

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(30 April – 06 May, 2018)**

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## Africa

- **African Nations Defiant to U.S. Aid Threat Over UN Voting<sup>1</sup>**

Three African nations singled out for their track record of voting against the U.S. at the United Nations say they stand by their votes — even if those choices may result in the U.S. cutting back on aid. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley made the threat to cut aid in a written statement last week after the State Department released its annual report on U.N. voting trends by member countries.

Among the 10 countries listed on the annual State Department report that tracks U.N. voting patterns are nations that have long opposed U.S. interests, such as Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela and Syria. This year's list also included Burundi, South Africa and Zimbabwe

The American people pay 22 percent of the U.N. budget – more than the next three highest donor countries combined,” Haley said. “In spite of this generosity, the rest of the U.N. voted with us only 31 percent of the time, a lower rate than in 2016. ... this is not an acceptable return on our investment.”

The United States provides hundreds of millions of dollars in aid each year to those three African countries. It goes, among other things, toward improving HIV/AIDS prevention, economic growth, agriculture, food security, refugee assistance, education and maternal and child health.

- **Trump calls on Nigeria to remove trade barriers**

President Donald Trump has called on Nigeria to remove its trade barriers, saying the United States is "owed that" on account of providing the West African country with more than \$1bn in foreign aid each year. Trump, speaking on Monday, 30 April 2018, at a joint press conference with Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari in Washington, DC, said the US will invest substantially in Nigeria if Buhari is able to create a more "level playing field" on trade. He said he hoped Nigeria would remove trade barriers to allow imports of American agricultural produce, a stance that's at odds with Buhari's known preference for protecting Nigeria's agricultural industry and stopping agricultural imports.<sup>2</sup>

Trump said "We have many things that we do together, as you know, probably, especially on terrorism," "We also have a very big trade deal that we're working on for military equipment - helicopters and the like." The United States has already approved the sale of half a billion dollars worth of military ware, including fighter jets, to Nigeria. That's a change in tack from the Obama administration which did not sell

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

<sup>2</sup> Quartz, <https://qz.com/1266514/president-buharis-meeting-with-donald-trump-was-all-about-staying-on-message/>

some weapons to Nigeria citing alleged human rights abuses by the Nigerian army. President Trump commented on the recent killings of Christians in Nigeria's middle-belt and northern areas. He said "We have had very serious problems with Christians who are being murdered in Nigeria, we are going to be working on that problem very, very hard because we cannot allow that to happen. Buhari, who is the first leader from sub-Saharan Africa to visit the White House since Trump took office more than a year ago, said he is thankful for US support in his government's fight against Boko Haram, the armed group.

### **Africa Needs \$170bn Annually to Meet Infrastructure Requirement - AfDB<sup>3</sup>**

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has said Africa needs about \$170 billion annually to meet its infrastructure requirement. Vincent Nmeielle, Secretary General of the bank, disclosed this at a media briefing to announce the bank's annual meeting, in Abidjan. "In 2016, the bank approved 7.8 billion dollars to finance investment in African continent and in 2017 it was about 6.7 billion dollars. He said "If you look at the African economic outlook that was released in January, it is very clear that Africa needs 170 billion dollars yearly, to fully meet its infrastructure requirement.

- **Rwanda's Paul Kagame Accuses the International Criminal Court of Being "A Court to Try Africans, Not People From Across the World"<sup>4</sup>**

Rwanda is one of the African countries that is not party to the Rome Statute and President Kagame has criticized the International Criminal Court for being a "fraudulent institution" that has become a tool for controlling Africa. Following his 2017 joint venture with Sudanese President Omar Bashir to confront the International Criminal Court (ICC), Rwandan President Paul Kagame has repeated his harsh criticism of that court for what he says is an open bias against Africa. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Kagame has said that the court has failed to dispense justice anywhere else. The ICC was established to prosecute and punish individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression. It has had 10 investigations since its inception, nine of which have centred on Africa. The five convictions that stemmed from these investigations were of nationals from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Mali. Kagame said "There are many people across the world who should be tried by the court." "Some leaders from African countries who are being tried by the ICC, whatever they are being tried for, have committed [their crimes] in partnership with other countries - which the ICC do not try.

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<sup>3</sup> Premium Times, 4 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805040160.html>

<sup>4</sup> This is Africa, 1 May 2018,

[http://allafrica.com/stories/201805020116.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabmrjk](http://allafrica.com/stories/201805020116.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabmrjk)

- **Zimbabwe: Chamisa - I Will Kick Out Chinese Investors<sup>5</sup>**

MDC Alliance presidential candidate Nelson Chamisa has vowed to kick out Chinese investors involved in shady deals with the Emmerson Mnangagwa administration, while addressing hundreds of workers commemorating May Day in Dzivarasekwa. He said most of the deals Mnangagwa agreed with Chinese companies were about corruption, looting and stripping of country's assets.

