

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(9 – 15 April, 2018)**

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## Africa

- **Nigerians in UK Protest Against Buhari's Re-Election Bid<sup>1</sup>**

A group of Nigerians living in the UK has staged a protest after President Muhammadu Buhari declared his intention to enter the contest for another term in office as president of Nigeria in 2019. The presidency, however, said the protest was sponsored by supporters of alleged looters and corrupt elements within and outside the country.

President Muhammadu Buhari on Wednesday in London explained that he chose to seek a re-election because Nigerians appreciate what his government is doing. According to the President's Special Adviser, Media, Mr. Femi Adesina, the president told the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Justin Welby, in London when he visited him, that he had to make his intention known in the meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC) held on Monday because people were talking so much on whether he would run or not.

- **UAE condemns Somalia over seizing cash 'sent to army'<sup>2</sup>**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has denounced the seizure of what it described as a civilian aircraft carrying nearly \$10m by Somali authorities at Mogadishu airport. The government of Somalia said on Sunday, 15 April 2018, it had seized several bags of money containing \$9.6m in cash from a plane arriving from the UAE capital Abu Dhabi.

According to a statement carried on by WAM, the UAE state news agency, the sum was intended to support the Somali military and trainees. The money was found in three unmarked bags on a Royal Jet plane, according to the Somali interior ministry, and its seizure resulted in an hours-long standoff between airport officials and UAE embassy staff in Mogadishu.

Royal Jet is an airline based in Abu Dhabi, servicing the luxury market between the UAE and Europe. Somalia's interior ministry said security agencies are currently investigating where the money came from, where it was going, the individuals

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<sup>1</sup> This Day, 11 April 2018, [http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00060142.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Agroup%3Aabkgta](http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00060142.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Agroup%3Aabkgta)

<sup>2</sup> Al Jazeera, 10 April 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/uae-condemns-somalia-seizing-cash-army-180410144049376.html>

involved and the reason for bringing money worth this amount into the country in a statement late on Sunday.

Al Hammadi, the UAE ambassador told that Somali money was not intended for the UAE embassy. He told the money was for the ministry of defense. It's for the salary of the Somali soldiers. He said the government knew in advance that the money was coming for the troops. The UAE has been training Somali soldiers in Mogadishu, as well as about 1,000 maritime police in the Puntland region. Somali officials argue the money was not intended for the Somali army. "The salary for the army is less than \$1 million. This is almost \$10 million," the official said.

- **President Kovind's Visit to Zambia: 4 Agreements Signed<sup>3</sup>**

India's President Ram Nath Kovind arrived in Zambia on Tuesday , 10 April 2018, on the final leg of his visit to three African countries. He held delegation-level talks with his Zambian counterpart Edgar Chagwa Lungu. President Kovind and had "meaningful and wide-ranging discussions" with his Zambian counterpart. The two Presidents exchanged views on bilateral and global issues. Committing to India's long-standing developmental partnership with Zambia, President Kovind also expressed appreciation for Zambia having signed the International Solar Alliance agreement. The two sides signed four agreements - on double taxation avoidance; on judicial cooperation; on mutual visa waivers for officials and diplomats; and on the Entrepreneurship Development Institute that India will build in Zambia. This was the first visit to the country by an Indian president since 1989. President Kovind also addressed the Zambia-India Business Forum.

- **Zimbabwe: ED Gamble Backfires<sup>4</sup>**

The Austrian company contracted to dualise the Beitbridge-Chirundu highway has ignored President Emmerson Mnangagwa's move to cancel the contract and says it is already working on the project amid indications another legal row is brewing over the project.

Mnangagwa announced during a recent visit to China that Geiger International's tender to carry out one of the biggest road projects in the country since independence had been cancelled because the firm was failing to deliver on time. There were indications the tender would be given to a Chinese contractor and that some senior government officials wanted to muscle in their companies into the project that has been on the cards for over 16 years.

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<sup>3</sup> India Today, 11 April 2018, <https://www.indiatoday.in/pti-feed/story/india-zambia-sign-4-agreements-during-president-kovinds-visit-1210187-2018-04-11>

<sup>4</sup> The Standard, 15 April 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201804160273.html>

A senior government source said the move was ill-advised as it exposed government to litigation and Geiger yesterday indicated it will not go away without a fight.

Cuthbert Mashanda, Geiger International's representative in Zimbabwe, told The Standard that their engineers were on the ground carrying out surveys on the highway before the actual work commences.

He said the firm had not received any official communication from the government concerning the cancellation of the tender.

- **Indonesia, Somalia Agree to Enhance Trade Ties<sup>5</sup>**

Indonesia and Somalia have agreed to intensify trade ties during a bilateral meeting between Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and Somalian Vice Foreign Minister Mukhtar Mahat Da'ud on Wednesday.

Marsudi remarked that he had held bilateral talks with the Somalian vice foreign minister and they spoke about trade ties, following the meeting held on the sidelines of the second day of the Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF).

Marsudi noted that trade between the two countries, which has grown on an average of 30 percent per year, can still be increased. In 2017, bilateral trade jumped by 80 percent as compared to the previous year, she stated. She further said that they are pursuing the development of infrastructure, including roads and ports, as one of the priorities. Right now, they are in the process of developing ports. Indonesia has vowed to enhance relations with African countries, particularly in the economic field, by holding the Indonesian Africa Forum (IAF) from April 10 to 11

- **World Bank Raises South Africa's 2018 Growth Forecast<sup>6</sup>**

The World Bank raised its forecasts for the South African economy on Tuesday but warned that growth potential would remain weak without concerted efforts to reduce inequality and stimulate competition. The World Bank now sees gross domestic product growing by 1.4 per cent this year, up from its September forecast of 1.1 per cent, supported by improved business and consumer confidence after Cyril Ramaphosa replaced Jacob Zuma as head of state in February. But South Africa will struggle to raise growth much beyond 2 per cent without policy interventions to improve skills among the poor and tackle monopolies, it said.

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<sup>5</sup> Shabelle Media Network, 11 April 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201804110612.html>

<sup>6</sup> Monew Web, 10 April 2018, <https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/economy/world-bank-raises-south-africa-2018-growth-forecast/>

- **Normal Tax Rules Apply to Crypto Income, Says South Africa<sup>7</sup>**

South Africans can declare cryptocurrency-related taxable income under standard rules, the country's tax agency has said. In a statement issued on Friday, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) clarified its stance on tax treatment of cryptocurrencies, explaining that taxpayers who have either traded, received or mined cryptocurrencies are expected to report gains or losses. Crypto earnings may be treated under "normal income tax rules" or may be liable for capital gains tax (CGT), according to the announcement. The notice comes as a result of the agency noting increasing levels of popularity and speculation around cryptocurrencies, which subsequently led to an investigation into the tax consequences of the technology. Consequently, it categorized cryptocurrency as an "intangible asset" for income tax or CGT purposes. Finally, the agency said it currently does not apply value added tax (VAT) on cryptocurrency sales. A move to clarify the situation was promised in the 2018 budget review in February.

- **Tanzanian Ports Locking Kenya Out of Regional Trade<sup>8</sup>**

The vibrant expansion of Tanzania's Dar es Salaam port and the Djibouti port are posing the biggest threat to the growth of Mombasa port, a new report says. The 2018 Africa Ports report by audit firm PriceWaterHouseCoopers (PWC) has noted that the Tanzania government's determined investment in the Dar port, and the development of other ports in Tanga and Bagamoyo, has greatly shut out Mombasa port as the dominant trade hub in the region. As a result, neighbours in the hinterland such as Uganda and Rwanda are now preferring the Tanzanian ports as transit points for cargo. Ethiopia, a country that is coming up strongly as an economic giant in the region, only crippled by its land-locked status, prefers the port of Djibouti.

- **You Now Have to Pay the Government over US\$900 a Year to be a Blogger in Tanzania<sup>9</sup>**

The internet has long been lauded as a marketplace for the free exchange of ideas, but not in Tanzania, where it will now cost you US\$930 to license a blog. As part of new online regulations, the government will certify all bloggers in the country and charge them an annual fee before they start any operations online. The new provisions also encompass online radio and television streaming services and affect

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<sup>7</sup> Coin Desk, 9 April 2018, <https://www.coindesk.com/normal-tax-rules-apply-to-crypto-income-says-south-africa/>

<sup>8</sup> Standard Digital, 13 April 2018, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2001276786/tanzanian-ports-locking-kenya-out-of-regional-trade>

<sup>9</sup> Quartz Africa, 10 April 2018, <https://qz.com/1248762/tanzania-social-media-and-blogging-regulations-charge-to-operate-online/>

online forums and social media users. To be authorized as an online content provider, applicants are expected to fill a form detailing the estimated cost of investment, the number of directors and stakeholders in the platform, their share of capital, staff qualifications, expected dates of commencing operations, besides future growth plans. But even after providing this documentation, authorities still reserve the right to revoke a permit if a site publishes content that “causes annoyance, threatens harm or evil, encourages or incites crimes” or jeopardizes “national security or public health and safety.” Officials could also force managers to remove “prohibited content” within 12 hours or face fines not less than five million shillings (US\$2,210) or a year in prison. The sweeping regulation, dubbed the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations 2018, is set to give the government unfettered powers to police the web.

- **Angola Gets US\$500 Million From HSBC Account That Was Frozen<sup>10</sup>**

Angola has recouped US\$500 million that was frozen in an HSBC Holdings Plc account in London linked to an alleged fraud involving Jose Filomeno dos Santos, the son of the former president, the Finance Ministry said. The funds were part of US\$1.5 billion that the Angolan government was to pay Mais Financial Services, a company managed by a person close to Dos Santos, for the start-up of a US\$35 billion strategic investment fund for state projects and another that would place US\$300 million weekly in the local-currency market, the ministry said in an emailed statement Monday. In August, the southern African nation paid the funds into the HSBC account held by PerfectBit, a company contracted by Mais. The ministry then conducted a due-diligence exercise and found that PerfectBit was a dormant company, it said. Former central bank Governor Valter Filipe da Silva then asked HSBC to freeze the funds held in the account.

- **No Border Tension between Namibia and Botswana<sup>11</sup>**

Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi yesterday dismissed any notion that his country and Namibia have border disputes, amid regular reports of Namibians often shot dead by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) soldiers on suspicion they went into that country to poach. Masisi, who was on a one-day working visit to Namibia and paid a courtesy call on President Hage Geingob at State House yesterday, said Botswana has no border tensions with Namibia as a country nor its citizens. He was, however, quick to remind poachers crossing into his country that they would face the full wrath of the law. Botswana has a shoot-to-kill policy with regard to poachers found in its territory. Namibians have expressed grave concern

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<sup>10</sup> Bloomberg, 9 April 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-09/angola-gets-500-million-from-hsbc-account-frozen-due-to-fraud>

<sup>11</sup> The New Era, 10 April 2018, <https://www.newera.com.na/2018/04/10/no-border-tension-between-namibia-and-botswana/>

about this shoot-to-kill policy, saying government was not doing enough to address the fatal shootings, especially during 2015 when many killings took place.

- **Mozambique Sets October 2019 for General Elections<sup>12</sup>**

Mozambique will hold presidential, legislative and provincial elections on October 15, 2019, President Filipe Nyusi announced on Wednesday. The date was unveiled amid negotiations on consolidating peace between the government and former rebels, the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo). Renamo and the ruling Frelimo fought a 16-year civil war that ended with a peace deal in 1992, but Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama took to the bush again in 2013 as his supporters waged a new low-level insurgency. In December 2016, Dhlakama announced a truce with the government, which until now is yet to culminate in a formal peace accord. Dhlakama and Nyusi have agreed on constitutional reforms that will decentralise power. The reforms, currently under debate in parliament, will allow voters to directly elect provincial governors, who at present are appointed by the president.

- **ISIS Fighters Infiltrate Neighbouring Mozambique<sup>13</sup>**

More than 90 well-trained ISIS fighters have infiltrated northern Mozambique in the past 30 days, and made their way down to the port of Nacala. It is believed that the terrorist group are headed to Nacala to bolster the ISIS stronghold at the port, where containers laden with drugs are offloaded monthly from cargo ships, Lowvelder reports. According to well-placed intelligence sources, the infiltrators entered from the island of Zanzibar and used Tanzania as springboard to cross the border into Mozambique. There have been numerous prior infiltrations, but this was the largest single group that came into the neighbouring state, the sources indicated. Although not confirmed yet, security experts indicated that the jihadists may try to join forces with Renamo rebels in a united front against the Frelimo government, so as to bolster their stand in the neighbouring country.

- **Mauritius Freezes Funds Linked to Angola's Sovereign Wealth Fund<sup>14</sup>**

Mauritius has frozen bank accounts and suspended business licenses linked to Quantum Global Investment Management, a firm through which Angola's sovereign wealth fund invests much of its cash, according to a court document and a regulatory source. Quantum Global, which said it was cooperating with

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<sup>12</sup> News24, 11 April 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/mozambique-sets-october-2019-for-general-elections-20180411>

<sup>13</sup> The Citizen, 13 April 2018, <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-cns/1893291/isis-fighters-infiltrate-neighbouring-mozambique/>

<sup>14</sup> Channel New Asia, 11 April 2018, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/mauritius-freezes-funds-linked-to-angola-s-sovereign-wealth-fund-10128714>

authorities, is run by Jean-Claude Bastos de Morais, a business partner of Jose Filomeno dos Santos. The son of José Eduardo dos Santos, Angola's former president, Jose Filomeno dos Santos was until recently the head of the national sovereign wealth fund. The moves at Quantum Global came after Angolan officials visited Mauritius last week, a regulatory source on Mauritius told Reuters. Following a Mauritius Supreme Court ruling, seen by Reuters on Wednesday, the island's Financial Services Commission suspended the licenses for seven Quantum Global funds, according to the source, and froze 25 of its bank accounts. On Monday, the Mauritian newspaper Le Mauricien reported that a further 33 bank accounts had been frozen, bringing the total to 58. In a statement, Zurich-based Quantum Global said it was cooperating with the relevant authorities.

