently underway.

The reinforcements were deployed near the Sajur River, which forms the frontline between the Operation Euphrates Shield area and the YPG/PKK invaded area. Several towns in northern Syria were cleared of Daesh terrorists in northern Syria with Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield, launched in Aug. 2016 and ended March 2017.

Also, reinforcements were deployed around Zub'ul Bayn village, west of Manbij.

The additional forces are now patrolling the Sajur River shore daily, the report added. Previously, the patrols occurred weekly. The U.S. forces are also patrolling the Ras al-Ayn area, opposite Turkey's Ceylanpinar border gate, for the last three days.

- **Turkey detains 245 Daesh-linked suspects in anti-terror ops in March¹⁰⁹**

Security forces arrested 245 Daesh suspects across Turkey and thwarted several terror attacks in March, according to information compiled by Anadolu Agency. The arrests included foreigners who were allegedly involved in the terrorist organization's administrative division. The forces also seized documents, weapons and ammunition. Fifty-one suspects were remanded into custody following a court ruling and some were deported. The others are still being investigated.

The security forces arrested 10 suspects with links to Daesh in northwestern Sakarya, central Nevsehir and southern Gaziantep provinces. Nine of them were remanded into custody. Daesh members M.K. and U.H, identified only by their initials, were handed down jail terms by a court.

¹⁰⁸ Daily Sabah, 31 March, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/04/02/us-military-buildup-in-manbij-amid-turkeys-offensive-signal>

¹⁰⁹ Daily Sabah, 31 March, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/04/01/turkey-detains-245-daesh-linked-suspects-in-anti-terror-ops-in-march>

In southeastern Şanlıurfa province, out of 41 suspects, 18 were remanded into custody. At least 319 people have lost their lives in Daesh terror attacks in Turkey, where the terror organization has targeted civilians in suicide bomb, rocket and gun attacks.

- **Procurement of Patriots on agenda of US-Turkey defense trade dialogue¹¹⁰**

Turkish and U.S. officials will have a round table meeting on March 30 in Ankara as part of the 5th gathering of Turkey-U.S. Defense Trade Dialogue with procurement of Patriot missile defense systems are on the agenda of two NATO allies.

U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Tina Kaidanow will be visiting Ankara as part of a regional trip including Iraq.

“In Ankara, Turkey, Ambassador Kaidanow will meet with Turkish officials to discuss bilateral defense trade and security cooperation. She will meet with representatives from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, and the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries to share U.S. perspectives on bilateral and regional security issues as part of the U.S.-Turkey Defense Trade Dialogue, and will hold a roundtable discussion with representatives from major U.S. and Turkish defense manufacturers,” the U.S. State Department said in a written statement.

Washington has for months urged Turkey to revise its decision to procure Russian S-400 missile defense systems, saying they will not be interoperable with NATO systems.

In December last year, Turkey and Russia signed an accord for Moscow to supply Ankara with S-400 surface-to-air missile batteries, finalizing a deal set to deepen military ties between NATO member Turkey and the Kremlin.

Iraq and Gulf Cooperation Council

- **US President Trump, Iraqi PM Abadi discuss ISIS, Syria, elections in phone call¹¹¹**

According to a statement from Iraqi Prime Minister’s office, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi held a phone call with US President Donald Trump on Sunday in which the two leaders discussed the fight against ISIS, the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections, and the suspected chemical attacks in Syria.

“Both praised the victories over Daesh [ISIS] terrorist gangs and the liberation of all of Iraqi soil, achieved by the determination of the heroic Iraqi forces and with the help and supporting of the International Coalition led by the United States,” the statement said. “Both also discussed the conditions of the region and the developments in Syria’s situation, and they emphasized the importance of ending the remnants of the terrorist Daesh gangs to prevent its spread again,” the statement added. Abadi told the US leader that Iraq has a vision of regional cooperation and coordination. He said Iraq hopes to balanced relations with all of its neighbors in a way that can strengthen the security and stability of the region and the world, the statement added.

According to the statement released by the White House on Sunday, “Prime Minister Abadi thanked President Trump for the decisive support of the United States in the fight

¹¹⁰ Hurriyet Daily News, 31 march 2018, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/procurement-of-patriots-on-agenda-of-us-turkey-defense-trade-dialogue-129522>

¹¹¹ <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/080420182>

against ISIS. The leaders also discussed accelerating the campaign to defeat remnants of ISIS and the need to work together to counter other threats in the region.”