After former president Robert Mugabe fell out with the West, Zimbabwe adopted a so-called Look East policy which has seen China become a major investor in the country and key financier for the government. Mnangagwa has continued with the Look East policy, claiming to have reached deals with billions of dollars with Beijing after taking over from Mugabe last November.

Chamisa said "I have seen the deals that Ngwenya (President Mnangagwa's (nickname) has entered into with China and others, they are busy asset-stripping the resources of the country."

- **India Inc Invests Over US\$4 Billion in South Africa<sup>6</sup>**

As many as 140 Indian companies with operations in South Africa have invested more than US\$4 billion and created 18,000 direct jobs, according to a report released today. The CII-PwC report showcased the contribution of Indian companies beyond foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa, including key CSR and skill development initiatives. According to the report, there exists substantial potential for trade growth between the two countries. Exports from India to South Africa include vehicle parts, transport equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, footwear, chemicals, textiles and rice. The report noted that value of bilateral trade has increased from US\$2.5 billion in 2003-04 to US\$11.79 billion in 2014-15, a growth of more than 400 per cent in ten years. However, trade between the two countries declined slightly to US\$9.5 billion in 2015-2016. A number of factors explain this decline, including South Africa's credit rating downgrade, policy uncertainty, political and economic uncertainty as well as exchange rate fluctuations, the report said.

- **First India-South Africa Business Summit concludes<sup>7</sup>**

The first India-South Africa Business Summit 2018 opened at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, in the presence of the Indian Minister of Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, and South Africa's Minister of Trade and Industry Rob Davies. The summit was also marked by the presence of trade and industry

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<sup>5</sup> New Zimbabwe.com, 2 May 2018, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201805020244.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt](http://allafrica.com/stories/201805020244.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt)

<sup>6</sup> The Economic Times, 6 May 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/india-inc-invests-over-4-bn-in-south-africa/articleshow/64050286.cms>

<sup>7</sup> IOL, 2 May 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/first-india-south-africa-business-summit-concludes-14739714>

ministers from SADC countries and top CEOs and industry specialists from India, South Africa and SADC countries. The two-day event opened with a tribute to Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi followed by a plenary session, eight breakaway sessions and a closing session, all of which seek to chart the way forward for the India-South Africa relationship. The summit was also marked by a MoU that was signed between Invest SA and Invest India, strengthening a rapidly growing economic and trade partnership between the two strategic partner countries.

- **Madagascar's President Rules Out Resignation Despite Protests<sup>8</sup>**

Madagascar's President Hery Rajaonarimampianina on Sunday refused to yield to opposition demands that he resign from office, following eight days of anti-government protests in the capital. "I am president by the will of the Malagasy people. There are millions of people who voted for me, it would really betray the people to resign," the president said at a press conference. Just seven months from general elections, he is confronted with an unprecedented revolt since coming to power in late 2013. The opposition accuses the government of trying to elbow them out of the race through new electoral laws they claim benefit the incumbent. They claim that the new laws could bar some candidates from standing in the presidential election, and they have asked the country's constitutional court to rule on the measures.

- **Tanzania Bloggers Win Temporary Court Order Against State Crackdown<sup>9</sup>**

Tanzanian bloggers and rights activists won a temporary court injunction on Friday against a government order to register their online platforms that raised concern about a crackdown on free speech. Tanzania's communications regulator had given bloggers, as well as owners of other online forums such as YouTube TV channels, until May 5 to heed tough new internet content rules through state registration and a licence fee of up to US\$900. Six human rights watchdogs, media organisations and bloggers filed a joint case in Tanzania's high court asking the judiciary to block implementation of the regulations, arguing that they violate freedom of expression and privacy of internet users. In his ruling, Judge Fauz Twaib ordered the information ministry and the state communications regulator (TCRA) not to enforce the deadline pending another hearing to decide the case.

- **Tanzania Asks AfDB to Fund Hydropower Plant in Heritage Site<sup>10</sup>**

Tanzania has approached the African Development Bank (AfDB) to finance a 2,100-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric plant in a World Heritage site renowned for its animal population, despite concerns from conservationists. The country considers the project at Stiegler's Gorge in the Unesco-designated Selous Game Reserve to be vital in its bid

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<sup>8</sup> The Independent, 30 April 2018, <https://www.independent.co.ug/madagascars-president-rules-out-resignation-despite-protests/>

<sup>9</sup> The Star, 4 May 2018, [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/05/04/tanzania-bloggers-win-temporary-court-order-against-state-crackdown\\_c1754010](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/05/04/tanzania-bloggers-win-temporary-court-order-against-state-crackdown_c1754010)

<sup>10</sup> Business Daily, 30 April 2018, <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/ea/tanzania/Tanzania-asks-AfDB-to-fund-hydropower-plant-in-heritage-site/4003154-4536938-x4nes2/index.html>

to diversify its energy mix and end chronic electricity shortages. The project would more than double the country's power generation capacity. But critics say securing financing for it could prove difficult because construction of a dam on a major river that runs through the Selous Game Reserve could affect wildlife and their habitats downstream. The AfDB confirmed that it was reviewing Magufuli's request but did not say how much the project would cost. Covering 50,000 sq km, the Selous Game Reserve is one of the largest protected areas in Africa, according to Unesco.