- **New Ocean Current Discovered Off the Coast of Madagascar<sup>15</sup>**

A previously unknown ocean current was recently discovered "by accident" off the coast of Madagascar, a rare find in the 21st century. The newfound Southwest Madagascar Coastal Current could help researchers better predict the effects of climate change, said researchers involved in the study. The team, which consisted of South African, Malagasy and French researchers, was investigating the strip of ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar, known as the Mozambique Channel. They noticed that there was water coming into the channel that couldn't be explained by other known flow sources. Looking at satellite imagery, they discovered a completely new current carrying water along the Madagascar coast and then toward Earth's poles. In oceanic terms, the Southwest Madagascar Coastal Current is fairly small: At only 62 miles (100 kilometers) long and 330 yards (300 meters) deep, it transports about 264 million gallons (1.3 gigaliters) of warm, salty water a second, or the equivalent of more than 500 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water. But the current's location, rather than its size, makes it vital in understanding the world's oceans, the researchers said.

- **Uhuru-Raila Unity Team Takes Shape<sup>16</sup>**

The team to steer President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga's unity deal is all but in place, the Star can reveal. The two leaders are also reportedly planning to expand the two-man dialogue committee they appointed to spearhead their handshake deal to 12 members. This comes as the country waits with bated breath the details of the unity plan, more than a month since the handshake on March 9. Sources privy to the behind-the-scenes goings-on say Uhuru and Raila have largely completed stitching together their closely guarded plan that is likely to be unveiled

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<sup>15</sup> Live Science, 11 April 2018, <https://www.livescience.com/62275-new-ocean-current-madagascar.html>

<sup>16</sup> The Star, 14 April 2018, [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/04/14/uhuru-raila-unity-team-takes-shape\\_c1743618](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/04/14/uhuru-raila-unity-team-takes-shape_c1743618)



next week. Impeccable sources told the Star in confidence that both Raila and Uhuru had settled on their nominees for the steering committee.

- **South Sudan's Ex-military Chief Forms Organisation to Challenge Kiir<sup>17</sup>**

South Sudan's former military chief said on Monday he had formed an organisation to challenge President Salva Kiir, accusing him of looting the country's resources and turning it into a failed state. Paul Malong was sacked early last year amid resignations by some generals who alleged abuses by the military and tribal bias in the army ranks. Since November he has been in exile in Kenya where he was allowed to travel after months of tension between him and his guards and Kiir's government. Malong said in a statement that his new organisation called South Sudan-United Front (SS-UF) was "a struggle to ... arrest the carnage" and steer the nation back to democracy.

- **Sudan's President Orders Release of Political Prisoners<sup>18</sup>**

The president of Sudan has ordered the release of dozens of political prisoners, the state-run news agency Suna reported on Tuesday, an action that appeared intended to mollify human-rights critics. The decision seemed to be a concession by the president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who came to power in 1989 in an Islamist and military-backed coup, and is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur.

- **South Sudan Rebels Release 7 Aid Workers<sup>19</sup>**

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) announced the release of seven aid workers upon directives from the group leader Riek Machar. Recently the UN urged the SPLM-IO to release seven aid workers with the South Sudan Health Association (SSUHA) saying they were abducted on 25 March while delivering health supplies in Morobo county in Central Equatoria. In a statement released on Sunday, Lam Paul Gabriel, the SPLM-IO deputy spokesperson said the release took place along the border with Uganda and in presence of security officials from the neighbouring country. He further said the handover was ordered by the SPLM-IO leader Machar who is still confined in South Africa but preparing to move to another country in the region, Tanzania probably. Gabriel said they captured the aid workers after discovering two South Sudanese security agents deployed in the rebel-held areas as humanitarians without elaborating on the matter.

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<sup>17</sup> Africa News, 10 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/10/south-sudan-s-ex-military-chief-forms-organisation-to-challenge-kiir/>

<sup>18</sup> The New York Times, 10 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/10/world/africa/sudan-political-prisoners.html>

<sup>19</sup> Sudan Tribune, 15 April 2018, <http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article65189>

- Ethiopia PM Gets Huge Welcome in Ambo, Epicenter of Oromo Protests<sup>20</sup>**  
 Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited the epicenter of protests that riled the country between 2015 and last year with a call for the people to rally behind government efforts aimed at deepening democracy. Ambo, located in the west Shoa zone of Oromia regional state, was the scene of heavy protests that led to security crackdown and deaths. There was intense preparations ahead of his visit while thousands poured out at the Ambo stadium to listen to his message. According to the state-affiliated FANA Broadcasting Corporate, he tasked citizens to join hands and make history by focusing their attentions towards peace and development. He also highlighted the importance of resolving differences through dialogue. Lemma Megerssa, President of the Oromia regional state in his comments stressed that the occasion unlike in the past was a time to announce good news and hope contrary to the past when they have had to quell protests.
- President Kovind Announces Indian Embassy, Investment for Equatorial Guinea<sup>21</sup>**  
 Speaking to members of Equatorial Guinea’s parliament, Kovind acknowledged the shared history of the nations’ colonial past and a commitment to economic diversification and climate change action. President of India Ram Nath Kovind heads to Swaziland on Monday, following a weekend visit with President Teodoro Obiang Nguema in Equatorial Guinea. The two met at the Presidential Palace in Malabo to discuss economic development and investment, as well as security. Kovind said India is eager to assist the small but resource-wealthy West African nation in project development, in keeping with credit extensions of US\$10 billion over five years for African countries first announced at the India-Africa Forum Summit of 2015.
- Noida-based Co. Builds IT Park, Unveiled by President Kovind in Swaziland<sup>22</sup>**  
 President of India Ramnath Kovind and Prime Minister of Swaziland Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini unveiled Royal Science and Technology Innovation Park in Phocweni, Swaziland on Tuesday. The park has been constructed by a leading Noida-based Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) Company - Angelique International Limited (AIL). The US\$20 million (INR 130 crore) IT park, financed by the Government of India under bilateral cooperation, is aimed to assist

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<sup>20</sup> Africa News, 11 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/11/ethiopia-pm-gets-huge-welcome-in-ambo-epicenter-of-oromo-protests/>

<sup>21</sup> Little India, 10 April 2018, <https://littleindia.com/kovind-announces-indian-embassy-investment-for-equatorial-guinea/>

<sup>22</sup> The Times of India, 11 April 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/noida-based-co-builds-it-park-unveiled-by-president-kovind-in-swaziland/articleshow/63712726.cms>

Swazi Government's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through use of information technology.

## North Africa

- **Egypt condemns Israel for Excessive use of violence against Palestinians<sup>23</sup>**

The government of Egypt has condemned the excessive use of violence by Israeli forces against Palestinians during the mass demonstrations which has killed at least nine people and left around thousands injured. In an official statement, Egypt's foreign ministry condemned Israeli violence against unarmed civilians who took to the streets in peaceful protests against Israeli occupation for the second consecutive week.

The source in foreign ministry stressed Egypt's rejection of the violence against Palestinians calling for their legitimate and fair rights and statement called on the international community to exert serious efforts to help Palestinians secure their right to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. It is worth mentioning here that on 30 March, a wave of Palestinian protests — dubbed the "Great March of Return" — erupted in Gaza, calling for a return of Palestinians to the homes of their ancestors who were displaced during the creation of Israel in 1948.

- **President El-Sisi expresses full support to legitimate government of Hadi in Yemen<sup>24</sup>**

On the sideline of the Arab League Summit in Saudi Arabia, second-term elected president of Egypt El-Sisi met his Yemeni counterpart President Hadi of Yemen and promised full support of Egypt to his legitimate government. During the meeting, he also promised to extend all support to maintain integrity and unity of Yemen. Both the leaders also discussed the existing security scenario in the country and expressed their concerns over existing inhuman condition and discussed the means and ways to bring the nation out of the present quagmire. On his part, President Hadi expressed his satisfaction and relief over the stance of Egypt and said that both the nations enjoys historical ties and bond with each other.

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<sup>23</sup> Ahram only English, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/297220/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-condemns-excessive-use-of-violence-by-Israel.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> Al-Shorouk , An Arabic Daily, <http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=15042018&id=8efd2e72-93e1-461f-bda2-b8a92fad5e78>

## Central Asia

- **Kyrgyz President Visits Turkey, Belgium**

President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov visited Turkey from 9 to 10 April 2018. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation. During the visit, the president held meetings with his counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey Binali Yildirim, and the Speaker of the Great National Assembly of Turkey Ismail Kahraman.

Reportedly, Erdogan demanded action against what it calls Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) and termed it ‘a great threat to Kyrgyzstan’<sup>25</sup>. The Kyrgyz President said that he had ‘constructive and fruitful’ talks and added that the common goal is to develop the level of strategic business association forward. Kyrgyz-Turkey economic relations were considered below potential and the countries want to increase the trade turnover up to US\$ 1 billion per year.<sup>26</sup>

The documents signed include, a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey and the Investment Promotion and Protection Agency of Kyrgyzstan, the Agreement on Cooperation in Physical Culture and Sport, the Agreement on Cooperation in Agriculture, the Agreement on mutual promotion and protection of investments, the Social Security Agreement, the Protocol on Cooperation in the field of media and information.<sup>27</sup>

After visiting Turkey, the President paid a working visit to Brussels, Belgium. During the visit, President Jeenbekov met with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federico Mogherini, Chairman of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani, Chairman of the European Council Donald Tusk., and Chairman of European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker <sup>28</sup>. The discussions were held to increase cooperation Kyrgyzstan and the EU, including attracting advanced European investments to Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>25</sup> AKI Press, “Erdogan says he “sees today’s visit of President Jeenbekov as the best answer to FETO's efforts”,” 10 April 2018, <https://akipress.com/news:604777>

<sup>26</sup> Kabar, “President of Kyrgyzstan meets with Speaker of Turkish Parliament,” 11 April 2018, <http://kabar.kg/eng/news/president-of-kyrgyzstan-meets-with-speaker-of-turkish-parliament/>

<sup>27</sup> Azernews, “Turkey, Kyrgyzstan sign joint documents on cooperation,” 10 April 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/region/130063.html>

<sup>28</sup> Kabar, “President of Kyrgyzstan completes his visit to Kingdom of Belgium,” 13 April 2018, <http://kabar.kg/eng/news/president-of-kyrgyzstan-completes-his-visit-to-kingdom-of-belgium/>

Subsequently, the visiting President also held meetings with His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan and Managing Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for Russia and Central Asia Natalia Khanzhenkova.

- **Kazakhstan Plans Sending Forces to UN Mission in Lebanon**

Kazakhstan may send forces to join the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. About 120 Kazakh troops are currently under training for deployment as part of UN contingent in that country.<sup>29</sup> Earlier, Kazakhstan had sent members of its forces to Tajikistan, Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

- **China Seeks Protection of Investment in Kyrgyzstan Following Arson**

Protestors in Kyrgyzstan resorted to violence in the Chinese funded gold-plant facility in the country's south-eastern Toguz-Toro district in Jalalabad Province. China has demanded fair investigation and protection of its investment in the country.<sup>31</sup> The protestors set some buildings and equipment worth US\$ 5 million, belonging to the Kyrgyz-Chinese joint venture Makmal GL Developing, on fire. The locals were protesting against the alleged impact on the environment when the plant starts functioning. An enquiry has been ordered by the government.

## China

- **Visit of National Security Advisor to China**

National Security Advisor Shri Ajit Doval visited China from 12-13 April 2018 and held talks in Shanghai with Mr. Yang Jiechi, Member of Politburo and Director of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee. The visit was part of regular high-level engagements between India and China. The discussions covered a wide agenda spanning bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two sides agreed to maintain the pace of high-level exchanges, with a view to fully realize the potential of Closer Development Partnership between India and China.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kazinform, "Kazakhstan may send troops to join UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon," 9 April 2018, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-may-send-troops-to-join-un-peacekeeping-mission-in-lebanon\\_a3213224](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-may-send-troops-to-join-un-peacekeeping-mission-in-lebanon_a3213224)

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Pannier, "After A Generation, Kazakh Peacekeeping Contingent Prepares To Go Abroad," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty , 10 April 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/qishloq-ovozi-kazakhstan-peacekeeping-contingent-lebanon/29156875.html>

<sup>31</sup> Maria Levina, "Kyrgyzstan: China demands to protect investor after locals burnt gold-processing plant," The Times of Central Asia, 13 April 2018, <https://timesca.com/index.php/news/19611-kyrgyzstan-china-demands-to-protect-investor-after-locals-burnt-gold-processing-plant>

<sup>32</sup> Press Release by Embassy of India in Beijing <http://indianembassybeijing.in/nsa.php>

- **India-China Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Dialogue**

The fifth edition of the India-China Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Dialogue was held on 10 April in Beijing. The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs) in the Ministry of External Affairs while the Chinese delegation was led by Mr. Wang Qun, Director General of Department of Arms Control at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

The delegations exchanged views on various topics of mutual interest, including, developments related to disarmament and non-proliferation at multilateral forums, nuclear issues, role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament as well as outer space.

Both sides underlined the importance of the bilateral dialogue as an important mechanism between the two countries for consultations on important issues. Both sides agreed to hold the sixth round of consultations in New Delhi at a mutually convenient time.<sup>33</sup>

- **Xi Jinping Meets with Prime Minister of Pakistan**

On April 10, 2018, President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi of Pakistan at Boao in Hainan Province.

Xi Jinping pointed out that since his visit to Pakistan in 2015, China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership has made substantial progress. Currently, the international and regional situation has been undergoing profound and complex changes. Consolidating China-Pakistan all-weather friendship and deepening China-Pakistan strategic cooperation are of more important and realistic significance.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi expressed that Pakistan and China are iron brothers, and consistently and firmly support each other on issues concerning respective core interests and major concerns.<sup>34</sup>

- **China to exempt import tariffs on all cancer drugs**

China will exempt import tariffs on all cancer drugs and encourage the import of more innovative drugs, according to a statement released after an executive meeting of the State Council presided over by Premier Li Keqiang on 12 April 2017.

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<sup>33</sup> Press Release by Embassy of India in Beijing available at <http://indianembassybeijing.in/India-China-Dialogue-on-Disarmament.php>

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1550205.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1550205.shtml)

From May 1, import tariffs on all common drugs including cancer drugs, cancer alkaloid-based drugs, and imported traditional Chinese medicine will be exempted, the statement noted. Value added tax in the production and import of drugs will drop by a large margin.