Earlier in March, Iraqi parliament had demanded that its government sets a deadline for the withdrawal of foreign troops stationed in the country to help fight Islamic State insurgents. Although the US has confirmed it is withdrawing up to 60 percent of its troops stationed in Iraq, Washington insists counter-terrorism cooperation will continue.

- **Iran blames Iran for delay in Kirkuk-oil swap**¹¹²

Iran’s Petroleum Ministry said on Sunday, that “the slight delay in implementing the major deal on swapping the crude oil produced in northern Iraq is mainly because of unprepared infrastructures and some logistical deficiencies on Iraq’s part.”

The note issued to Tasnim News Agency clarified that the Oil swap operation will begin soon, the letter said, dismissing reports on “oil diplomacy negligence” or secret issues behind the delay.

On Saturday, Hamid Hosseini, the secretary-general of Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce, said that the long-delayed project to swap Iraq’s Kirkuk crude oil with Iran is expected to be launched later this month.

The deal under which Kirkuk oil would be transported to Iranian refinery in Southwest of the country, by trucks in first phase then by a 200 kilometres pipeline in the second phase, was first discussed when Iraqi government –supported by Iranian trained Shia paramilitary –took Kirkuk from the Kurdistan region in October 2017.

- **Iraqi Prime Minister in Japan for talks on Peace, Reconstruction**¹¹³

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi sought international support in Japan on Thursday to restore peace and prosperity in his country, torn by extremism. Al-Abadi co-hosted a meeting in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to discuss ways to improve public safety in Iraq while promoting the country’s sustainable economic development.

As part of Japan’s 6 billion pledge to stabilise Middle East – the source of 80% of Japanese oil imports – Abe announced a 35 billion yen (\$330 million) loan for irrigation projects in Iraq.

The conference was aimed at helping Iraq reconstruct by establishing a system to eliminate weapons held by many civilians. The goal is to create jobs, provide vocational training and motivate people to return to their ordinary lives, Japanese officials said.

- **Vice-President Ayad Allawi Launches Election Campaign Against Corruption**¹¹⁴

Ayad Allawi, one of the three Vice-Presidents of Iraq, launched an electoral campaign focusing on countering corruption, dubbing it “the call of the homeland.”

“Some of those who assumed responsibility after 2003 did not carry the project of building a state,” Allawi said in a televised speech on Sunday evening. Criticising the ethnic-

¹¹² http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/09/c_137096195.htm

¹¹³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-leader-in-japan-for-talks-on-peace-reconstruction/2018/04/05/28f8bb72-38ac-11e8-af3c-2123715f78df_story.html?utm_term=.8f28f45fa3df

¹¹⁴ <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1230756/iraq%E2%80%99s-vp-launches-electoral-campaign-against-corruption>

sectarian power-sharing mechanism, Allawi argued “abhorrent quotas and power sharing according to different and narrow loyalties caused tragedies, public displacement, security setbacks and corruption.”

The leader of the National Coalition warned against distorting the will of Iraqi voters, manipulating votes and bringing in debts. “We will not stand idly by anymore,” Allawi warned.

Allawi, a secular Shiite, has led a secular Iraqi National Accord or *Iraqiya* –which won the largest number of seats in 2010 parliamentary elections, was asked to step aside in favour of the continuation of the premiership of the Shiite Islamist Nuri-al-Maliki.

- **Trump and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince discuss Iran in call¹¹⁵**

US President Donald Trump and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, spoke about Iran and Qatar, in a telephone call.

"The president thanked the crown prince for his close, strategic partnership and for his strong leadership in highlighting ways all Gulf Cooperation Council states can better counter Iranian destabilising activities and defeat terrorists and extremists," the White House statement said.

"The leaders agreed that all GCC states can and should do more to increase coordination with each other and with the United States to ensure the peace and prosperity of the people in the region."

The White House also said Sheikh Mohammed, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, is to visit Washington, though no date has yet been announced by the US or the UAE.