- **Mauritius to Host 11th World Hindi Conference in August<sup>11</sup>**

The 11th World Hindi Conference (WHC), organised jointly by the Government of Mauritius and the Government of India, will be held in Mauritius at Swami Vivekanand International Convention Centre in Pailles from 18 to 20 August 2018. The Minister of External Affairs, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, accompanied by two other ministers will lead the Indian delegation comprising some 100 members. This was announced yesterday during a joint press conference by the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Mrs. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, and the High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, Mr. Abhay Thakur, at the headquarters of the World Hindi Secretariat in Phoenix.

- **Mozambique Presidential Contender Afonso Dhlakama Dies<sup>12</sup>**

Afonso Dhlakama, the former Mozambican guerrilla leader who was set to run for the presidency next year, has died aged 65, TVM, the state broadcaster, said on Thursday. The leader of Renamo, the former Mozambique National Resistance movement, was found dead in the central town of Gorongosa, a party stronghold. No immediate confirmation was available of the TVM report, which gave no details of how Mr. Dhlakama died. Mr. Dhlakama, whose party members have fought with government forces since he lost a disputed election four years ago, was set to run again against President Filipe Nyusi next year. Mr. Nyusi heads the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, Frelimo. Afonso Dhlakama was born in 1953 in Sofala province, taking over Renamo at the age of 26 from Andre Matsangaissa who had been killed by government forces.

- **Mozambique Launches 100 MW Floating Power Station<sup>13</sup>**

Mozambican president Filipe Nyusi and his Zambian counterpart Edgar Lungu launched the 100 MW floating power station in Nacala, to boost energy supply between the two countries. According to the chairperson of state-owned electricity company, EDM, Mateus Magala, the electricity produced by the floating power station will be injected into the national grid at the Nacala sub-station. In February this year, a Turkish vessel containing the unit was docked at Nacala port and 110 kV cables were

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<sup>11</sup> All Africa, 3 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805030873.html>

<sup>12</sup> Financial Times, 4 May 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/7f5e27ca-4f10-11e8-9471-a083af05aea7>

<sup>13</sup> Mining Review Africa, 1 May 2018, <https://www.miningreview.com/mozambique-100-mw-floating-power-station/>

connected, linking the ship to two special reception pylons, 65 and 85 m tall. Magala stated that this floating power station has been developed to ensure electricity supply for the next two years to Mozambicans while also selling energy to Zambia. Nyusi said the floating power station is “an example of energy cooperation to the benefit of the citizens and the economies of Mozambique and Zambia.”

- **China is Mozambique’s Largest Financier and Builder of Infrastructure<sup>14</sup>**

China is now the largest financier and builder of infrastructure in Mozambique, and built the Maputo-Catembe bridge, the Maputo circular road, National Road 6 and the fishing port of Beira city, said the ambassador of China to the country, in statements made in Maputo to Macao magazine. In order to reinforce the importance of the bilateral relationship, Ambassador Su Jian also recalled that China is Mozambique’s main trading partner and also the main foreign investor, “a position that has been consolidated.” Su Jian highlighted the existence of other projects that are part of a list compiled by the Mozambican government including 13 priority areas in a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2017 including industrial parks, highways, agriculture, exploration of natural and energy resources and ports.

- **Kenya's President Seeks Forgiveness for 'Damaging Country's Unity' During 2017 Polls<sup>15</sup>**

Kenya’s president, Uhuru Kenyatta, called on Kenyans to forgive him for ‘damaging the unity of the country in any way’ during last year’s heated and contested presidential elections. The president was delivering the first state of the nation address in his second and final term of office. “If there was anything I said last year that hurt or wounded you, if I damaged the unity of this country in any way, I ask you to forgive me, and to join me in repairing that harm,” Kenyatta said. The president also hailed opposition leader, Raila Odinga, for accepting to work with him to restore national unity and reconciliation. “Rt. Hon. Raila and I stood together not because we agreed on every item of politics or policy, but because we agreed that Kenya belongs to all of us.” Kenyatta, was heavily criticised last year after he called the judges “thugs” after the Supreme Court annulled his election win in the August 8 polls. He also called Odinga a ‘mad man’ after the latter boycotted the rerun which Kenyatta won, to be declared president.