The authorities will reduce the prices of cancer drugs through centralized government procurement and eliminate premium prices for drugs by means of cross-border e-commerce. Imported innovative drugs, especially much-needed cancer drugs, will be incorporated into the catalogue of medical insurance reimbursement, the statement said.<sup>35</sup>

- **New anti-cancer weapon: Nanotech**

Scientists in Shanghai say they have made a breakthrough in researching an alternative to chemotherapy that would treat tumors in a safe, efficient way with zero side effects for patients.

On 10 April, a team from the Shanghai Institute of Ceramics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, announced that it has devised a therapy using inorganic, nontoxic nanoparticles that can travel around the body and target only tumors, leaving healthy cells unaffected. “Laboratory testing on mice has shown that tumors shrank by 85 per cent after receiving the therapy,” said Shi Jianlin, Lead researcher at the institute.<sup>36</sup>

- **DPRK pledges to consolidate friendship with China**

The top leader of the DPRK, Kim Jong Un, pledged on 14 April to jointly write a new chapter of the country's friendship with China during a meeting with with Song Tao, head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee at Pyongyang.<sup>37</sup>

- **Xi Jinping Attends Opening Ceremony of BFA Annual Conference 2018**

On the morning of April 10, 2018, the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2018 was opened in Boao, Hainan Province. President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech themed with “Openness for Greater Prosperity, Innovation for a Better Future”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Xinhua available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1097756.shtml>

<sup>36</sup> Chinese academy of Sciences, available at [http://english.cas.cn/newsroom/news/201804/t20180413\\_191652.shtml](http://english.cas.cn/newsroom/news/201804/t20180413_191652.shtml)

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/15/c\\_137112978.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/15/c_137112978.htm)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1550206.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1550206.shtml)

- China, Mongolia pledge to deepen comprehensive strategic partnership**  
 On April 10, 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for strengthening China-Mongolia comprehensive strategic partnership during his meeting with the Mongolian Prime Minister Ukhnaa Khurelsukh in Hainan province of China. The Chinese side advocated linking of China's Belt and Road Initiative and Mongolia's Prairie Road development initiative and welcomed Mongolia's active participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Khurelsukh reiterated that Tibet and Taiwan are inalienable parts of China.<sup>39</sup>
- ASEAN, China establish joint science, technology labs**  
 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China launched a joint laboratory programme to boost innovation cooperation on April 12, 2018. Chinese Minister of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang made the announcement while speaking at the inauguration of the 2018 ASEAN-China Year of Innovation in Beijing. Some of the joint laboratories built include the China-Indonesia joint laboratory for high temperature gas cooled reactors, the China-Thailand railway system joint research centre, the China-Laos laboratory for new and renewable energy and the China-Myanmar laboratory for radar and satellite communications.<sup>40</sup>
- New freight train service linking Chengdu and Vienna launched**  
 A new China-Europe freight train service, connecting China's Chengdu and Austria's capital Vienna, was launched on April 12, 2018. The train will cover a distance of 9,800 kilometres and pass through Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and Slovakia during its 13 days long journey. A memorandum of cooperation was signed between China's Chengdu International Rail Port Investment & Development (Group) and Austrian OBB Holding AG to build a new station in 2020 as a terminal station.<sup>41</sup>
- China, Netherlands agree to exploit advantages of complementarities**  
 On April 12, 2018, China and the Netherlands agreed to promote pragmatic cooperation during the meeting between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in Beijing. The Chinese side expressed readiness to deepen cooperation in agriculture, finance, technology, people-to-people exchanges and climate change issue. Also, Li said that China is willing to work with the EU to uphold the multilateral trading system and free trade. Rutt expressed

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<sup>39</sup> "China, Mongolia pledge to deepen comprehensive strategic partnership", *The China Daily*, April 10, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201804/10/WS5acc546a3105cdcf65175d8.html>, Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> "China, ASEAN launch joint sci-tech labs", *Xinhuanet*, April 12, 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/12/c\\_137106865.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/12/c_137106865.htm), Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> "New freight train service linking Chengdu and Vienna launched", *The Global Times*, April 12, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1097674.shtml>, Accessed on April 16, 2018.



willingness to strengthen strategic communication and dialogue and expressed firm support for free trade.<sup>42</sup>

- **President Xi reviews navy in South China Sea**

Chinese President Xi Jinping reviewed the largest PLA Navy parade since its inception in the South China Sea on April 12, 2018. As part of China's efforts to build a first-class navy and achieve rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Xi said that the need to build a strong navy has never been more urgent than today. He pledged to speed up the modernisation of the navy. The review included more than 10,000 service personnel and a total of 48 vessels and 76 aircraft.<sup>43</sup>

- **China gives \$66 million grant to Ghana**

China agreed to provide a grant of \$66 million for construction of the Jamestown Fishing Port Complex and the University of Health and Allied Sciences. An agreement was signed towards this on April 6, 2018. China has expressed support to the 'Ghana Beyond Aid' agenda and establishment of polytechnics for industrialisation of Ghana. In addition, the Chinese government is conducting feasibility study to establish a cocoa processing company in Sefwi Wiawso in western Ghana.<sup>44</sup>

## European Union

- **Germany Supports Airstrikes against Syria**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has supported the US-led joint airstrikes in Syria. Chancellor Merkel described airstrikes as 'necessary and appropriate' measure to hamper the Syrian government's potential use of chemical weapons in the future. Chancellor Merkel said, "We support the fact that our American, British and French allies have taken responsibility in this way as permanent members of the UN Security Council."<sup>45</sup> Earlier Chancellor Merkel stated that German military "will not participate in possible military actions" in Syria. However, she

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<sup>42</sup> "China, Netherlands agree to exploit advantages of complementarities", *The China Daily*, April 13, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201804/13/WS5acf91b4a3105cdcf6517f48.html>, Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> "President Xi reviews navy in South China Sea", *The People's Daily*, April 13, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0413/c90000-9448842.html>, Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Edmund Smith-Asante, "China gives \$66 million grant to Ghana", *The China Daily* (Africa edition), April 13, 2018, [http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/weekly/2018-04/13/content\\_36024198.htm](http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/weekly/2018-04/13/content_36024198.htm), Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Germany backs airstrikes in Syria as 'necessary and appropriate', DW, April 14, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-backs-airstrikes-in-syria-as-necessary-and-appropriate/a-43386145>

emphasized that Germany would support to “send a clear signal that the use of chemical weapons” is unacceptable.<sup>46</sup>

- **Early Parliamentary Election in Slovenia**

President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor announced has dissolved the parliament and announced early election. President Pahor told, “On this day, I dismiss the parliament and determine June 3 as the date for an early parliamentary election.” Parliamentary election will be held on 3 June 2018. Prime Minister Miro Cerar resigned after the Supreme Court blocked a 1 billion euro railway project proposed by him.<sup>47</sup>

- **Poland Supported Airstrikes against Syria**

Polish President Andrzej Duda said that air strikes “were needed”. He added that “decent nations cannot allow innocent people to be killed with chemical weapons.” President Duda, “We are a member of the coalition, a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, and, of course, we back and support the actions of our allies.”<sup>48</sup>

- **Airstrikes against Syria**

As US President Donald Trump announced, air strikes “on targets associated with chemical weapons capabilities” in Syria were launched by the US, France and Britain. In a national television address, President Trump said, the western allies had “marshalled their righteous power against barbarism and brutality.” He also said, “The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children, thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man; they are crimes of a monster instead.”<sup>49</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Foreign Minister Taro Meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang in Tokyo**

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<sup>46</sup> Mark Hallam, The German stance on Syria: Ready to help, but not militarily, DW, April 12, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/the-german-stance-on-syria-ready-to-help-but-not-militarily/a-43356242>

<sup>47</sup> Slovenia to hold early parliamentary election, DW, April 14, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/slovenia-to-hold-early-parliamentary-election/a-43387500>

<sup>48</sup> Polish president voices support for allied strikes on Syria, Radio Poland, April 14, 2018, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/358862,Polish-president-voices-support-for-allied-strikes-on-Syria>

<sup>49</sup> Katrina Manson, Courtney Weaver and Sam Fleming, US, Britain and France launch air strikes against Syria, Financial Times, April 14, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/22b82050-3f81-11e8-b9f9-de94fa33a81e>; Syria strikes: All the latest updates, Aljazeera, April 15, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/syria-air-strikes-latest-updates-180414021423479.html>

On April 15, 2018, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono met visiting State Councilor and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Tokyo. Wang's trip follows an official visit by Kono to Beijing earlier this year, and marks the first visit by a Chinese foreign minister to Japan in a bilateral context in nine years. During their meeting Minister Taro Kono said that Tokyo and Beijing needed to work more closely together to denuclearize North Korea. Wang said that the visit was a response to Japan's positive attitude toward China. "Since last year, Japan has, in relations with China, displayed a positive message and friendly attitude" he said during the meeting.<sup>50</sup>

- **Public protest across Japan against Abe Administration**

On April 14, 2018, protesters turned out in full force across Japan to make their voices heard over a "crisis in democracy," condemn two scandals plaguing the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Protest were organized in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka to condemn Abe administration on charges including falsification of documents by Finance Ministry officials in connection to the dubious sale of state-owned land to school operator Moritomo Gakuen as well as the process behind the approval given to Kake Educational Institution to open a veterinary medicine faculty. In Tokyo, tens of thousands of people joined a demonstration outside the Diet, making it the biggest in nearly three years. Protesters, many young, held up signs calling Abe a "liar" and seeking his resignation.<sup>51</sup>

- **Foreign Minister Kono visits Seoul**

On April 10-11, 2018, Foreign Minister Taro Kono was on a two-day visit to Seoul during. During the his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Minister Kono asked to raise the issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s to be put on the agenda at an upcoming inter-Korea summit. He said after the meeting that "We agreed that Japan and South Korea will continue to cooperate on the abduction issue." According to Moon's office, the president suggested to Kono that Japan and South Korea "continue to cooperate for a resolution to the outstanding issues between Japan and North Korea, including the abduction issue, and for the improvement of Japan-North Korea relations." During the visit Minister Kono also also repeated Japan's call for South

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<sup>50</sup> "Kono says Tokyo, Beijing should cooperate more to denuclearize N. Korea", Asahi Shimbun, April 15, 2018, [www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201804150030.html](http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201804150030.html)

<sup>51</sup> "Thousands rally across Japan to protest Abe administration", Asahi Shimbun, April 15, 2018, [www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201804150022.html](http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201804150022.html)

Korea to stick to a December 2015 bilateral agreement on the issue of “comfort women,” who were forced into Japanese wartime military brothels.<sup>52</sup>

- **Six-party talks are dead: Says North Korea**

In a recent semi-official meeting with South Korea and the United States in Helsinki, Finland, North Korea said the six-party talks are “dead,” the head of a South Korean state-run think tank said Friday, referring to the long-suspended multilateral forum on denuclearizing the North. The two-day meeting brought together 18 former government officials and experts from Seoul, Washington and Pyongyang in the Finnish capital late last month for a rare chance to sound out North Korea's policy stances.<sup>53</sup>

- **Kim Jong-un meets senior Chinese official**

North Korean state media KCNA reported that Kim Jong-un met Song Tao, head of the International Department in the Communist Party's Central Committee on April 13, 2018. Song Song arrived in Pyongyang to lead a Chinese art troupe performing in the North's April Spring Friendship Art Festival. During the meeting, Kim said he hoped the occasion would herald a “new era” of cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. KCNA also reported that Kim was “pleased” with the recent improvement of Pyongyang-Beijing relations and expressed hope that ties would improve further.<sup>54</sup>

- **South Korea confirms Moon-Abe-Xi summit**

On April 11, 2018, office of the President confirmed a summit among the leaders of South Korea, Japan and China will take place, in a meeting of President Moon Jae in and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono. The Presidential spokesperson said after the meeting that, “the summit of South Korea, Japan and China set to be hosted in Japan next month, President Moon Jae-in highly evaluated the efforts the Japanese government has taken to host the meeting, and pledged the government will cooperate for its success”.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Tokyo gets no clear answer after asking Seoul to raise abduction issue at North-South summit", The Japan Times, April 11, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/04/11/national/tokyo-asks-seoul-raise-abduction-issue-north-south-summit/#.WtRDhYhuaM8>

<sup>53</sup> "N. Korea told Helsinki meeting that 6-party talks are dead: think tank", The Yonhap News, April 13, 2018, [english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2018/04/13/0401000000AEN20180413008900315.html](http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2018/04/13/0401000000AEN20180413008900315.html)

<sup>54</sup> "In sign of thaw, Kim meets senior Chinese diplomat", The Korea JoongAng Daily, April 16, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3046980&cloc=joongangdaily|home|top](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3046980&cloc=joongangdaily|home|top)

<sup>55</sup> "Cheong Wa Dae confirms Moon-Abe-Xi summit", Korea Times, April 12, 2018, [www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/04/356\\_247124.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/04/356_247124.html)

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

- **President Duterte emphasises on cooperation with China at the Boao Forum**

President Rodrigo Duterte in his speech at the Boao Forum in Hainan, China on April 10, 2018, admitted that bilateral relations with China are “complex” but said that these are not barriers to a positive and mutually-beneficial engagement. President Duterte stated that the Philippines and China are united in fighting what he called the “pernicious and rotten social diseases” that devour the country, and stand together in the war on criminality and illegal drug trade. While stressing on the fact that, without the stability of Asia in its land and marine space no real progress is possible. President Duterte emphasised on the need for both nations to cooperate with each other in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>56</sup>

- **Malaysia to hold General Elections on May 9**

Malaysia’s Election Commission chairman Mohd Hashim Abdullah on April 10 announced that the country will hold its 14th general election on May 9. Nomination day for candidates will be on April 28, after which parties can begin campaigning. The upcoming polls, expected to be a closely fought one, will see ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) pitted against Pakatan Harapan (PH) and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) in multiple three-cornered fights nationwide. The upcoming polls will also see former premier turned opposition leader Mahathir Mohamad, aged 92, coming out of retirement to challenge the incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak of the ruling party, Umno.<sup>57</sup>

- **Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF), April 10-11, 2018**

Indonesia for the first time organised a two day Indonesia-Africa Forum in Bali on the theme "Developing Sustainable Economic and Investment Cooperation". In the forum a series of concrete agreements to further strengthen Indonesia's partnership with African countries were signed. The forum saw the signing of a series of business deals worth USD 586.56 million in the presence of the Vice President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Trade and other Ministers of Kabinet Kerja, with additional business deals worth USD 499.2 million. The Forum also recorded 11 business announcements with a total potential value of USD 1.3 billion. On the sidelines of the IAF meeting, a Task Force on

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<sup>56</sup> Gaea Katreena Cabico, “Duterte: Philippines, China partnering in combating drug trade, criminality”, Phil Star Global, April 10, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/04/10/1804601/duterte-philippines-china-partnering-combating-drug-trade-criminality>, accessed on April 10, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> “Malaysia goes to the polls on May 9, nomination day is April 28: Election Commission”, The Straits Times, April 10, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-goes-to-the-polls-may-9-election-commission>, accessed on April 10, 2018.