- **Qatar will be “an Island” if Saudi Arabia implements its plan to regenerate East Coast¹¹⁶**

An integrated project for excavating a marine canal along the borders with Qatar is set to be carried out with investments by a consortium of nine Saudi companies in this field. The project is awaiting official approval and licensing to begin execution, which will be completed within 12 months only, according to Sabq online newspaper, which said it had knowledge of the integrated tourism project.¹¹⁷

A 200-meter wide marine canal, with a depth of 15-20 meters and length of 60 km will be the link between Khor Salwa and Khor Al-Udayd. It will be capable of handling all kinds of vessels, including container and passenger ships. According to reports, five hotels and holiday resorts, as well as two new harbors, have also been planned along new channel.

The maritime channel, which will turn Saudi eastern coast into a long continuous one, if constructed would turn Qatar into an island.

Israel

- **Refugee Deportation**

¹¹⁵ Trump and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince discuss Iran in call

¹¹⁶ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1279741/saudi-arabia>

¹¹⁷ <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/532105/SAUDI-ARABIA/Mega-marine-canal-project-along-Saudi-Qatari-border-on-cards>

As per Prime Minister Netanyahu on April 2nd, some 16,250 African migrants in Israel will be resettled in “developed” Western countries (Canada, Germany or Italy), while a similar number will be allowed to stay and given temporary residency, under a new agreement reached with the UN refugee agency. Netanyahu said the earlier plan to deport migrants to Rwanda and Uganda was no longer feasible.¹¹⁸ However, in the evening of April 2, amid mounting right-wing criticism of the deal, Netanyahu announced that he was freezing the new agreement with the UN refugee agency. He added, noting that he would meet with Interior Minister Aryeh Deri and residents of south Tel Aviv, where many of the migrants reside, before reconsidering it.¹¹⁹ On April 3rd, PM Netanyahu formally cancelled the new agreement.¹²⁰ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on April 3rd expressed “disappointment” at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s decision to scrap an agreement on resettling thousands of African migrants following tough domestic criticism, and urged him to “reconsider” it.¹²¹ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared on April 3rd that he is seeking to establish a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the activities of the New Israel Fund, which he blamed for the failure of Israel’s plan to deport African migrants from the country. Netanyahu claimed the NIF put pressure on Rwanda to reject Jerusalem’s proposed resettlement of African migrants in the country, forcing him to seek other solutions.¹²² The Israeli government on April 5th said there was a “high probability” an unnamed country, widely reported to be Uganda, would absorb African migrants deported from Israel.¹²³ Uganda joined Rwanda late April 3rd in denying it had ever clinched an agreement with Israel to absorb migrants deported from the Jewish state.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Netanyahu: 16,250 migrants to resettle in ‘developed countries,’ rest will stay, *Times of Israel*, April 2, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-migrants-to-resettle-in-canada-germany-italy/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=dca710ebfe-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-dca710ebfe-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹¹⁹ “Hours after announcing it, Netanyahu suspends deal to let 16,000 migrants stay”, *Times of Israel*, April 2, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-suspends-new-deal-on-african-migrant-hours-after-announcing-it/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=aa5a4ace77-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-aa5a4ace77-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁰ “After flip-flop, Netanyahu formally cancels deal to let 16,000 migrants stay”, *Times of Israel*, April 3, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-flip-flop-netanyahu-formally-cancels-deal-to-let-16000-migrants-stay/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=7666382418-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-7666382418-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²¹ “UN urges Israel to ‘reconsider’ canceled migrant deal”, *Times of Israel*, April 3, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-urges-israel-to-reconsider-canceled-migrant-deal/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=7666382418-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-7666382418-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²² “PM pins deportation failure on New Israel Fund, demands Knesset probe”, *Times of Israel*, April 5, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-pins-deportation-failure-on-new-israel-fund-demands-knesset-probe/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=a2003bd5c7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-a2003bd5c7-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²³ “Israel says ‘highly probable’ African migrants will be deported to Uganda”, *Times of Israel*, April 5, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-highly-probable-african-migrants-will-be-deported-to-uganda/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=881d5e64b5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-881d5e64b5-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁴ Uganda denies a deal with Israel to ‘dump their refugees here’, *Times of Israel*, April 4, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/uganda-denies-a-deal-with-israel-to-dump-their-refugees-here/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=a2003bd5c7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-a2003bd5c7-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