- **Democratic Republic of Congo Plans to Allow Oil Exploration in National Parks Home to Endangered Mountain Gorillas<sup>16</sup>**

The Democratic Republic of Congo is planning to reclassify two protected national parks to allow oil exploration. Documents seen by *The Independent* show the

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<sup>14</sup> Macau Hub, 30 April 2018, <https://macauhub.com.mo/feature/pt-china-e-o-maior-financiadore-construtor-de-infra-estruturas-em-mocambique/>

<sup>15</sup> Africa News, 3 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/03/kenya-s-president-seeks-forgiveness-for-damaging-country-s-unity-during-2017/>

<sup>16</sup> The Independent, 5 May 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/drc-congo-oil-national-parks-gorillas-virunga-salonga-endangered-special-mountain-a8336286.html>



government wants to redraw the boundaries of the Salonga and Virunga national parks, which are home to critically endangered species such as mountain gorillas, to remove protected status from certain areas. Both parks are UNESCO World Heritage sites, a status which in theory should protect them from oil exploration and other extractive activities. In a letter, Congo's oil minister Aime Ngoi Muken invited the environment minister and the minister for scientific research to a special commission meeting to discuss the plans on 27 April. The Virunga park is one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet and is home to about a quarter of the world's remaining mountain gorillas.

- **UN Experts Say Congo Obstructs Probe of UN Monitors' Killings<sup>17</sup>**

Congolese security officials are interfering with the investigation into the killings of two UN sanctions monitors last year in central Democratic Republic of Congo, UN experts deployed to assist the investigation said. The charge came in a confidential note by the United Nations' Department of Political Affairs that was dated April 18 and circulated among Security Council members on the progress of a team of experts sent to Congo in November by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to support Congolese officials' investigation into the killings. The note was seen by Reuters on Tuesday. A Congo government spokesman could not be immediately reached for comment.

- **South Sudan Rebels Free 10 Aid Workers<sup>18</sup>**

Ten aid workers detained in South Sudan last week have been freed after the rebel group holding them confirmed their identities as representatives of relief agencies, the rebels said on Monday. Lam Paul Gabriel, a spokesman for the rebel group, the SPLM-IO, said that its fighters detained the aid workers on Wednesday at a checkpoint in rebel-held territory in the southern part of the country. He said that the aid workers, all South Sudanese citizens, were transferred to two rebel bases before being flown by the International Committee of the Red Cross to Juba, the capital, on Monday afternoon. Mr. Lam said this was the second time in a month that the rebel group had detained aid workers in the region for traveling in rebel-held territory without giving notice.

- **South Sudan President Names Gabriel Jok Riak New Army Chief<sup>19</sup>**

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir appointed General Gabriel Jok Riak as the new head of the army on Wednesday, according to a decree read out on State Television. Riak's appointment follows the death in Cairo last month of army chief General James Ajongo after a short illness. Riak, from Jonglei State in the Upper Nile region, was the deputy army chief for operations and has been serving as the acting army chief. "I..do

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<sup>17</sup> Reuters, 2 May 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-un/u-n-experts-say-congo-obstructs-probe-of-u-n-monitors-killings-note-idUSKBN1I3010>

<sup>18</sup> The New York Times, 30 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/30/world/africa/south-sudan-aid-workers-freed.html>

<sup>19</sup> Africa News, 3 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/03/south-sudan-president-names-gabriel-jok-riak-new-army-chief/>



hereby issue this Republican Decree for the appointment of General Gabriel Jok Riak Makol as the chief of the Defense Force of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)," Kiir's statement read. South Sudan, which obtained independence from Sudan in 2011 and is the world's youngest nation, has been mired in civil war since 2013, when Kiir fired his deputy. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in fighting often along ethnic lines, and much of the nation has faced dire food shortages.

- **Ethiopia's Desalegn Says Kiir Has Failed South Sudan, Must Step Aside<sup>20</sup>**

Ethiopia's former prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn has stressed the need for South Sudan president Salva Kiir to step down and allow the country to be guided to peace by a new face. Desalegn added that it was increasingly becoming clear that peace agreements between the government and rebel groups were not going to be respected. "Immediately after my resignation, I asked them, please would you resign because you failed to resolve the problem in South Sudan?" Desalegn disclosed during a governance summit held in Rwanda over the weekend.

- **US Govt Removes Restrictions on Banking Dealing with Sudan<sup>21</sup>**

The US government has removed restrictions on banking dealing with Sudan after lifting the sanctions. The remark was made by US Assistant Secretary of Treasury Marshall Billingslea who is visiting Sudan as part of a US Congress delegation. Billingslea, who held talks with a number of Sudanese officials in Khartoum on Sunday, promised to restore relations of the American banks with the Sudanese banks. He urged in a statement the Sudanese government to make further progress in human rights and build normal ties with the United States. He said Sudan has achieved progress in the five-track plan in accordance with which the economic sanctions were lifted, noting that the US Congress is looking forward to removing Sudan's name from the list of states sponsoring terrorism. On October 6, 2017 the US decided to lift its economic sanctions on Sudan permanently, citing Sudan's "sustained positive actions to maintain a cessation of hostilities in conflict areas in Sudan, improve humanitarian access throughout Sudan, and maintain cooperation with the United States on addressing regional conflicts and the threat of terrorism."