Indonesian Infrastructure to Africa has also been established. The Task Force consists of the Government and the private sectors that will map out and implement infrastructure-related policies. A meeting was also held to begin the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) discussion with Mozambique, Tunisia, Angola, Kenya and South Africa. According to the Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi in a joint press conference with Trade Minister Enggartiasto Lukita, "Indonesia and the African countries agreed to further intensify economic and trade diplomacy and to strengthen Indonesia's presence in Africa".<sup>58</sup>

- **Malaysia raises Concern on the US led Air Strikes in Syria**

According to a statement released by the Malaysian Foreign Ministry on April 15, 2018, the ministry raised concerns over the April 14, joint air strike by the United States, France and Britain, saying that it believes all parties must act in a manner consistent with the United Nations Charter and international law. While condemning in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, under any circumstances, Malaysia is deeply concerned that the use of chemical weapons and the air strikes represent an escalation of the conflict in Syria, with dire consequences for the civilian population there, as well as region-wide ramifications. The statement also stated that no military solution can bring an end to the conflict in Syria; it urged all parties involved to find a political solution through dialogue and negotiations.<sup>59</sup>

## Myanmar

- **Soldiers get 10 years for Inn Din killings**

Seven Tatmadaw (military) soldiers have been sentenced to 10 years in civilian prison for their involvement in the summary execution of 10 people suspected of being members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Northern Rakhine State last year. The government classifies ARSA as a terrorist organisation. All the convicted soldiers have also been dismissed from service, according to a statement issued by the military's True News Information Team<sup>60</sup>.

- **State Counsellor holds peace talk in Ayeyawady**

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<sup>58</sup> "The Concrete Result of IAF 2018: Strengthening Indonesia-Africa Partnership", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, April 12, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/The-Concrete-Result-of-IAF-2018,-Strengthening-Indonesia-Africa.aspx>, accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> "Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia on the situation in Syria", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, April 15, 2018, [http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/press-release/-/asset\\_publisher/FCko/content/press-release-:-statement-by-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-malaysia-on-the-situation-in-syria?redirect=%2Fweb%2Fguest%2Fpress-release](http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/press-release/-/asset_publisher/FCko/content/press-release-:-statement-by-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-malaysia-on-the-situation-in-syria?redirect=%2Fweb%2Fguest%2Fpress-release), accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Soldiers get 10 years for Inn Din killings, 12 April 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/soldiers-get-10-years-inn-din-killings.html>

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held a Peace Talk on 9<sup>th</sup> April with the local people in Ayeyawady Region, Myaungmya Township, at Basic Education High School No. 1. The talk, held by the State Counsellor in different locations across the country, was an effort to explain about the ongoing peace process in Myanmar, why peace is critical to the country's future and why peace and development are inseparable. The event was also a chance for the public to ask questions and make comments.<sup>61</sup>

- **Myanmar to sign cross-border transport deal with Thailand**

Thailand and Myanmar would soon sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that would facilitate cross-border transportation of goods and people, U Aung Ye Tun, assistant secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, told The Myanmar Times. The memorandum would lead to the implementation of the 2015 agreement that was signed for cross-border transportation among Mekong region countries. "We're negotiating with related ministries concerning the points in the MoU. It will be signed in August," said U Aung Ye Tun<sup>62</sup>.

- **UN appeals to fighters to spare civilians**

The United Nations appealed to government troops and the armed ethnic group Kachin Independence Army (KIA) who have been engaged in fierce fighting during the past several days to spare the lives of civilians. At least 21 fatalities have been reported in the clashes in Hpakant and Tanai townships of Kachin State, according to local residents<sup>63</sup>.

- **Scepticism as Myanmar announces return of first refugee family**

Myanmar's government said it has repatriated the first family of Rohingya refugees, among the 700,000 who fled a brutal crackdown, but the move was slammed by rights groups as a publicity stunt which ignored warnings over the security of returnees. "The five members of a family... came back to Taungpyoletwei town repatriation camp in Rakhine state this morning," said a statement posted on the Information Committee's Facebook page. Bangladesh's refugee commissioner, Mohammad Abul Kalam, told AFP the Rohingya family had been living in a camp erected on a patch of "no man's land" between the two countries, meaning Dhaka had no formal role in their return<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> STATE COUNSELLOR HOLDS PEACE TALK IN AYEYAWADY, 10 April 2018, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1882>

<sup>62</sup> Myanmar to sign cross-border transport deal with Thailand, 11 April 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-sign-cross-border-transport-deal-thailand.html>

<sup>63</sup> UN appeals to fighters to spare civilians, 10th April 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/un-appeals-fighters-spare-civilians.html>

<sup>64</sup> Scepticism as Myanmar announces return of first refugee family, 16 April 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/scepticism-myanmar-announces-return-first-refugee-family>

- UN Security Council to visit Myanmar and Bangladesh**

The United Nations Security Council will travel to Myanmar and Bangladesh this month to see first-hand the impact of the Rohingya refugee crisis. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said all 15 council ambassadors will make the April 26 to May 2 trip. Nearly 700,000 Rohingya have been driven out of Rakhine state and are living in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh since a Myanmar army operation in August<sup>65</sup>.
- Decision in Reuters journalist case ‘Miscarriage of Justice’: PEN America**

The decision of a Myanmar judge today to allow the prosecution of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo to move forward is a miscarriage of justice, said PEN America in a statement. “Myanmar’s prosecutors are engaged in a politically motivated effort to punish the crime of journalism,” said PEN America Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Nossel<sup>66</sup>.

## North America

### Canada

- Trudeau supports U.S.-led military action after Syrian chemical attack**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed his support for the joint military action by the U.S., U.K. and France against Syria. “Canada supports the decision by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to take action to degrade the Assad regime’s ability to launch chemical weapons attacks against its own people. “We will continue to work with our international partners to further investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Those responsible must be brought to justice.”. Foreign Minister Freeland, who spoke before the strikes were announced, said Canada is working with non-governmental organizations and others to collect evidence of war crimes and other atrocities in Syria.<sup>67</sup>
- Canada’s Trudeau pledges money, new law pipeline happen**

Prime Minister Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he has instructed his finance minister to begin talks with Kinder Morgan to “remove the uncertainty” hanging over the controversial Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project that would nearly triple the flow of oil from Canada’s oil sands to the Pacific Coast. Trudeau

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<sup>65</sup> UN Security Council to visit Myanmar and Bangladesh, 13th April 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/un-security-council-visit-myanmar-and-bangladesh>

<sup>66</sup> Decision in Reuters journalist case ‘Miscarriage of Justice’: PEN America, 12th April 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/decision-reuters-journalist-case-%E2%80%99miscarriage-justice%E2%80%99-pen-america>

<sup>67</sup> Global News and the Canadian Press, “Trudeau supports U.S.-led military action after Syrian chemical attack,” <https://globalnews.ca/news/4144673/trudeau-supports-military-action-syria/>, Accessed on 16 April 2018



also said legislation is coming that will “reassert and reinforce” the fact that the federal government is well within its power to approve the project and ensure it goes ahead. Trudeau met with British Columbia’s premier, who is blocking the project, and the premier of oil-rich Alberta, who desperately wants to see it go ahead. The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion by the Canadian division of Texas-based Kinder Morgan would dramatically increase the number of oil tankers traveling the shared waters between Canada and Washington state. Trudeau approved the project in late 2016, saying it was in Canada’s best interest. The project has drawn legal challenges and opposition from environmental groups and Native American tribes as well as from municipalities such as Vancouver and Burnaby. It’s also sparked a dispute between the provinces of Alberta, which has the world’s third largest oil reserves, and British Columbia.<sup>68</sup>

## The United States

- **India must look towards US, not Russia & China:US Under Secretary Mark Menezes**

As the US steps up the heat on Russia through sanctions and now missile strikes into Syria, the message from Washington to New Delhi is equally clear that countries like India should start looking at the US differently. Ahead of the key strategic energy partnership dialogue, US Under Secretary of Energy Mark Menezes told The Economic Times that it’s important for countries like India to not let Russia and China gain over the US in these areas. The US, Menezes emphasized, offers a more reliable option now that it’s a net exporter of oil and natural gas. He went on to add that US attached significant importance to India’s membership quest at the Nuclear Suppliers Group.<sup>69</sup>

- **President Trump declares victory as Pentagon details U.S.-led strikes in Syria**

President Trump declared victory in the largest application of military force he has ordered, as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations vowed that the United States is ready to launch another strike if the Syrian government uses chemical weapons in the future. “Mission Accomplished!” Trump tweeted a day after the allied assault on Syrian facilities that the United States, Britain and France say are part of a large chemical weapons program. The phrase was the same one the last Republican president, George W. Bush, employed to his regret in 2003, when the Iraq War was far from over. At the Pentagon, Lt. Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., the

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<sup>68</sup> Associate Press, “Canada’s Trudeau pledges money, new law pipeline happen,” Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>69</sup>ET Bureau, “India must look towards US, not Russia & China:US Under Secretary Mark Menezes,” <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-must-look-towards-us-not-russia-chinaus-under-secretary-mark-menezes/articleshow/63777508.cms>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

director of the Joint Staff, said the United States, France and Britain fired more than 100 missiles, delivering a blow to the “heart” of Syria’s chemical weapons network. He acknowledged, however, that Syria retains “residual” capacity, but he gave no details about what could be left. Although the attack may send a message to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad about future chemical use, it is unlikely to bring the wider Syrian conflict, which has killed upward of half a million people since 2011 and destabilized the region, closer to an end.<sup>70</sup>

- **Trump to Impose New Sanctions on Russia Over Support for Syria**

The Trump administration plans to impose new sanctions against Russia on Monday to punish it for enabling the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons in its civil war, the latest in a series of actions by both sides underscoring the deterioration in relations between Moscow and the West. The sanctions, coming shortly after American-led airstrikes against facilities linked to Syria’s chemical weapons, are meant to signal that the United States holds responsible not just the government of President Bashar al-Assad but also his patrons in Russia and Iran. President Trump has vowed that Syria’s allies will pay a “big price” for facilitating the suspected use of poison gas. But it remained unclear how far Mr. Trump would go in trying to shape events in Syria, which has been racked by civil war for seven years. New sanctions would be the third round enacted by the Trump administration against Russia in the past four weeks. Last month, the administration targeted Russian companies and individuals for intervening in the 2016 election and mounting cyberattacks against Western facilities. It followed that this month with penalties against Mr. Putin’s inner circle, singling out some of Russia’s richest men and top government officials. The administration also expelled 60 Russian diplomats and intelligence officers and closed the Russian Consulate in Seattle in response to the poisoning of a former Russian spy living in Britain. Russia responded by expelling 60 American diplomats and closing the American Consulate in St. Petersburg.<sup>71</sup>

- **Donald Trump orders aides to examine rejoining Trans Pacific Partnership**

Donald Trump appears to have tempered his initial enthusiasm to examine the possibility of the US re-entering the Trans Pacific Partnership, tweeting that he’d only want a “substantially better deal” than was offered to Barack Obama. The President had earlier today ordered his senior economic and trade advisers to examine the possibility of the United States rejoining the 11-nation TPP, reportedly

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<sup>70</sup>Carol Morello, Anne Gearan and Missy Ryan, “President Trump declares victory as Pentagon details U.S.-led strikes in Syria,” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/after-syria-attack-us-and-russia-tensions-rise-but-military-confrontation-fears-ease/2018/04/14/d7a48d32-3fdb-11e8-a7d1-e4efec6389f0\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.2c20ee464a1b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/after-syria-attack-us-and-russia-tensions-rise-but-military-confrontation-fears-ease/2018/04/14/d7a48d32-3fdb-11e8-a7d1-e4efec6389f0_story.html?utm_term=.2c20ee464a1b), Accessed on 19 April 2018.