- **Interview of the Saudi Prince**

In an interview with *The Atlantic*, which was published on April 2nd, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman recognised Israel's right to exist and extolled the prospect of future diplomatic relations between his kingdom and Israel, adding that an agreement with the Palestinians was a prerequisite to formal relations.¹²⁵ It can be noted, that on April 2nd, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud called US President Trump reaffirming his nation's support for the Palestinians. The king also emphasised the need to advance the Middle East peace process.¹²⁶

- **Israel and the Ongoing Conflict in Gaza**

In the ongoing clashes on the Israeli Palestine fence in Gaza, which started on March 30, which has led to the death of 20 Palestinians, injuring more than 1200, IDF also had to use aircrafts targeting an armed Palestinian approaching the Gaza security fence on April 5th.¹²⁷ The IDF had to deploy snipers and tanks on April 6th when protests intensified.¹²⁸ Israeli planes carried out airstrikes in the northern Gaza Strip on April 9th hours after a group of Palestinians entered Israeli territory from the enclave and planted two improvised explosive devices along the Gaza security fence.¹²⁹

- **Syria and Israel**

Israel alleged that the Syrian government placed tanks and heavy artillery inside the demilitarized buffer zone on the country's border with Israel, for regaining southern Syria and the Syrian Golan Heights from rebel groups.¹³⁰ Missiles struck an air base in central Syria early April 9th, killing 14 people, including Iranians. Neither US nor Israel have accepted its involvement in the attack till reported.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Saudi Crown Prince: Iran's Supreme Leader 'Makes Hitler Look Good'", *The Atlantic*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/mohammed-bin-salman-iran-israel/557036/> as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁶ "Saudi king states support for Palestinians after son accepts Israel's legitimacy", *Times of Israel*, April 3, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/saudi-king-states-support-for-palestinians-after-son-accepts-israels-legitimacy/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=7666382418-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_03_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-7666382418-55556173 as

accessed on April 9, 2018; "Readout of President Donald J. Trump's Call with King Salman of Saudi Arabia", Statements and Releases, *The White House Official Website*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/readout-president-donald-j-trumps-call-king-salman-saudi-arabia-4/> as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁷ Judah Ari Gross, "IDF: Israeli aircraft targets armed Palestinian approaching Gaza fence", *Times of Israel*, April 5, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-israeli-aircraft-targets-armed-palestinian-approaching-gaza-fence/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=881d5e64b5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-881d5e64b5-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁸ "Israel deploys snipers, tanks as Palestinians begin protests along Gaza border", *Times of Israel*, April 6, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-deploys-snipers-tanks-as-palestinians-begin-protests-along-gaza-border/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=4f88318dcd-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-4f88318dcd-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹²⁹ "Israeli jets strike Gaza after Palestinians plant bombs on fence", *Times of Israel*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-jets-strike-gaza-after-palestinians-plant-bombs-on-fence/> as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁰ Michael Bachner, "Assad regime places tanks, artillery in buffer zone with Israel", *Times of Israel*, April 5, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/assad-regime-places-tanks-artillery-in-buffer-zone-with-israel-report/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=881d5e64b5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-881d5e64b5-55556173 as accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³¹ Judah Ari Gross, "14 said killed in attack on Syrian facility previously targeted by Israel", *Times of Israel*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/syria-blames-israel-for-missile-attack-idf-wont-comment/> as accessed on April 9, 2018

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 2	Balochistan	<p>At least seven Christians were killed in two separate incidents in different localities of provincial capital Quetta. Four Christians travelling in a rickshaw were killed when unidentified militants opened fire at them on Shah Zaman Road. A minor girl was also injured in the attack.</p> <p>In a separate incident, three people were killed and four others were injured in a firing incident on Qambrani Road. Police said the deceased belong to Bangulzai tribe.¹³²</p> <p>Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement carried by its Amaq News.¹³³</p>	7	5
2	April 4	Balochistan	A Frontier Corps (FC) soldier and two militants were killed in an encounter triggered by a search operation in Pinsin Kaur area of Kech district. ¹³⁴	3	0
3	April 5	Punjab	The Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered government authorities to not “harass” banned Jama’at-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed and allow him to continue his social welfare activities until April 23, 2018, the date of the next hearing. ¹³⁵	LHC orders Government to not harass Hafiz Saeed	
4	April 6	Sindh	Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced three men to death and two individuals to life in prison in a sectarian killing case. All five convicted were affiliated with a	Five men convicted in sectarian killing	