- **Zambia, Angola Agree to Explore Cooperation in Oil, Gas<sup>22</sup>**

Zambia and Angola have agreed to explore cooperation in oil and gas, according to a final joint communique issued on Friday following a two-day state visit by Angolan President Joao Lourenco. The communique said the leaders of the two countries agreed to cooperate in the oil and gas sectors given the resource endowment and expertise that Angola possesses and the readily available market in Zambia. The two

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<sup>20</sup> Africa News, 30 April 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/30/ethiopia-s-desalegn-says-kiir-has-failed-south-sudan-must-step-aside/>

<sup>21</sup> Vanguard, 30 April 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/u-s-govt-removes-restrictions-banking-dealing-sudan-official/>

<sup>22</sup> Xinhua news, 4 May 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/04/c\\_137156607.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/04/c_137156607.htm)

leaders further agreed to expedite plans for the construction of an oil pipeline from Angola to Zambia as well as renewed commitments to the development of transport infrastructure linking the two neighboring countries. The communique said the two leaders also underscored the need to increase the levels of bilateral trade. The Angolan president arrived in Zambia on Wednesday and held talks with his Zambian counterpart President Edgar Lungu. The two leaders also witnessed the signing of five agreements that included on the exemption of visas, security and public order, cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters and a protocol on agricultural cooperation.

- **Electoral Commission of Zambia to Disqualify Violent Parties**<sup>23</sup>

The Electoral Commission of Zambia has issued a stern warning that it will be compelled to cancel and disqualify anyone found committing acts of violence in the by-elections slated for 5th June 2018. ECZ Public Relations Manager Margaret Chimase says the commission is deeply concerned with rising levels of intolerance and political violence that have characterized the nominations on 3 May 2018 so far. Ms. Chimase has stated that the electoral act and the electoral code of conduct both empowers the commission to suspend all campaigns and disqualify candidates that will be found wanting. She has since appealed to all political parties to urge to refrain from acts of violence or risk disqualification. Meanwhile Ms. Chimase has revealed that the commission received reports of intimidation from their officers of an incident in Luangwa ward, Nyimba District that took place during nominations to which the commission is actually addressing.

- **Cardano Pens Deal to Help Ethiopia Put Agriculture on the Blockchain**<sup>24</sup>

Ethiopia is the latest African nation to express interest in blockchain-powered solutions. The country has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with fledgling cryptocurrency startup Cardano that will see developers use its blockchain in the local agriculture industry. Cardano's lead and former Ethereum co-founder, Charles Hoskinson, made the announcement on Twitter earlier today, adding that the initiative will also focus on training developers how to use blockchain. "Just signed an MOU with the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Technology to explore training blockchain developers and use Cardano in the Agritech Industry," Hoskinson said. It remains unclear when the collaboration will start – or when we can expect to see the first results of this MOU. For those unfamiliar, Cardano is building a decentralized blockchain platform that will support smart contracts and decentralized applications – similarly to Ethereum. Given that the platform is pretty much still in its infancy, it is yet to be seen whether it can deliver on its promises.

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<sup>23</sup> Lusaka Times, 6 May 2018, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/05/06/electoral-commission-of-zambia-to-disqualify-violent-parties/>

<sup>24</sup> TNW, 3 May 2018, <https://thenextweb.com/hardfork/2018/05/03/ethiopia-cardano-blockchain-cryptocurrency/>

- **Ethiopia to Help Sudan Develop Port as It Builds Export Routes<sup>25</sup>**

Sudan and Ethiopia agreed to work together in developing and managing Port Sudan, their presidents said, as landlocked Ethiopia attempts to expand trade routes essential for its export-led economy. “We have agreed to expand our exchange,” Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed told reporters Thursday in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum. Standing alongside, Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir said his country is committed to providing “all the needed facilities” to ensure the flow of goods via its Red Sea ports to and from Ethiopia. Neither gave further details. Ethiopia – ranked Africa’s fastest-growing economy by the International Monetary Fund – already ships large consignments such as fertilizer through Port Sudan.

- **Ethiopia State of Emergency Must be Lifted - Nega Tasks PM to 'Walk the Talk'<sup>26</sup>**

Ethiopia’s prime minister Abiy Ahmed should fulfil his pledge to expand political freedoms by lifting a state of emergency, said a journalist released in February after six years in jail. Eskinder Nega was arrested in 2011 and convicted under anti-terrorism laws for articles criticising what he called politically motivated prosecutions at a time of a broader campaign for democratic freedoms in the country of 100 million. He was pardoned one day before Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned on February 15, saying he wanted to clear the way for reform. The government imposed the emergency the next day, saying it wanted to stem anti-government protests. The choice of Abiy, 41, as premier by the coalition that has ruled Ethiopia since 1991 has raised expectations of greater freedom but Eskinder said he will be judged by his actions.

- **Somalia, UN meet over Illegal Charcoal Sale<sup>27</sup>**

The Somali government and United Nations representatives will meet next week in Mogadishu to discuss ways of stopping illegal charcoal trade in the country. Charcoal exportation was banned by the UN Security Council resolution and the Somali government in 2012 because of the destructive effect on the environment. However, it is also a source of revenue for the al-Shabaab militants. “It [the meeting] intends to rally support for concrete action, including partnerships with investors to stop the illegal trade and to strengthen ongoing work in developing alternative livelihoods and alternative energy sources in Somalia,” a statement issued by African Union/United Nations Information Support Team in Somalia on Friday reads in part. According to the statement, the May7-8 meeting will also seek to end the trade that has left more than 8.2 million trees cut in Somalia between 2011 and 2017. A UN report released in 2017 showed that al-Shabaab earned approximately US\$10million in 2016 from charcoal exports to Asia through Kismayo.