<sup>71</sup>Peter Baker, “Trump to Impose New Sanctions on Russia Over Support for Syria,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/us/politics/trump-russia-sanctions-syria.html>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

saying: “Go get it done.” The surprise move, which comes just over a year after he withdrew from the TPP, would if enacted dramatically recast trade across the Asia-Pacific and act as a powerful symbolic boost for global free trade. Mr Trump had directed his economic adviser Larry Kudlow and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to immediately examine the feasibility of the US re-entering the agreement. But later on Friday, however, Mr Trump tempered the move by saying he would only be prepared to rejoin the pact if there was a “substantially better” deal than the one the Obama administration negotiated.<sup>72</sup>

## Mexico

- **U.S., Mexico and Canada hasten NAFTA talks as elections loom: Pena Nieto**  
The United States, Mexico and Canada will expedite NAFTA talks in a push to reach a deal in coming weeks, Mexico's president said after a meeting with the U.S. vice president and Canadian prime minister. On the sidelines of the Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru, Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said they thought an agreement could be reached before Mexican elections on July 1, although they also said no deadlines had been set. There are concerns U.S.-Mexico relations could get rockier with Pena Nieto, a centrist, unable to seek a second six-year term due to Mexico's term limits. After meeting Pena Nieto and Trudeau separately, Pence said he was leaving the summit "very hopeful that we are very close to a renegotiated NAFTA."<sup>73</sup>
- **Mexico president says door open to U.S. rejoining TPP**  
Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto said that the door was open to the United States rejoining the Trans Pacific Partnership, after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered his economic advisors to look at rejoining the sweeping trade deal. Speaking on a business panel at the Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru, Pena Nieto said Mexico was opposed to protectionism and urged the United States to take advantage of a “window of opportunity” for rejoining the TPP. Trump withdrew the United States from the TPP in one of his first acts as president but said Thursday that he would consider rejoining it if it were a “substantially better” deal than the one negotiated under former U.S. President Barack Obama.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Primrose Riordan And Cameron Stewart, “Donald Trump orders aides to examine rejoining Trans Pacific Partnership,” <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/donald-trump-orders-aides-to-examine-rejoining-trans-pacific-partnership/news-story/1f7a0f245ab361814dccd211f623f257>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>73</sup> Reuters, “U.S., Mexico and Canada hasten NAFTA talks as elections loom: Pena Nieto,” <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/u-mexico-canada-hasten-nafta-045245016.html>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Reuters, “Mexico president says door open to U.S. rejoining TPP,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amers-summit-business-mexico/mexico-president-says-door-open-to-u-s-rejoining-tpp-idUSKBN1HK2ME>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

### Argentina

- **Argentina will not recognize Venezuela vote: Macri**

Argentina will not recognize the result of next months' Venezuelan presidential election, which is being boycotted by the main opposition parties, President Mauricio Macri said. Despite presiding over an economic collapse, Socialist President Nicolas Maduro is seeking a second six-year term in elections which the opposition coalition claims are effectively rigged in advance. Speaking at a joint press conference, Macri said the crisis would be "top of the agenda" at the Summit of the Americas. The center-right Argentine president said countries agreeing that the elections have no validity will discuss at the summit what measures could be taken against Maduro's government.<sup>75</sup>

### Brazil

- **Brazil's Army Awakes From Decades-Old Slumber as Elections Near**

Brazilian President Michel Temer last week mulled replacing the interim defense minister, a four-star Army general, with a professor of philosophy. The military was quick to give a thumbs down. The episode illustrates how the armed forces in Latin America's largest nation are becoming increasingly vocal and assertive, some 33 years after the end of military rule. In February, they took over public security in Rio de Janeiro state; last week General Eduardo Villas Boas, commander of the Army, shocked the nation with a message essentially warning the Supreme Court not to grant former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's appeal to stay out of jail. The military's elevated profile on the national scene coincides with a discernible shift among Brazilians to the political right and growing disillusionment with democracy. The most popular presidential hopeful after Lula is former Army Captain Jair Bolsonaro, who advocates getting tough on crime by handing out guns and denies the 1964-85 military regime was a dictatorship. In the past three years, Brazil's political and business establishment was rattled by the arrest of leading executives and politicians. Lula's predecessor, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached in 2016, a politically seismic event that helped plunge the economy into its deepest recession on record.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> AFP News, "Argentina will not recognize Venezuela vote: Macri," <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/argentina-not-recognize-venezuela-vote-macri-183328186.html>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Bloomberg, "Brazil's Army Awakes From Decades-Old Slumber as Elections Near," <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-13/crisis-weary-military-becomes-more-vocal-as-brazil-voting-nears>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

## Chile

- **Piñera to visit Peru, Argentina and Brazil in first international tour**

Chilean President Sebastián Piñera will visit Argentina and Brazil at the end of this month, on the first international tour of his second term, Foreign Minister Roberto Ampuero has confirmed. In conversation with a radio station in Santiago, Ampuero explained that President Piñera's visit abroad will begin at the Summit of the Americas, in Peru. In Lima, Piñera will meet with the new Peruvian president Martín Vizcarra, who assumed the presidency after the resignation of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. Piñera will travel to Argentina, to meet with his partner Mauricio Macri between April 25 and 26. Finally, the President will move to Brazil, where he will meet Michel Temer. Mr. Piñera, who had already ruled Chile between 2010 and 2014, assumed his second term on March 11.<sup>77</sup>

## Cuba

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

President Raul Castro, 86, will step down after a decade in power, in a decision he announced in 2013. In a significant generational shift he is expected to hand over to Miguel Diaz-Canel - who was not even born when the Revolution begun. He will not, strictly speaking, be the first non-Castro to rule Cuba since the Revolution - Manuel Urrutia was president for the first six months of the Revolution, and Osvaldo Dorticos then ruled for 17 years, until 1976. Mr Castro hands over a country significantly more open than it was when he took over. Mr Diaz-Canel also inherits some significant challenges - not least a deeply hostile government 90 miles away, in the United States. Direct democracy is as distant a dream as ever; the pace of economic reform has been slower than promised; and Venezuela's struggles have hit Cuba hard.<sup>78</sup>

## Peru

- **Americas leaders vow to stem corruption, confront Venezuela**

Leaders from throughout the Americas vowed to confront systemic corruption with an accord aimed at improving transparency and boosting civil society at a time when graft scandals plague many of their own governments. Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra kicked off the Summit of the Americas' first full session asking the Western Hemisphere leaders to approve 57 action points he said would constitute a base for preventing corruption. The "Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance Against Corruption" was approved with a round of applause, though analysts are skeptical that it will lead to any tangible change. Many heads of state

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<sup>77</sup> ----, "Piñera to visit Peru, Argentina and Brazil in first international tour," <http://santiagotimes.cl/2018/04/05/chiles-president-pinera-to-visit-peru-argentina-and-brazil-in-first-international-tour/>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Harriet Alexander, "Cuba prepares for life after the Castros," <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/04/15/cuba-prepares-life-castros/>, Accessed on 16 April 2018.

in attendance lead administrations that face allegations of misusing public funds, obstructing justice and accepting bribes. Numerous leaders expressed concerns about an apparent chemical weapons attack in Syria and voiced support for military airstrikes there by the U.S., France and United Kingdom. They also called on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to accept humanitarian aid as his nation confronts a crippling economic crisis and urged those gathered not to accept the results of an upcoming presidential election in the embattled South American nation.<sup>79</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia and Pakistan**

On 8 April, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan confirmed in an interview that Islamabad was interested in buying weapons from Moscow such as the air defence system, T-90 tanks and Su-35 fighter jets.<sup>80</sup> People aware of the matter dismissed the statement on the proposed purchase as "wishful thinking". They said the statement made by the Pakistan minister in a recent interview was mere posturing, on the lines of Pakistan foreign minister's claim in February of Russian support at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary, which turned out to be false. On the contrary, Russia had supported India in the November plenary that put Pakistan in the 'Grey List'.<sup>81</sup>

- **Russia and Sanctions**

On 9 April, Russia stocks crashed while aluminium prices spiked, after the US levied its harshest sanctions to date against Russia. The Russian [RTS](#) index plunged 11.4 percent, its biggest one-day decline since Dec. 16, 2014 when it fell 12.4 percent. Meanwhile, the VanEck Vectors Russia exchange-traded fund ([RSX](#)) dropped 10.7 percent. America has sanctioned several Russian oligarchs, officials, businesses and agencies on 13 April. The US also froze assets from these entities that were under US jurisdiction. The sanctions prohibit US citizens or entities from doing business with the sanctioned Russian entities. "Additionally, non-US persons could face sanctions for knowingly facilitating significant transactions for or on behalf of the individuals or entities blocked today," the Treasury Department said on 13 April.

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<sup>79</sup> Christine Armario, "Americas leaders vow to stem corruption, confront Venezuela," [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/peru-opens-americas-summit-decrying-scourge-of-corruption/2018/04/14/08b50f8e-3f99-11e8-955b-7d2e19b79966\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1b81c0429c36](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/peru-opens-americas-summit-decrying-scourge-of-corruption/2018/04/14/08b50f8e-3f99-11e8-955b-7d2e19b79966_story.html?utm_term=.1b81c0429c36), Accessed on 16 April 2018.

<sup>80</sup>"Pakistan in talks with Russia for procurement of sophisticated arms: Report", *Economic Times*, April 8, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-in-talks-with-russia-for-procurement-of-sophisticated-arms-report/articleshow/63666363.cms> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>81</sup>Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, "Pakistan talk on buying arms from Russia 'Wishful Thinking'", *Economic Times*, April 10, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistan-talk-on-buying-arms-from-russia-wishful-thinking/articleshow/63690833.cms> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

"The new US sanctions against Russia are a negative game-changer for three reasons: they directly affect portfolio investments; they are de-linked from clear conditionality; and they will be applied 'extra-territorially,'" said Christopher Granville, a managing director at TS Lombard, in a note to clients. The sanctions "justify a higher risk premium in Russian asset valuations."<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Russia on 13 April prepared a list that has suggested a possible ban on titanium sales to Boeing. The list also slaps limits on cooperation in nuclear and space technology. Further restrictions on the imports of American farm products and curbs on food and drink imports were also suggested.<sup>83</sup>

The Russian [ruble](#) hit its lowest level against the dollar since November 2016, as tensions surrounding Syria intensify. The currency briefly hit 65 versus one dollar after a tweet by President Donald Trump on 11 April suggested that the U.S. was ready to launch missiles into Syria. The ruble has shed more than 11 percent in value against the dollar this week.<sup>84</sup>

- **Russia and Syria**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on 15 April warned that further Western attacks on Syria would bring chaos to world affairs. In a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani, Putin and Rouhani agreed that the Western strikes had damaged the chances of achieving a political resolution in the seven-year Syria conflict. "Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions committed in violation of the U.N. Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations," the Kremlin statement said. On 14 April, the United States, France and Britain [launched 105 missiles targeting](#) what the Pentagon said were three chemical weapons facilities in Syria in retaliation for a suspected poison gas attack in Douma on April 7. French President Emmanuel Macron said on 15 April that he had convinced Trump, who has previously said he wanted to take U.S. forces out of Syria, to stay for "the long term." Meanwhile, US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, told CBS' "Face the Nation"

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<sup>82</sup>Fred Imbert, "Russian stocks crash on new sanctions; aluminum prices soar on penalties to global producer Rusal", *CNBC*, April 9, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/09/russian-stocks-crash-on-new-sanctions-aluminum-prices-soar-on-penalties-to-global-producer-rusal.html> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>83</sup>David Reid, "Russia could stop exporting titanium to Boeing in retaliation to Trump sanctions", *CNBC*, April 13, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/13/russia-could-stop-exporting-titanium-to-boeing-in-retaliation-to-trump-sanctions.html?recirc=taboolainternal> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>84</sup>"Ruble falls to a 2016 low after Trump raises stakes with Russia over Syria", *CNBC*, April 11, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/11/ruble-falls-after-trump-tweet-raises-stakes-with-russia-over-syria.html> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

program that the United States would announce new economic sanctions on 9 April that aimed at companies "that were dealing with equipment" related to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's alleged chemical weapons use. Responding to Haley's remarks about the plans for new sanctions, Evgeny Serebrennikov, deputy head of the defense committee of Russia's upper house of parliament, said Moscow was ready for the penalties. He said that "They are hard for us, but will do more damage to the USA and Europe." The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah said on 15 April that Western strikes on Syria had failed to achieve anything, including terrorizing the army, helping insurgents or serving the interests of Israel.<sup>85</sup>

Defying Russian warnings against U.S. military strikes in Syria, President Donald Trump said on 11 April that missiles "will be coming" in response to Syria's suspected chemical attack that killed at least 40 people. "Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria," Trump tweeted. "Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and 'smart!' You shouldn't be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!" On the same day, Syria's Foreign Ministry said that Trump's threats are "reckless" and endanger international peace and security. Russian lawmakers have warned the United States that Moscow would view an airstrike on Syria as a war crime and that it could trigger a direct military clash between the two former Cold War adversaries. Russia's ambassador to Lebanon said any missiles fired at Syria would be shot down and the launching sites targeted — a stark warning of a potential major confrontation.<sup>86</sup>

- **Russia and India**

Speaking at the inauguration of a photo exhibition organised here to celebrate the Centenary Anniversary of India's first woman prime minister Indira Gandhi, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi on 10 April hailed the "special partnership" between India and Russia, saying it has resulted in laying the foundations of India's industrialisation.<sup>87</sup>

Ahead of the key strategic energy partnership dialogue, US Under Secretary of Energy Mark Menezes told *The Economic Times* on 16 April that it's important for

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<sup>85</sup>"Putin warns of 'chaos' in international order if Syria gets attacked again", *CNBC*, April 16, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/15/putin-warns-of-chaos-in-international-order-if-syria-gets-attacked-again.html> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>86</sup>"Trump Warns Russia Missiles 'Will be Coming' in Syria", *Times*, April 11, 2018. <http://time.com/5235997/trump-russia-missile-strike-tweet/> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>87</sup>"India and Russia share special partnership: Sonia Gandhi", *Economic Times*, April 10, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-and-russia-share-special-partnership-sonia-gandhi/articleshow/63702449.cms> Accessed on April 16, 2018.



countries like India to not let Russia and China gain over the US in these areas. As the US steps up the heat on Russia through sanctions and now missile strikes into Syria, the message from Washington to New Delhi is equally clear that countries like India should start looking at the US differently. The US is keen that India signals its strategic inclination towards the US in the energy sector, adding that the Trump Administration will ensure Westinghouse builds new nuclear reactors in India. He went on to add that US attached significant importance to India's membership quest at the Nuclear Suppliers Group. "We are pledged that we will look critically at any effort to impose unreasonable restrictions to their (India's) membership."<sup>88</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **President Ghani Inaugurates Several Projects in Khost<sup>89</sup>**

On 9 April 2018, President Ashraf Ghani inaugurated a newly-built runway and laid the foundation stone of buildings for fire tender and radar in Ismailkhel and Mandozai districts in southeastern Khost province. On the same day, President Ghani launched a power substation in the same district which would provide power facility to 13,000 families in the same district. All these projects accounted for one billion and seven million afghanis. During this trip, President Ghani met tribal elders, provincial council members, civil society activists and youth of Khost city.

- **Jihadi Leaders, Politicians Back Dialogue with Pakistan<sup>90</sup>**

At a meeting in the Presidential Palace, President Ashraf Ghani on 9 April 2018 stressed that state to state relation with Pakistan is the key for the success of peace process. The recent visit of Pakistani Prime Minister was a part of larger strategy of Afghanistan to overcome mistrust and involve Pakistan in direct talks. In the same line, the President Ghani welcomed some jihadi and political leaders to the meeting who supported the launch of negotiations with Pakistan. Calling direct engagement with Pakistan beneficial for the people, Ghani added that the government would provide full support for peace talks. There should be continuous engagement in the form of consultative meetings, as well as

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<sup>88</sup>“India must look towards US, not Russia & China: US Under Secretary Mark Menezes”, *Economic Times*, April 16, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-must-look-towards-us-not-russia-china-under-secretary-mark-menezes/articleshow/63777508.cms> Accessed on April 16, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 10 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20649](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20649)

<sup>90</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 10 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20648](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20648)

development of national consensus on national and international issues and should involve people from different walks of life such as political parties, parliamentarians, civil society, media professionals and women.