¹³² Syed Ali Shah, 4 Christians among 7 killed in separate firing incidents in Quetta, *Dawn*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399128/4-christians-among-7-killed-in-separate-firing-incidents-in-quetta>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³³ Saleem Shahid, Four members of Christian family shot dead in Quetta, *Dawn*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399249/four-members-of-christian-family-shot-dead-in-quetta>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁴ Soldier, two ‘militants’ killed in operation in Kech district, *Dawn*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399681/soldier-two-militants-killed-in-operation-in-kech-district>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁵ Rana Bilal, LHC bars govt from ‘harassing’ Hafiz Saeed over welfare activities, *Dawn*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399751/lhc-bars-govt-from-harassing-hafiz-saeed-over-welfare-activities>, accessed on April 9, 2018

			banned sectarian militant outfit and guilty of killing a member of Tablighi Jama'at in February 2014. ¹³⁶	
5	April 8	Sindh	Karachi Police's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested four suspected militants from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) over allegations of terror financing through bank robberies, kidnapping-for-ransom and extortion. ¹³⁷	Arrest

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 3-5	Farah & Nimroz	US Forces-Afghanistan and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) conducted airstrikes strikes on 11 Taliban narcotics production facilities in Farah and Nimroz provinces, expanding their counter-revenue efforts against the Taliban beyond Helmand. This degraded the Taliban's primary means of funding its operations - narcotic production. ¹³⁸	Airstrikes dismantle Taliban-controlled drug havens	
2	April 7	Uruzgan	At least 18 Taliban militants and three SFs were killed while 17 others were wounded during Uruzgan operation that was conducted in the vicinity of Khas Uruzgan district. Uruzgan security chief General Rahmatullah Sediqi confirmed the incident. ¹³⁹	21	17
3	April 7	Sara-e-Pul	Six security personnel were killed and three others were injured when Taliban and IS militants jointly attacked a checkpoint in Takhta village of Sar-e-Pul city. ¹⁴⁰	6	3

¹³⁶ Three sentenced to death for killing Tablighi Jamaat man in Karachi, *Dawn*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400017/three-sentenced-to-death-for-killing-tablighi-jamaat-man-in-karachi>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁷ Imtiaz Ali, Four suspected militants from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi arrested in Karachi for terror financing, *Dawn*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400356/four-suspected-militants-from-lashkar-e-jhangvi-arrested-in-karachi-for-terror-financing>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁸ US release new videos of heavy airstrikes on Taliban narcotics factories, *Khaama Press*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/us-release-new-videos-of-heavy-airstrikes-on-taliban-narcotics-factories-04822/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹³⁹ Afghan forces and Taliban suffer casualties in Uruzgan operation, *Khaama Press*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/afghan-forces-and-taliban-suffer-casualties-in-uruzgan-operation-04828/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴⁰ 6 security personnel killed in joint Daesh, Taliban attack, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/04/08/6-security-personnel-killed-joint-daesh-taliban-attack>, accessed on April 9, 2018

4	April 8	Kabul	The NATO troops will probably return to the battlefields in Afghanistan, as the NATO Secretary-General has said the organization would send more soldiers to the war-hit country to fight terrorism. The NATO-led international coalition finished combat missions at the end of 2014 and started training and advising of the Afghan security forces. ¹⁴¹	NATO to resume combat mission
5	April 9	Kabul	Former Taliban Ambassador to Islamabad Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef said that Pakistan has 'increased pressure' on Taliban to join the reconciliation process but they will not bow to this. "Pakistan has increased pressure on the Taliban but they will not accept what Pakistan wants them to do. Pakistan has detained some senior Taliban leaders at a time when efforts are underway in the region to encourage the Taliban to come to the negotiating table," Zaeef said. ¹⁴²	Taliban will not bow to Pakistan