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<sup>25</sup> Bloomberg, 3 May 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-03/ethiopia-to-help-sudan-develop-port-as-it-builds-export-routes>

<sup>26</sup> Africa News, 2 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/02/ethiopia-state-of-emergency-must-be-lifted-eskinder-nega-tasks-pm-to-walk-the/>

<sup>27</sup> Daily Monitor, 30 April 2018, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Somalia-UN-meet-over-illegal-charcoal-sale/688334-4537300-xupimb/index.html>

- **China Denies Using Lasers Against US Military Aircraft in Djibouti**<sup>28</sup>

China has strongly rejected US accusations that its forces repeatedly pointed lasers at US military aircraft flying near Beijing's new military base in Djibouti in recent weeks. The dispute is the first between the world's two biggest military powers since China opened its first overseas military base last August in the tiny Horn of Africa country. The Chinese garrison is only 12km from Camp Lemonnier, the largest US military base on the continent. The Pentagon on Thursday said lasers had been pointed at its military aircraft a number of times in Djibouti and that on at least one occasion pilots suffered minor injuries. Some of the lasers were of military grade but the intent was not clear, officials said. Diplomats and analysts say the quarrel highlights the growing potential for military tensions between Washington and Beijing as China expands its overseas operations and seeks to increase its influence in Africa. Jim Mattis, the US defence secretary, said in January that "great power competition" was the primary focus of US national security.

## North Africa

- **IMF Asks Egypt to Broaden its Economic Reform**<sup>29</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked the Egypt government to broaden and deepen its ongoing reform and meanwhile it has hailed the nation for carrying out its program for economic reform and modernization. First Deputy Managing Director David Lipton made the comments during a conference held in Cairo to discuss the country's economic future. The conference was attended by Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, Central Bank Governor Tarek Amer and Finance Minister Amr El-Garhy.

This conference about Egypt and IMF support to it has come at a crucial moment for Egypt. In 2016, this country faced severe economic challenges. The response then was bold. It has been sustained, and it has succeeded. The results are clear: macroeconomic stability and market confidence have been restored, growth has resumed, inflation has fallen, and the public debt ratio is expected to fall for the first time in nearly a decade. First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF David Lipton said that Egypt will need to broaden and deepen" its reform agenda to sustain its stabilization and achieve modernization. It is worth mentioning here that in 2016, the Egyptian economy was suffering from low growth, lagging investment, rising inflation, and growing government debt and there was a risk of instability as told by Mr. Lipton.

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<sup>28</sup> Financial Times, 4 May 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/a15ebc0a-4f87-11e8-a7a9-37318e776bab>

<sup>29</sup> Ahram online , An Egyptian English Daily  
<http://english.ahram.org/NewsContent/3/12/298923/Business/Economy/IMF-calls-on-Egypt-to-broaden-deepen-reform-agend.aspx>

- **Jordan MBH Faces Major Setback in Election**<sup>30</sup>

For the first time in 26 years, the Jordanian branch of Muslim Brotherhood faced a crushing defeat in the syndicate election. The election for the engineering syndicate which is considered to be the biggest political body in the country has suffered a major political setback which will further weakened the movement in the region. Majority of the candidates who fought the election on the tickets of MBH were defeated and this si happened after more than two decades when the MBH had done so poor in the electoral politics of the country. The MBH in Jordan is the most organized political block like in Egypt and other countries of the region.

- **Many Christian Houses set on Fire on Issue of Disputed Church in Egypt** <sup>31</sup>

The houses of many Coptic Christians in the Beni Suef village of Beni Menin town (Egypt) were set on fire by Muslim villagers in latest incident of sectarian violence over the status of disputed church. Around twenty persons have been taken into custody and the investigation is has been initiated to go deep into the matter and to take actions against the culprit. The reports mentioned that many children and women from the Coptic community have fled their villages and taken shelter in the neighboring village to rescue their lives after the incident. Another report also mentioned that some Coptic Christians were arrested when they were trying to burn their own houses to put the blame on the Muslim of the villages. The village has seen many conflict in the past over the legal status of a church in the village which both side claim that it belong to their ancestral property.