- **Italy Donates \$8.5m to Pediatric Clinic in Kabul<sup>91</sup>**

Calling Afghan women as part for Afghan peace and reconciliation process, the foreign ministry of Italy donated an amount of \$8.5 million to a new pediatrics and obstetrics clinic in Kabul. On 9 April 2018, the ministry stated that the clinic would be set up at the National Military Hospital in the capital as part of Italy's efforts to support Afghan women. The ministry also added that new clinic would offer women in the Afghan army healthcare facilities in their professional careers and family lives, offering quality services to Afghan army women and their children, safeguarding their environment.

- **Aid to Afghans: Japan Gives UN Agencies \$5.3m<sup>92</sup>**

Afghanistan received \$5.3 million from Japan which would be utilised by six UN organizations in humanitarian and emergency assistance to Afghanistan. The embassy of Japan stated that UNHCR, UNICEF, UNMAS, WFP, WHO and IOM would share the funds to address humanitarian challenges such as plea of Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran, people suffering from food insecurity, malnutrition, natural disaster and displacement. The UNHCR would spend \$1,000,000 to returning refugees under the Voluntary Repatriation Operation along with reintegration through community-based programs, contributing to addressing urgent humanitarian needs of the displaced populations which is around 10,750 individuals. Similarly an amount of \$ 800,000 would be used by UNICEF for education to strengthen coordination and information management of the Education in Emergency Working Group (EiEWG), with linkages to the Development Partners Group (DPG). On the other hand, UNMAS would spend \$1,000,000 supporting civilians affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyán, Logar, Paktia and Takhar provinces. Since 2001, Japan has constantly provided financial assistance to Afghanistan, contributing its socio-economic development as well as a reduction in civilian casualties.

- **China Ready to Expand Cooperation with Afghanistan<sup>93</sup>**

China wants to expand cooperative ties with Afghanistan. On 9 April 2018, Geng Shuang, spokesman of the Chinese foreign ministry appreciated efforts of Pakistani

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<sup>91</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 11 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20658](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20658)

<sup>92</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 11 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20657](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20657)

<sup>93</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 11 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20656](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20656)

Prime Minister and his recent visit to Afghanistan to resolve the Afghan conflict and create enabling environment for regional peace. The Chinese spokesman maintained, “Prime Minister Abbasi’s visit to Afghanistan constitutes an important step forward towards improvement of relations. We noted the two countries reached many agreements, including on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), advancing the Afghan reconciliation process.” China focused on open and innovative Asia for development and called for a peaceful environment in Afghanistan by re-engaging neighbours.

- **Afghan President Asks Taliban to Take Part in Elections<sup>94</sup>**

Launching the voters’ registration process for the long-due polls, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on 14 April 2018 invited the Taliban to take part in the forthcoming district and parliamentary elections in the war-torn country. According to him, “If they [Taliban] believe they have roots among the people in Afghanistan then elections is a chance”. In addition, Mohammad Akram Khpalwak, leading political adviser of President Ghani said, “Based on our information, the Taliban are busy in serious consultations, there might be some troubles but we are optimistic that the growing pressure on them and international, regional and internal efforts for peace would lead to an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process”. Earlier in Kabul Process Conference, President Ghani offered to approve the Taliban as a political group, release their prisoners and lift sanctions in return for acknowledgment of the country’s Constitution and shunning ties with terrorist groups, wanted to renew ties with the Taliban who neither believe in democracy nor election process.

- **Bahrami, Swaraj Discuss Peace, Counterinsurgency Efforts<sup>95</sup>**

On 13 April 2018, the External Affairs Minister of India Sushma Swaraj held talks with Defense Minister Lt General Tariq Shah Bahrami, who is on a in a three-day visit to India to participate in Defense Expo 2018. Discussing Afghanistan's peace process and efforts for fighting against cross border terrorism, both nations highlighted Afghan government's recent initiatives for internal reconciliation and efforts to fight terrorism which received support beyond Afghanistan. Recognising India’s greater role in Afghanistan, the defense minister said, “Afghanistan deeply appreciates the positive and constructive support extended by India for economic development and reconstruction in Afghanistan and to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces”. A statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India said that India continued to be committed to building a peaceful, secure, stable, united, inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan. Under the

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<sup>94</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 15 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20691](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20691)

<sup>95</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 15 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20689](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20689)

“New Development Partnership” launched in 2017, India pronounced that it would implement 116 development projects in Afghanistan.

- **US Strategy Turns Afghan Uncertainty into Certainty<sup>96</sup>**

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on 12 April 2018 before the House Armed Services Committee said that US President Donald Trump’s South Asia policy had replaced ambiguity over US’s policy towards South Asia especially Afghanistan. He mentioned, “In South Asia and Afghanistan, uncertainty in the region has been replaced by the certainty of President Trump’s South Asia Strategy”. Jim Mattis also added that US had been successful in ISIS’s physical presence in West Asia through a coordinated, whole-of-government approach that works “by, with, and through” its allies and partners to crush ISIS’ claim in the region. Mattis requested for budget that would assist U.S. forces in Afghanistan as part of the Administration’s South Asia Strategy, to maintain its operations to prevent the resurgence of ISIS and to form security partnership with Iraqi Security Forces to support Iraq’s long-term stability and independence.

## Bangladesh

- **Put more pressure on Myanmar to take back Rohingyas: PM**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday (April 9) urged India to put more pressure on Myanmar to take back the over one million Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh. “We want India to put more pressure on Myanmar,” she said during a meeting with visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale at her Sangsad Bhaban office.<sup>97</sup>

- **Dhaka-Delhi fraternal ties enriched by shared art, culture: Sushma**

A symbolic Mongol Shubhajatra and a mesmerizing display of dance and music marked the celebration of Pahela Baishakh, Bangla New Year’s Day, by Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on Saturday (April 14). In a message on the occasion, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the fraternal ties between both the countries are enriched by shared art, culture and music of the two countries.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 15 April 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20682](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20682)

<sup>97</sup> “PM Hasina to India: Put more pressure on Myanmar to take back Rohingyas, *Dhaka Tribune*, April 10, 2018, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2018/04/10/pm-hasina-india-put-pressure-myanmar-take-back-rohingyas/>, accessed on April 10, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> “Dhaka-Delhi fraternal ties enriched by shared art, culture: Sushma,” *The Independent*, April 15, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/145848>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

- **Bangladesh in grip of evil force: BNP**

The country's main opposition political party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has hoped that there will be a change of regime through elections in the Bangla new year beginning from today, Saturday (April 14). Addressing a function organised at its Naya Paltan central office to greet Bangla new year, BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas alleged that the country is in the clutch of an evil force. "The country is now in the grip of an evil force. I don't know when good days will arrive. We will have to unitedly forge a war against the evil force to bring good days for all. Otherwise, nothing will happen," he noted.<sup>99</sup>

- **Myanmar repatriates first Rohingya family: Government**

Myanmar's government said it repatriated on Saturday (April 14) the first family of Rohingya out of some 700,000 refugees who fled to Bangladesh to escape a brutal military campaign, despite UN warnings that a safe return is not yet possible. According to a Myanmar government statement posted late Saturday (April 14), one family of Rohingya refugees became the first to return earlier in the day.<sup>100</sup>

- **Dhaka, UNHCR dispute Myanmar's claim of repatriation**

The Bangladeshi government and the United Nations refugee agency on Sunday (April 15) disputed Myanmar's claim it had repatriated five members of a Rohingya family, saying neither the government of Bangladesh nor the aid agency had any involvement in any such repatriation.<sup>101</sup>

## नेपाल

### भारत भ्रमण सफल और एतिहासिक रहा: ओली

नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री के पी शर्मा ओली ने नेपाल जाने के बाद भारत के तीन दिवसीय दौरे को व्यापक रूप से सफल माना. त्रिभुवन हवाईअड्डे पर पत्रकारों को संबोधित करते हुए ओली ने कहा कि इस यात्रा से दोनों देशों के बीच रिश्तों में विश्वास बढ़ा है और सम्बन्ध नई ऊँचाईयों की तरफ

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<sup>99</sup> "Bangladesh in grip of evil force: BNP," *Prothom Alo*, April 15, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/174164/Bangladesh-in-grip-of-evil-force-BNP>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> "Myanmar repatriates first Rohingya family: Government," *The Independent*, April 15, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/145839>, accessed on April 15, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> "Dhaka, UNHCR dispute Myanmar's claim of repatriation," *Prothom Alo*, April 16, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/174211/Dhaka-UNHCR-dispute-Myanmar-s-claim-of-5-member>, accessed on April 16, 2018.

बढ़े हैं. उन्होंने कहा कि इस यात्रा के बाद हमारे रिश्ते सही पटरी और सकारात्मक दिशा की ओर अग्रसर हुए हैं.<sup>102</sup>

विदेश मंत्री ग्यावली चीन जायेंगे:

नेपाल के विदेशमंत्री प्रदीप ग्यावली 16 अप्रैल को चीन की यात्रा पर जाने की तैयारी में हैं. चीन के विदेशमंत्री के निमंत्रण पर ग्यावली चीन जा रहे हैं. प्रधानमन्त्री ओली की भारत यात्रा के बाद अब चीन जाने की बारी है जिसके संदर्भ में विदेशमंत्री की इस यात्रा को जमीनी कार्य माना जा रहा है.<sup>103</sup>

भारत अब नेपाल के आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप नहीं करेगा: ओली

प्रधानमंत्री के पी शर्मा ओली ने देशवासियों को आश्वस्त किया है कि देश आर्थिक संवृद्धि के ऐतिहासिक मुहाने पर खड़ा है. इस आश्वासन के पीछे दरअसल, उनका यह विश्वास है कि अब नेपाल भारत और चीन दोनों से बड़े पैमाने पर आर्थिक मदद हासिल कर सकता है. साथ ही ओली के इस भरोसे के पीछे भारत सरकार की तरफ से उन्हें दिया गया दो बड़ा आश्वासन भी है. पिछले दिनों नई दिल्ली की यात्रा के दौरान भारत ने ओली और उनके कैबिनेट को साफ तौर पर बताया कि भारत अब न तो नेपाल के आंतरिक राजनीति में कोई हस्तक्षेप करने की मंशा रखता है और न ही आने वाले दिनों में नेपाल को आवश्यक सामानों की आपूर्ति में कोई बाधा उत्पन्न की जाएगी। ओली के सत्ता में आने के बाद जब विदेश मंत्री सुषमा स्वराज नेपाल की यात्रा पर आई थी तभी उनकी बातचीत में आपसी विश्वास बहाली पर सबसे ज्यादा बात हुई थी. वामपंथी गठबंधन की सरकार बनाने के बाद ओली को इस बात की आशंका थी कि भारत की तरफ से उनकी सरकार में कुछ अड़ंगा डाला जा सकता है. इस आशंका को न सिर्फ विदेश मंत्री स्वराज ने एक सिरे से खारिज किया बल्कि भारत में भी ओली को उच्चस्तरीय बातचीत में भारत के रुख से अवगत कराया गया.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> "India visit successful, historic: PM", The Kathmandu Post, 9 April 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-04-09/1>

<sup>103</sup> Anil Giri, "Foreign Minister Gaywali set to visit China on April 16", The Kathmandu Post, 12 April 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-04-12/1>

<sup>104</sup> "भारत अब नेपाल के आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप नहीं करेगा: ओली", हिमालिनी, 16 अप्रैल 2018, <http://www.himalini.com/भारत-अब-नेपाल-के-आंतरिक-रा.html>

## Pakistan

- **Pakistan and Afghanistan**

In its weekly press briefing, the Pakistani foreign office spokesperson stated that terrorist groups (based on Afghan soil) regularly undertake cross-border raids on Pakistani posts. The spokesperson recalled that two Pakistani soldiers lost their lives in cross-border attacks on April 7 and 8, besides several others injured.<sup>105</sup> Afghan officials handed over the bodies of five martyred personnel of the Frontier Corps as well as an injured soldier to the elders of Kurram Agency on April 16<sup>th</sup> as talks continued between the two sides to deescalate tension along the border. 10 attackers from the Afghan side were also killed in clashes that erupted in the area after the FC men erecting a fence along the border at Laka Tiga post in Lower Kurram Agency came under fire. Military officials of Pakistan and Afghanistan held a flag meeting at a location near the border to hold ceasefire.<sup>106</sup>

- **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia**

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Minister for Defence Khurram Dastgir Khan and COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa arrived in Riyadh on April 15<sup>th</sup> to join other world leaders to witness the closing ceremony of the 24-country joint military exercise, Gulf Shield-1. Troops of the Pakistan Army, the Pakistan Air Force's C-130 aircraft and JF-17 Thunder fighter jets, Pakistan Navy ships and commandos from the Special Services Group participated in the exercise. The exercise featured two types of military operations: conventional military operations that involved coastal defence attacks against the enemy and irregular war operations carried out by besieging and penetrating villages and industrial installations to cleanse them of hostile elements.<sup>107</sup>

- **Pakistan and Iran**

Two Pakistani nationals were killed and five others were arrested when Iran's border security forces acted against a group of people allegedly trying to enter into Iran illegally. The bodies and arrested men were handed over to Balochistan Levies personnel by Iranian border authorities on border-post 250 located on the Pak-Iran border near Gwadar.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> "Foreign Office deplures attacks from across Afghan border", *Dawn*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401354/foreign-office-deplures-attacks-from-across-afghan-border> as accessed on April 17, 2018

<sup>106</sup> "Afghanistan returns bodies of five Pakistani soldiers", *Dawn*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1402115/afghanistan-returns-bodies-of-five-pakistani-soldiers> as accessed on April 17, 2018

<sup>107</sup> "Abbasi, Bajwa in S. Arabia to witness joint drills closing", *Dawn*, April 16, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401900> as accessed on April 17, 2018

<sup>108</sup> Ismail Sasoli, "Iran's security forces kill 2 Pakistanis trying to sneak across border", *Dawn*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401978/irans-security-forces-kill-2-pakistanis-trying-to-sneak-across-border> as accessed on April 17, 2018

## Sri Lanka

- **Iran approves extradition treaty with Sri Lanka**

Iranian lawmakers in Tehran on 15<sup>th</sup> April had ratified a bill on the extradition treaty between the governments of Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported. It said the Bill secured 153 ‘yes’ votes, 11 ‘no’ votes and seven abstentions. A total of 203 lawmakers had been present at the parliament open session.