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 4	Diyala	IS militants attacked a bus carrying civilians on Jalawla-Khanqeen Road and killed people on board. A total of 104 Iraqi civilians and policemen were killed, while 177 others were injured in acts of terrorism in Iraq in March, according to casualty figures by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). ¹⁴³	NS	NS
2	April 4	Diyala	Joint security forces killed three IS militants in an operation, near Hamreen lake, northeast of Baquba. One of the killed was identified as Abu Nabil al-Iraqi, the mastermind	3	0

¹⁴¹ NATO to resume combat mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Times*, April 8, 2018, <http://afghanistantimes.af/nato-resume-combat-mission-afghanistan/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴² Taliban Won't Bow To Pakistan, Says Zaeef, *Tolo News*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-wont%2%A0bow-%2%A0pakistan-says-zaeef>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴³ Nehal Mostafa, Islamic State targets vehicle, kills civilians on board, north of Diyala, *Iraqi News*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-targets-vehicle-kills-civilians-on-board-north-of-diyala/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

			of several terrorist attacks in the region. ¹⁴⁴		
3	April 7	Anbar	Six Iraqi soldiers were injured after a suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up in Hit district. According to a source, "The troops were combing a party headquarters that was hit by a bomb explosion, when the suicide bomber targeted them". ¹⁴⁵	0	6
4	April 8	Anbar	Seven IS militants were killed as Iraqi troops launched a military operation to eliminate the terrorist group in Anbar. According to an unnamed source, "A security force from the Anbar Operations Command, backed by pro-government troops, launched a military operation to track down IS cells in Hit desert, west of Ramadi," killing seven IS militants. ¹⁴⁶	7	0

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 5	Syria-Iraq border	Four IS militants were killed in a security operation in al-Jazeera region of Qaim town on borders between Syria and west of Anbar (Iraq). ¹⁴⁷	4	NS
2	April 7	Dayrik (Turkish Syrian borders)	A Saudi militant, who is in a jail in the Syrian Kurdish town of Dayrik, and managed by the Syrian Democratic Forces, said that he joined IS in Syria late 2013 at the age of 16. "The group obtained the drones, some Chinese- and others US-made, through smuggling from Turkey". He said the group used three models of drones, and that the	IS drone industry	

¹⁴⁴ Nehal Mosatafa, Three Islamic State members killed in security operation, northeast of Baquba, *Iraqi News*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-islamic-state-members-killed-in-security-operation-northeast-of-baquba/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴⁵ Mohammed Ebraheem, Six Iraqi soldiers injured as suicide bomber blows himself up in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/six-iraqi-soldiers-injured-as-suicide-bomber-blows-himself-up-in-anbar/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴⁶ Mohammed Ebraheem, Iraqi troops kill seven Islamic State militants in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-troops-kill-seven-islamic-state-militants-in-anbar/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴⁷ Nehal Mostafa, Four Islamic State members killed in operation on borders between Iraq, Syria, *Iraqi News*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/four-islamic-state-members-killed-in-operation-on-borders-between-iraq-syria/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

			flying range of one of them reached 600 kilometers. ¹⁴⁸		
3			At least 70 people were killed in a suspected chemical attack in Douma, the last rebel-held town of Eastern Ghouta. Syria has called the allegations of a chemical attack a “fabrication” - as has its main ally, Russia. ¹⁴⁹	70	NS
4	April 9	Homs	<p>A large number of Syrian military personnel were killed or wounded after several missiles struck the T-4 Airport in the Homs Governorate’s eastern countryside.</p> <p>According to the army source, the attack is believed have been carried out by the Israeli Air Force, as 20 missiles were fired from the Lebanese border.¹⁵⁰ Others said that it was an American attack.</p> <p>However, the Pentagon denied US forces’ role in the missile strike. “At this time, the Department of Defence is not conducting air strikes in Syria,” a Pentagon statement said.¹⁵¹</p>	NS	NS

International Economic Issues

- **AIIB Adopts Strategy on Private Capital Mobilization**

On April 5, 2018, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) released its “Strategy on Mobilizing Private Capital for Infrastructure” to further define the bank’s approach to making investment in emerging market infrastructure more attractive to private investors. The strategy presents AIIB’s long-term goal of positioning itself as a ‘go-to’ institution for providing infrastructure financing solutions to client countries. In the medium-term, AIIB will move toward this goal by pursuing a range of activities, including actively originating the bank’s private sector pipeline, executing high-quality transactions and achieving a