## Central Asia

- **Tajikistan Hosts counter-Terror Conference**

Tajikistan hosted High-Level International Conference International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism in Dushanbe on 3-4 May 2018. The conference was organized by the Tajik government in cooperation with the UN, CSTO, SCO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU. It was attended by representatives of 46 countries and organizations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Asharqal Awsat, A n Arabic Daily

<https://aawsat.com/home/article/1259146/%D9%87%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%80%C2%AB%D8%A5%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%C2%BB-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86>

<sup>31</sup> Mada Misr, An Egyptian Daily <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/04/18/feature/politics/disputed-status-of-beni-suef-church-sparks-sectarian-violence/>

<sup>32</sup> Akbar, "International conference on counter-terrorism opens in Tajik capital today," 3 May 2018, <http://kabar.kg/eng/news/international-conference-on-counter-terrorism-opens-in-tajik-capital-today/>

The challenges in the security area faced by the world were discussed. The participants also deliberated how to combine the efforts to counter terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism.

Minister of State for External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar attended the conference. He highlighted the achievements of Tajikistan in defeating terrorism in the country in 1990s.<sup>33</sup> He added that the fight against terrorism must be at three levels; first, on the field by security forces; second, against the radicalization of minds, and third, bringing equitable economic prosperity.

- **Turkish President Visits Uzbekistan**

President Turkey Recep Tayal Endogen paid a visit to Uzbekistan from 29 April to 1 May 2018. He held discussions with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on development of trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian cooperation.<sup>34</sup>

To further develop cooperation between the two countries, 24 documents were signed, in the fields of economy and trade, transport and logistics, industry, science, education, tourism etc. Turkey is an important trade partner of Uzbekistan, it is the fourth largest trading partner of the country followed by Russia, China and Kazakhstan. In 2017, their bilateral trade increased by 30 percent to US\$ 1.5 billion.<sup>35</sup> The two leaders also attended a business forum, where agreements were reached on implementation of more than 50 new investment projects worth US\$3 billion.<sup>36</sup>

## China

- **Chinese premier arrives in Indonesia for official visit**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang arrived in Jakarta on May 6 for an official visit to Indonesia, the first stop on his first overseas trip since the new cabinet took office in March. Li's visit comes as this year marks the 5th anniversary of the establishment of

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<sup>33</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Statement by Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs at the High-Level International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism (4 May 2018, Dushanbe)," 7 May 2018, <http://www.indianembassytj.com/index.php?itfpage=newsevent&itemid=70>

<sup>34</sup> Usably, "Presidents of Uzbekistan and Turkey hold talks in narrow format," 30 April 2018, <http://www.uzdaily.com/en/articles-id-43715.htm>

<sup>35</sup> Embassy of Uzbekistan, New Delhi, "Uzbekistan – Turkey: Cooperation based on mutual trust and friendship develops dynamically," 1 May 2018, <http://www.uzbekembassy.in/uzbekistan-turkey-cooperation-based-on-mutual-trust-and-friendship-develops-dynamically/>

<sup>36</sup> Embassy of Uzbekistan, New Delhi, "Uzbekistan – Turkey: Cooperation based on mutual trust and friendship develops dynamically," 1 May 2018, <http://www.uzbekembassy.in/uzbekistan-turkey-cooperation-based-on-mutual-trust-and-friendship-develops-dynamically/>

the China-Indonesia comprehensive strategic partnership and the 15th anniversary of the strategic partnership between China ASEAN.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Indonesia in 2013, the two countries have been promoting the synergy of their development strategies, yielding fruitful results in their cooperation in various fields, Li said upon his arrival in Jakarta.<sup>37</sup>

- **Xi calls for developing world-class universities with Chinese characteristics**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on 2 May called for more efforts in building the country's universities into world-class institutions with Chinese characteristics. Xi made the remarks on a visit to Peking University for its 120th anniversary celebration.

While inspecting an exhibition of the university's achievements, the president said making a country great is a precondition of making a university great. He also said it is a long-term task for China to turn itself into a modernized socialist country, and that requires continued efforts. He urged the young generation to provide the great momentum in this, and become the latest great force in rejuvenating China.<sup>38</sup>

- **China marks 200 years of Karl Marx's birth as Xi leads in new era**

Two centuries on, despite huge and profound changes in human society, the name of Karl Marx is still respected all over the world and his theory still shines with the brilliant light of truth, Chinese President Xi Jinping said during a conference to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Xi, made the remarks at a grand gathering to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth.

Senior leaders including Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Zhao Leji, Han Zheng, and Wang Qishan were present. Wang Huning presided over the gathering.<sup>39</sup>

- **Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Dominican Republic**

China and the Dominican Republic signed the communiqué on establishment of diplomatic relations in Beijing on May 1, 2018. It is stated that the two sides have decided to recognise each other and establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. The two governments agreed to develop friendly relations on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. The Government of the Dominican Republic has recognised that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal

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<sup>37</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/06/c\\_137159806.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/06/c_137159806.htm)

<sup>38</sup> [https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d774e33496a4d77457a6333566d54/share\\_p.html](https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d774e33496a4d77457a6333566d54/share_p.html)

<sup>39</sup> [http://english.qstheory.cn/2018-05/07/c\\_1122793675.htm](http://english.qstheory.cn/2018-05/07/c_1122793675.htm)



government representing the whole of China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.<sup>40</sup>