Under the terms of the Bill, the extradition treaty between Iran and Sri Lanka was passed and the permit for exchange of documents was issued. It was reported that at least 15 Iranian prisoners are kept in Sri Lankan prisons while three Sri Lankans are imprisoned in Iran<sup>109</sup>.

- **Wigneswaran insists North, East Tamils support unified Sri Lanka**

The Chief Minister of the North East Province, C V Wigneswaran, has alleged that the Sri Lankan Government had not taken steps to retrieve the land, houses and other properties belonging to Tamils that were illegally occupied by Sinhalese during the ethnic crisis when thousands of Tamils fled the island nation, the Times of India reported. Responding to a question on Indo-Lankan relationship, the CM felt that the relationship had not weakened. He opined that Sri Lanka’s closeness to China could have grown stronger. He also said that the president and Prime Minister of his country, Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe, were keen on completing their full term (till 2020), amidst internal disputes that got louder following the recent local body elections.<sup>110</sup>

- **President Maithripala Sirisena to participate in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in the United Kingdom from 16-20 April 2018**

President Maithripala Sirisena will join the Heads of Government of the 53-member Commonwealth at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that is to convene in London from 16-20 April 2018. The President will be joined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tilak Marapana. The Commonwealth is a diverse community of nations that work together to promote prosperity, democracy and peace. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings are occasions where the leaders of the Commonwealth member states come together to reaffirm common values, address the shared global challenges faced and agree

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<sup>109</sup> Iran approves extradition treaty with Sri Lanka, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Iran-approves-extradition-treaty-with-Sri-Lanka-148666.html>

<sup>110</sup> Wigneswaran insists North, East Tamils support unified Sri Lanka, 15 April 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/04/15/wigneswaran-insists-north-east-tamils-support-unified-sri-lanka/>



on how to work to create a better future for all citizens, particularly young people<sup>111</sup>.

- **Government asserts no negative impact from prorogation**

The Government asserts the prorogation of Parliament will not have a negative impact. By Gazette notification (Gazette Extraordinary 2066/43 of April 12, 2018), with effect from Thursday 12th April 2018, Parliament was prorogued by President Maithripala Sirisena. The next Parliament session will commence on 8th May 2018. The prorogation is the period between the end of a Parliament session and the opening of the next Parliament session<sup>112</sup>.

- **Chinese firm to invest \$800mn on Port City underground road**

China Communication Construction Company (CCCC) will invest \$800 million to build an underground road network to the Port City, the \$1.4 billion project built on reclaimed land. The plan, for which an agreement has already been signed, is expected to reduce traffic congestion on the existing route once the Port City - part of Beijing's ambitious plan to create a modern-day "Silk Road" across Asia - starts operating<sup>113</sup>.

## Maldives

- **Will not allow religious freedom in Maldives, says defence minister**

The Maldives defence minister has vowed not to allow religious freedom in the country, days after former president Mohamed Nasheed called for co-existence and tolerance. "We are facing challenges in promoting Islam and because Maldivians follow Islam. However, we can't allow for religious freedom in the Maldives. The Maldives will remain a country with moderate Islamic values prioritizing development and peace," Shareef told the gathering of Islamic scholars<sup>114</sup>.

- **Yameen Rasheed's family appeals to High Court**

Brutally murdered local Yameen Rasheed's family has requested for appeal to the High Court after the Civil court rejected their appeal concerning failed police

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<sup>111</sup> President Maithripala Sirisena to participate in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in the United Kingdom from 16-20 April 2018, 12 April 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/en/media/media-releases/7576-chogm18>

<sup>112</sup> Government asserts no negative impact from prorogation, 13 April 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/04/13/government-asserts-no-negative-impact-from-prorogation/>

<sup>113</sup> Chinese firm to invest \$800mn on Port City underground road, 13 April 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Chinese-firm-to-invest-mn-on-Port-City-underground-road-148646.html>

<sup>114</sup> Will not allow religious freedom in Maldives, says defence minister, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/society/will-not-allow-religious-freedom-in-maldives-says-defence-minister-137455>

action to provide protection to Yameen, despite having asked for it after receiving several threats. Yameen was found murdered in April 2017 near the stairwell of his residence. His father Hussain Rasheed filed a case against the state believing that the police did not investigate or take any steps after the repeated death threats received by Yameen<sup>115</sup>.

- **No way that we can trust the Elections Commission : Opposition**

Opposition parties have stated that they cannot trust the Elections Commission due to the current composition of the commission. An official of the opposition parties say that they cannot trust a commission where the members say that they will elect President Yameen no matter what. In addition the SG of JP Ahmed Sameer also stated that the parliament appointed a PPM activist to the EC after hijacking the parliament committee for independent institutions<sup>116</sup>.

- **We have a candidate for the election – opposition parties**

Opposition parties have stated that they have a candidate for the presidential election and the candidate is very close. Speaking at a press conference held by the opposition, SG of JP Sameer said that the opposition candidate is ready and that the person will be revealed when the time comes<sup>117</sup>.

- **“State institutes do not function properly”: HRCM**

President of the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives Aminath Eenas has said it is unable to improve human rights conditions in Maldives since the state institutions do not function properly. Eenas said this while delivering the keynote address at the at the National Human Rights Institution Conference held at Nepal. According to a statement by HRCM, Eenas addressed the challenges they were facing in identifying and responding to the needs, about the best practices in cooperation across institutions and conducting investigations into human rights violations, and about protections during and after the conflict.<sup>118</sup>

## **Indian Ocean Region**

- **IOC Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean**

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<sup>115</sup> Yameen Rasheed’s family appeals to High Court, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/yameen-rasheeds-family-appeals-to-high-court/>

<sup>116</sup> No way that we can trust the Elections Commission : Opposition, 10 April 2018, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10275>

<sup>117</sup> We have a candidate for the election – opposition parties, 10 April 20178, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10271>

<sup>118</sup> State institutes do not function properly”: HRCM, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/state-institutes-do-not-function-properly-hrcm/>

The Indian Ocean Commission's (IOC) Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean is planned for 26 to 29 April 2018 in Mauritius.<sup>119</sup> The proposal and planning of the meeting was discussed during a meeting on Friday 30 March 2018 at the Voilà Hotel, in Bagatelle.<sup>120</sup> The above mentioned meeting was presided by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, and chairperson of IOC's Council, Mr Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo<sup>121</sup>. The meeting was aimed "to exchange views on the Ministerial Conference which will explore ways and means to further defend the common ocean space and heritage shared by IOC Member States and exploit the potential for growth and innovation pertaining to the blue economy."<sup>122</sup>

- **DRDO hands over over three critical indigenous technologies to the Indian Navy**

On April 11, 2018, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over three critical indigenous technologies to the Indian Navy which includes processor-based mines (PPBM), VLF modulator and the first indigenously developed heavy weight torpedo **Varunastra**.<sup>123</sup> "Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman handed over three technologies for the Indian Navy to Chief of Naval Staff Sunil Lanba."<sup>124</sup>

- **India Korea MoU on seafarers**

On 10 April 2018, India and Korea signed an MoU on mutual recognition of certificates of competency of seafarers.<sup>125</sup> The agreement was signed by the visiting Indian Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari and his Korean counterpart Kim Young-choon in Busan, South Korea.<sup>126</sup> The statement released by Ministry of Shipping, Government of India said, "this paves the way for the two governments to mutually recognize the certificates of maritime education and training, competency, endorsements and medical fitness of seafarers issued by each other."<sup>127</sup> Speaking on the occasion Indian Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari said, "the signing of the

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<sup>119</sup> Mauritius: IOC's Maritime Security Ministerial Conference to Further Defend Common Ocean Space, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201804120696.html> (Accessed on 16 April 2018)

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> DefExpo 2018: DRDO hands over first indigenous heavy weight torpedo Varunastra to Indian Navy, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/defexpo-2018-drdo-hands-over-first-indigenous-heavy-weight-torpedo-varunastra-to-indian-navy/articleshow/63714819.cms> (Accessed on 16 April 2018)

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> India signs MoU with Korea on seafarers, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-signs-mou-with-korea-on-seafarers-118041001350\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-signs-mou-with-korea-on-seafarers-118041001350_1.html) (Accessed on 16 April 2018)

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> India signs MoU with Republic of Korea on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of Seafarers in Busan today, PIB, Government of India, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=46> (Accessed on 16 April 2018)

agreement will benefit both countries. Korea is a large ship owning nation. As of now, Korean entities own more than 500 foreign going ships, and need seafarers to work on their fleet. India has around 1,54,349 seafarers. The agreement will open up employment opportunities for Indian seafarers on Korean ships."<sup>128</sup>

## West Asia

### Iraq and GCC

- **Iraqi PM says measures taken to protect borders with Syria from Islamic State**<sup>129</sup>

Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi, during his speech in his weekly conference, stressed taking measures to protect borders with Syria, saying that Islamic State will not be able to penetrate into Iraq once again. Abadi said “security services achieved great progress to eliminate the remnants of Islamic State members.”

Islamic State continues to launch sporadic attacks across Iraq against troops. Security reports indicate that militant group still poses threat against stability in the country.

In a statement on Friday, spokesperson of al-Hashd al-Shabi said “information from intelligence department showed that Islamic State members were gathering in Syria and that they were planning for an attack against the 29th brigade of the troops in Tal Sufuk taking advantage of the bad weather.”<sup>130</sup>

- **Western Strikes in Syria could let terrorism expand: Syria**<sup>131</sup>

Air strikes carried out by the United States, France and Britain against Syrian military targets could give terrorism an opportunity to expand in the region, the Iraqi foreign ministry said on Saturday. The air strikes marked “a very dangerous development”, the ministry said in statement.

“Such action could have dangerous consequences, threatening the security and stability of the region and giving terrorism another opportunity to expand after it was ousted from Iraq and forced into Syria to retreat to a large extent,” it said.

The ministry called on Arab leaders to discuss the situation at a summit due to be held in Saudi Arabia on Sunday. Iraq’s position is in line with those of Russia and Iran, the main backers of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the civil war which has raged in his country since 2011.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-pm-says-measures-taken-to-protect-borders-with-syria-from-islamic-state/>

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-paramilitary-troops-repulse-islamic-state-attack-coming-from-syria/>

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-syria/western-air-strikes-on-syria-could-let-terrorism-expand-iraq-idUSKBN1HL0NR>

On Saturday, Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr called for a mass rally against the strikes on Syria, stressing that only the Iraqi and Syrian flags should be raised in the protest.

- **UAE ends programme to train Somalia's military<sup>132</sup>**

According to state news agency of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the country “has decided to disband its military training programme in Somalia which started in 2014 to build the capabilities of the Somali army.”

The UAE has trained and paid wages to hundreds of troops since 2014 as part of an effort boosted by an African Union military mission to defeat an Islamist insurgency and secure the country for the government backed by Western nations, Turkey and the United Nations.

Analysts say Somalia's relations with UAE are strained by a dispute between Qatar and Saudi because Mogadishu has refused to take sides. Arab states have strong trading links with and influence in Somalia, but that is offset by the sway of Qatar and its ally Turkey, one of Somalia's biggest foreign investors.

- **Trump, welcoming Qatar's al-Thani, says US-Qatar ties working well<sup>133</sup>**

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that his ties with Qatar were working “extremely well” as he welcomed Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the White House for bilateral talks.

Two leaders spoke as the US was preparing with its allies to militarily respond to suspected chemical weapon attacks in Syria. Al-Thani told reporters the region could not tolerate “a war criminal” like Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and he said the region cannot accept people who support terrorism.

Trump, who had initially sided with Saudi Arabia and UAE in the dispute which began in June last year, is now supporting for a resolution of the Qatar crisis in order to maintain a united front against Iran.

- **Kuwait alarmed at dangerous Syria developments<sup>134</sup>**

The state of Kuwait has followed up, with deep concern and alarm the latest dangerous developments in Syria namely the military operations, carried out as a result of the Syrian authorities' use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons, an official source at the foreign ministry said.

The developments have taken place due to undermining the international community's efforts to reach a political solution to the over-seven-year political

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<sup>132</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-emirates-somalia-military/uae-ends-programme-to-train-somalias-military-idUSKBN1HM0Y5>

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-qatar/trump-welcoming-qatars-al-thani-says-u-s-qatar-ties-working-well-idUSKBN1HH2OR?il=0>

<sup>134</sup> <https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2718241&language=en>

conflict in Syria, which left hundreds of thousands of people dead, and several other millions homeless, the source added.

Alarmed at this serious escalation, the State of Kuwait calls on the UN Security Council (UNSC) members to set aside their differences and to show united positions instead, in order to boost their capabilities of shouldering their historic responsibilities for maintaining international security and stability, the source said. Kuwait's balanced approach to foreign policy is different from its Gulf neighbours who have blockaded Qatar and have long supported Western military action against Bashar al- Assad in Syria.

## Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi ARAMCO signs US\$ 44 billion Investment deal with India**

On 11 April 2018, Saudi Arabia's oil giant, Aramco signed one of the biggest investment deals with Ratanagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals (RRPL), a joint venture of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL). The initial agreement signed between the two sides aims to build a mega refinery and petroleum project on western coast in the state of Maharashtra. The project is estimated to cost around \$ 44 billion<sup>135</sup> and Saudi Arabia holds 50 per cent stake in the project. The project is likely to produce includes a 1.2 million-barrel-per-day (bpd) refinery integrated with petrochemical facilities with a total capacity of 18 million tonnes per year.<sup>136</sup> This investment will give Saudi Arabia an assured market of an additional 30 million tonnes of its crude oil.<sup>137</sup>

The giant refinery complex will become a crucial new outlet for the world's biggest supplier. Aramco's president and CEO said that India is characterized by its fast-growing economy and its major consumer market. The President also said that Aramoc may introduce a strategic partner to share its 50 per cent stakes in future. Aramco will supply half of the crude to the refinery, while for the rest India is free to procure from anywhere.