¹⁴⁸ Mohamed Mostafa, Islamic State militant gives insight into group’s drone industry, April 7, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-militant-gives-insight-into-groups-drone-industry/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁴⁹ Syria war: At least 70 killed in suspected chemical attack in Douma, *BBC*, April 8, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43686157>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁵⁰ Leith Aboufadel, Scores of Syrian military personnel killed, wounded in T-4 Airport attack, *Al Masdar News*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/scores-of-syrian-military-personnel-killed-wounded-in-t-4-airport-attack/>, accessed on April 9, 2018

¹⁵¹ US denies it launched missile strike on Syrian airbase after chemical weapons attack on rebel-held town, *ABC News*, April 9, 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-09/missiles-hit-airfield-in-homs-syria-state-tv-says/9633498>, accessed on April 9, 2018

distinctive and efficient client experience. Three key activities—‘AIIB partners,’ ‘AIIB leads’ and ‘AIIB creates markets’—are identified as steps to achieve the highest impact on private capital mobilization. Apart from underlining priority areas for transactions, a set of monitoring indicators has also been established to measure progress as the strategy begins to roll out.¹⁵²

- **Trump says WTO is unfair to US**

On April 7, 2018, US President Donald Trump claimed that the World Trade Organization comprising 164-countries was biased against the United States. A day after China asked the WTO to referee a rapidly escalating trade fight with Washington, Trump questioned the organizations impartiality. He tweeted, “China, which is a great economic power, is considered a Developing Nation within the World Trade Organization.” “They therefore get tremendous perks and advantages, especially over the US. Does anybody think this is fair. We were badly represented. The WTO is unfair to US”. Trump has repeatedly expressed skepticism about multilateral bodies -- from the WTO to the United Nations to NATO -- believing they constrain US power.¹⁵³

Noteworthy, on April 2, 2018, China has increased import duties up to 25 percent on a list of US goods, including pork, fruit and other products, amounting to \$3 billion, responding to a US tariff hike on steel and aluminum that took effect on March 23, 2018.¹⁵⁴

- **No NAFTA deal in principle to be announced at Lima summit: sources**

Talks to rework the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are not advanced enough for the United States, Mexico and Canada to announce a deal “in principle” at the April 13-14 Summit of the Americas in Lima. US President Donald Trump, his Mexican counterpart Enrique Pena Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are due to attend the Lima gathering, and officials have held out hope for substantive progress on the renegotiation before the meeting. During a joint news conference on the closing of the seventh round of NAFTA talks in Mexico City, Mexico March 5, 2018, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said that progress had been made on reworking the accord. But there was still too much to do unveil an agreement in the summit.

Negotiations to rework NAFTA began last year after Trump took office promising to take the United States out of the 1994 agreement if it could not be reworked to better serve American interests. However, with the Trump administration embarking on a tariff conflict with China, officials say Washington is now in a hurry to reach a deal over NAFTA before the current Congress ends. The United States holds mid-term congressional elections in November. Much of the debate centers on drawing up new rules for the

¹⁵² AIIB, “AIIB Adopts Strategy on Private Capital Mobilization”, April 5, 2018, https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2018/20180405_001.html (accessed on April 9, 2018)

¹⁵³ “Trump says WTO is unfair to US “, Business Standard, April 7, 2018, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/trump-says-wto-is-unfair-to-us-118040700037_1.html (accessed on April 9, 2018)

¹⁵⁴ Ben Blanchard, Tony Munroe, “China hits U.S. goods with tariffs as 'sparks' of trade war fly”, Reuters, April 2, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/china-hits-u-s-goods-with-tariffs-as-sparks-of-trade-war-fly-idUSKCN1H81J3> (accessed on April 9, 2018)

automotive sector, with the United States eager to broker a revised NAFTA that secures it a bigger chunk of that business.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ “No NAFTA deal in principle to be announced at Lima summit: sources”, Reuters, April 9, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-nafta/no-nafta-deal-in-principle-to-be-announced-at-lima-summit-sources-idUSKBNiHFoYD> (accessed on April 9, 2018)