President Amin Hasan Al-Nasser also underlined that his company is interested in entering the retail sector of India and face the consumers directly. According to him, 'Investing in India is a key part of our company's global downstream strategy,

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<sup>135</sup> <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1234456/saudi-aramco-signs-mou-build-refining-and-chemicals-complex-india>

<sup>136</sup> [http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-saudi-aramco-agree-to-partner-on-44-billion-refinery-petchem-project-118041100513\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-saudi-aramco-agree-to-partner-on-44-billion-refinery-petchem-project-118041100513_1.html)

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/saudi-aramco-the-worlds-largest-oil-producer-signs-50-per-cent-stake-in-usd-44-b/310886>

and another milestone in our growing relationship with India'. 'Participating in this mega project will allow Saudi Aramco to go beyond our crude oil supplier role to a fully integrated position that may help usher in other areas of collaboration, such as refining, marketing, and petrochemicals for India's future energy demands,' he added.

As a part of capturing global oil and petrochemical markets, Aramco has signed billions of dollars of deals with several countries, including US, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, etc. With China, Aramco is further strengthening its refining role. It has a refinery joint venture with Sinopec and Exxon Mobil, and is building a 300,000-bpd refinery with Norinco. It is also aiming to sign a deal with CNPC this year to buy a stake in a 260,000-bpd refinery in Yunnan.<sup>138</sup>

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 9	Balochistan	At least five Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were injured in a suicide blast during the routine patrol in Belili area of provincial capital Quetta. However, no outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. <sup>139</sup>	0	5
2	April 11	FATA	The FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) set April 30, 2018, as the last deadline for the repatriation of around 1,500 families from Afghanistan to North Waziristan Agency.	Repatriation deadline announced	

<sup>138</sup>

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/saudi-aramco-signs-44-bn-deal-for-indian-refinery-complex/article23504593.ece>

<sup>139</sup> Syed Ali Shah, 5 injured in suicide attack on FC vehicle in Quetta, *Dawn*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1400573/5-injured-in-suicide-attack-on-fc-vehicle-in-quetta>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			FDMA Assistant Director Operation and Relief Mian Adil Zahoor said that the government would facilitate return of the tribal people from Afghanistan by the end of April. He said after expiry of the deadline the tribal people could return to their homes, but would not be entitled to any assistance from the government. <sup>140</sup>		
3	April 11	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Malakand Division Commissioner Zaheerul Islam and DIG Akhtar Hayat Khan said that the number of security checkpoints in Swat district had been decreased to only six and the process of handing over the administrative responsibilities from military to civil administration in the division would be complete soon. <sup>141</sup>	Security check-posts decreased in Swat	
4	April 15	FATA	At least two Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were killed while five others were injured in a cross-border attack in Laka Tika area of Lower Kurram Agency. The attack was carried from Khost province of Afghanistan. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the FC	2	5

<sup>140</sup> FDMA asks NWA families to return from Afghanistan by 30<sup>th</sup>, *Dawn*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401051/fdma-asks-nwa-families-to-return-from-afghanistan-by-30th>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>141</sup> Checkposts in Swat decreased to six, *Dawn*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401066/checkposts-in-swat-decreased-to-six>, accessed on April 15, 2018



			troops were fired upon from Afghanistan while they were busy in “routine surveillance along Pak-Afghan border for plugging of gaps and making necessary preparations for starting fencing in that area.” <sup>142</sup>		
5	April 14-15	Punjab	<p>Unidentified armed assailants opened fire at the residence of Justice Ijazul Ahsan in Model Town area of provincial capital Lahore in two separate incidents. However, no casualties were reported in the attacks.</p> <p>Justice Ahsan was part of the five-member bench that delivered the verdict in the high-profile Panamagate case last year, which led to the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister.<sup>143</sup></p>	0	0

## Afghanistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 12	Ghazni	The district governor of Khwaja Omari district, Ali Shams Dost, was killed along with seven	8	9

<sup>142</sup> Jawed Hussain, 2 FC personnel martyred, 5 injured in attack from across Afghan border, *Dawn*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401790/2-fc-personnel-martyred-5-injured-in-attack-from-across-afghan-border>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>143</sup> Haseeb Bhatti & Rana Bilal, Gunmen open fire at Justice Ijazul Ahsan's Lahore residence in two separate incidents, *Dawn*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401786/gunmen-open-fire-at-justice-ijazul-ahsans-lahore-residence-in-two-separate-incidents>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			<p>policemen in a Taliban attack. Nine other policemen were injured.</p> <p>“After the attack the forces called for air support and 27 Taliban were killed during the airstrikes and clashes,” official statement said.<sup>144</sup></p>		
2	April 14	Kandahar	Police chief of Shahr Safa district of Zabul province, identified as Gul Ahmad Gerani, was assassinated by unidentified militants in Kandahar city. <sup>145</sup>	1	0
3	April 15	Nangarhar	The Taliban militants blew up the laboratory of a school in the vicinity of Momandara district, which resulted into the destruction of the laboratory as well as some documents stored in the compound. <sup>146</sup>	0	0
4	April 15	Sara-e-Pul	The Taliban killed eleven members of the public uprising forces in a coordinated attack on a	11	0

<sup>144</sup> Ghazni’s District Governor Killed in Taliban Attack, *Tolo News*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/ghazni%E2%80%99s-district-governor-killed-taliban-attack>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>145</sup> Senior Afghan police official assassinated in Kandahar city, *Khaama Press*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/senior-afghan-police-official-assassinated-in-kandahar-city-04878/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>146</sup> Taliban militants blow up the laboratory of a school in Nangarhar, *Khaama Press*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/taliban-militants-blow-up-the-laboratory-of-a-school-in-nangarhar-04888/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			security post Sang Charak district. <sup>147</sup>		
5	April 15	Khost	Police officials said troops reached the Zazi Maidan district after clashes broke out between local residents and Pakistani troops across the Durand Line. “Army, Police and NDS (National Directorate of Security) forces have reached Zazi Maidan district and they will respond to the Pakistan military attacks,” said Gul Agha Rohani 303 Spinghar Police Corps’ acting commander. <sup>148</sup> .	Clashes between Khost residents and Pakistani military	

## Iraq

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 12	Kirkuk	Four Iraqi policemen were wounded in an attack by Islamic State militants in Theybat, al-Rashad. <sup>149</sup>	0	4
2	April 12	Anbar	A mass grave containing human remains of burnt bodies has been found, north of Ramadi, Anbar Operations Command.	Mass grave recovered	

<sup>147</sup> Taliban militants killed 11 members of public uprising forces in Sari Pul, *Khaama Press*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/taliban-militants-killed-11-members-of-public-uprising-forces-in-sari-pul-04887/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>148</sup> Troops Arrive In Khost As Clash With Pakistani Army Continues, *Tolo News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/troops-arrive-khost-clash-pakistani-army-continues>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>149</sup> Mohamed Mostafa, Four Iraqi policemen wounded in Kirkuk attack, *Iraqi News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/four-iraqi-policemen-wounded-in-kirkuk-attack/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			<p>“Troops of the army’s tenth division, affiliated to Anbar Operations Command, ran into a mass grave containing remains of unidentified burnt bodies inside a house in al-Tarabisha region, north of Ramadi,” a senior source said.<sup>150</sup></p>		
3	April 14	Baghdad	<p>Iraqi Foreign Ministry has considered the airstrike against Syria as ‘dangerous action’, warning that this could lead to dangerous consequences that threaten the region’s stability.</p> <p>Ahmed Mahjoub, spokesperson for the Ministry, said, “The Iraqi Foreign Ministry expresses its concern toward the airstrike carried out by the U.S. and its allies against Syria. Such action is very dangerous as it has consequences against the innocent citizens.”<sup>151</sup></p>	Iraq condemns US-led airstrikes	
4	April 15	Kirkuk	<p>One civilian was killed and nine others were injured in a car bomb blast in al-Khadraa district. According to the latest casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a total of 104 Iraqi civilians and policemen were killed and</p>	1	9

<sup>150</sup> Nheal Mostafa, Mass grave with remains of burnt bodies found, north of Ramadi: Command, *Iraqi News*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/mass-grave-with-remains-of-burnt-bodies-found-north-of-ramadi-command/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>151</sup> Nheal Mostafa, Iraq: Airstrikes against Syria ‘dangerous’, could threaten region’s stability, *Iraqi News*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/iraq-says-airstrikes-against-syria-dangerous-could-threaten-regions-stability/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			another 177 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in March. <sup>152</sup>		
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## Syria

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 13	Moscow	Russia responded angrily to a US-led strike against Syria, warning of unspecified “consequences” that stoked fears the conflict could escalate. President Donald Trump ordered targeted military action in the country on April 13, 2018, following an alleged chemical weapons attack that reportedly left dozens of citizens dead. <sup>153</sup>		Russia warns US of unspecified consequences
2	April 15	Damascus	Only 48 hours after US, France and Britain targeted several airports and facilities in Syria, the Syrian Air Force resumed sorties against rebel positions across the war-torn country. The T4 airbase in Homs, Khalkhala in Sweida, Blai in southern Damascus and Hama airbase were operational again with no substantial damages reported by the western aggression. <sup>154</sup>		Syrian Air Force reactivated

<sup>152</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, Ten Iraqi people killed, injured in car bomb blast in Kirkuk, *Iraqi News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/ten-iraqi-people-killed-injured-in-car-bomb-blast-in-kirkuk/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>153</sup> Javier E. David, Russia warns of 'consequences' for US-led strike on Syria, *CNBC*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/13/russia-warns-of-consequences-for-us-led-strike-on-syria.html>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>154</sup> Syrian Air Force reactivated following US strike, *Al Masdar News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-air-force-reactivated-following-us-strike/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

3	April 15	Idlib	<p>A massive battle is taking place in southern Idlib between two rival jihadist groups that once fought alongside each other against the Syrian government.</p> <p>Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (formerly Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham, Jabhat Al-Nusra) launched a large-scale attack in southern Idlib this morning, targeting several areas controlled by Jabhat Tahrir Souriya.<sup>155</sup></p>	Clashes among rebels
4	April 15	Damascus	<p>Syrian military buildup are amassing outside a small ISIS pocket in southern Damascus after the entire East Ghouta region was fully liberated. Convoys of various Syrian Army formations, including the Republican Guards, Tiger Forces and 9th Armored Division, headed to the southern district of Qadam and Yarmouk Refugee Camp ahead of a prospective military operation.</p> <p>According to military experts, the offensive will be swift and effective in order</p>	Syrian army amasses forces

<sup>155</sup> Leith Aboufadel, All out war breaks out between rival jihadist groups in southern Idlib, *Al Masdar News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/all-out-war-breaks-out-between-rival-jihadist-groups-in-southern-idlib/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

			to reclaim the ISIS-held enclave. <sup>156</sup>	
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## International Economic Issues

- **China initiates WTO dispute complaint against US tariffs on steel, aluminium products**

China has requested for WTO dispute consultations with the United States (US) concerning certain US duties imposed on imports of steel and aluminium products. The request was circulated to WTO members on 9 April. China claims the duties of 25% and 10% on imports of steel and aluminium products respectively are inconsistent with provisions of the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 and of the Agreement on Safeguards. The duties have been adopted through a number of legal instruments, including pursuant to Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act.<sup>157</sup>

- **Chinese President Xi's business forum speech: The take from Beijing**

During a speech at a business forum in the Annual Conference of Boao Forum on the southern island of Hainan held on April 10, 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged a more open China. The Chinese President announced plans to open up the Chinese economy, including lowering tariffs for autos and enforcing the legal intellectual property of foreign firms. Xi's comments come amid escalating trade tensions between China and the U.S. as the two economies take turns announcing trade measures against each other. Xi highlighted action that Beijing would take to "break new ground" on opening up the Chinese economy. These include:

- a. Raise foreign equity limits in securities, insurers and banks
- b. Lower auto tariffs
- c. Ease restrictions on foreign ownership in manufacturing (ships, aircraft and autos)

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<sup>156</sup> Zen Adra, Video: Syrian Army amasses forces for upcoming offensive in southern Damascus, *Al Masdar News*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/video-syrian-army-amasses-forces-for-upcoming-offensive-in-southern-damascus/>, accessed on April 15, 2018

<sup>157</sup> WTO, "China initiates WTO dispute complaint against US tariffs on steel, aluminium products", April 9, 2018, [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news18\\_e/ds544rfc\\_09apr18\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/ds544rfc_09apr18_e.htm) (accessed on April 12, 2018)

- d. Empower a new state agency to enforce intellectual property rights protection.<sup>158</sup>

In response, President Donald Trump welcomed the remarks made by his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. In a tweet on April 11, 2018, Trump said he was “very thankful” to his Chinese counterpart and hailed “great progress” to be made by the superpowers. He specifically appreciated Xi’s “kind words on tariffs and automobile barriers” as well as his “enlightenment on intellectual property and technology transfers,” a key sticking point of U.S.-Chinese trade disputes.<sup>159</sup>

- **World Bank raises 2018 East Asia growth forecast, says tighter policy likely needed**

On April 12, 2018, the World Bank raised its growth forecast for East Asia and Pacific for 2018, but it said the region’s economies may need to adopt tighter monetary policy and larger fiscal buffers to guard against short-term risks. It forecasts that in 2018 growth in the developing East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region, which includes China, would be 6.3 percent. Its previous forecast in October was 6.2 percent. The World Bank also raised its growth outlook for China this year to 6.5 percent from its October forecast of 6.4 percent, attributing it to faster-than-anticipated 2017 growth. The bank said China’s economy continues to rebalance away from investment and towards domestic consumption with policies that focus more on slowing credit expansion and improving the quality of growth. It suggested bolstering mechanisms such as the ASEAN Economic Community, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and China’s Belt & Road Initiative to face the emerging challenges of labor saving technologies and automation, and the blurring of the lines between manufacturing and services.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Eunice Yoon, “Chinese President Xi’s business forum speech: The take from Beijing”, CNBC News, April 11, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/10/chinese-president-business-forum-speech.html> (accessed on April 12, 2018)

<sup>159</sup> Eli Meixler, “President Trump Is ‘Very Thankful’ for Xi Jinping’s Conciliatory Talk on Trade”, Time, April 11, 2018, <http://time.com/5235735/trump-xi-jinping-boao-trade/> (accessed on April 12, 2018)

<sup>160a</sup> World Bank raises 2018 East Asia growth forecast, says tighter policy likely needed”, Reuters, April 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-worldbank-asia/world-bank-raises-2018-east-asia-growth-forecast-says-tighter-policy-likely-needed-idUSKBN1HJoA6>