- **China deploys cruise missiles on South China Sea outposts**

China has installed cruise missile and surface-to-air missile on Fiery Cross Reef, Subi Reef and Mischief Reef islands located in Spratly Islands. The missiles include the anti-ship cruise missiles YJ-12B and surface-to-air missile HQ-9B. On May 3, 2018, Chinese Foreign Ministry defended the deployment of national defence facilities on these islands on the ground of safeguarding China's sovereignty and security and termed it "peaceful construction activities".<sup>41</sup> Earlier, China has deployed such missile systems on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands.<sup>42</sup>

- **Helicopter manoeuvres suggest China's new aircraft carrier ready for sea trials**

On May 5, 2018, China's Changhe Z-18 helicopter took off from its first indigenously-built aircraft carrier in Dalian in Liaoning Province to test the helicopters' guidance system. The Liaoning Maritime Safety Administration announced that the Bohai Sea and an area north of the Yellow Sea would be cordoned off from 4 to 11 May for military activities. The restricted areas are close to the Dalian shipyard where the Type 001A aircraft carrier was built.<sup>43</sup>

## European Union

- **Hungary to Bring Tougher Immigration Law**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that his government would bring tighter immigration rules. He said, "We are building a Christian democracy. An old-style Christian democracy rooted in European traditions, where human dignity is paramount and there is a separation of powers." He added, "We will defend Christian culture and will not surrender the country to aliens." Prime Minister also named

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<sup>40</sup> "Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Dominican Republic", MOFA, PRC, May 1, 2018, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1555850.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1555850.shtml), Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> "Deployment of defence facilities on Nansha Islands to safeguard China's sovereignty and security", *China Military Online*, May 4, 2018, [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-05/04/content\\_8023064.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-05/04/content_8023064.htm), Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> "China deploys cruise missiles on South China Sea outposts", *The Guardian*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/03/china-deploys-cruise-missiles-on-south-china-sea-outposts-reports>, Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> "Helicopter manoeuvres suggest China's new aircraft carrier ready for sea trials", *China Military Online*, May 7, 2018, [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-05/07/content\\_8024470.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-05/07/content_8024470.htm), Accessed on May 7, 2018.

Interior Minister Sandor Pinter and Economy Minister Mihaly Varga as deputy prime ministers.<sup>44</sup>

- **Polish GDP Growth Forecast**

The Commission forecasted that Poland's GDP growth would be 4.3 percent in 2018 and it is expected to grow 3.7 percent in 2019. According to the Commission's estimates, Poland will be the fifth-fastest growing economy in the European Union in 2018. Consumption and investment supported by fast wage growth, strong consumer confidence and EU structural funds are the main growth drivers.<sup>45</sup>

- **French President Macron Visited Australia**

French President Macron paid his first official visit to Australia from 1 to 3 May 2018. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and President macron discussed security, trade and strategic cooperation between the two countries. President Macron said that he wanted to create a "strong Indo-Pacific axis to build on our economic interests as well as our security interests". He added, "I would very much like France, given it is the last European member of the EU being present in the Pacific after the Brexit ... to be at the heart of this project." He noted that the region is important for the global stability.<sup>46</sup>

## European Union

- **Commission tables €1.279 trillion EU budget plan for 2021-2027**

The European Commission on May 2 proposed an EU budget of €1.279 trillion for 2021 to 2027, the long-anticipated Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker unveiled the MFF draft plan during the European Parliament plenary in Brussels. It is the first such plan for the EU-27, in the wake of the UK's decision to withdraw from the European Union. According to

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<sup>44</sup> Gergely Szakacs, Hungary PM Orban vows tougher laws on migration, names new deputy PMs, Reuters, May 3, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-government-orban/hungary-pm-orban-vows-tougher-laws-on-migration-names-new-deputy-pms-idUSKBN1I50GP>

<sup>45</sup> Polish GDP to grow 4.3% in 2018: European Commission, Radio Poland, May 3, 2018, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/361735,Polish-GDP-to-grow-43-in-2018-European-Commission>

<sup>46</sup> Ben Doherty, France and Australia can be heart of new Indo-Pacific axis, Macron says, The Guardian, May 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/02/france-and-australia-can-be-heart-of-new-indo-pacific-axis-macron-says>

Juncker, this plan is “an opportunity to shape our future as a new, ambitious union of 27.”<sup>47</sup>

- **Eurozone growth slows down at 0.4%**

Eurozone economic growth slowed during the first quarter of 2018, according to Eurostat data. The 0.4% expansion of the Eurozone economy has been the weakest in six quarters, after registering 0.7% growth during the last quarter of 2017. Temporary factors, such as bad weather, played a part in the poor performance of the common currency club, but trade wars were also to blame only months after the Eurozone saw its GDP growing at its fastest pace in a decade. Data published by the EU’s statistics service also showed that the unemployment rate remained at its lowest level since December 2008, sitting at 8.5%.<sup>48</sup>

- **EU defence gets €20 billion budget boost**

The EU on 2 May announced plans to spend nearly €20 billion on defence over its next long-term budget, as the bloc seeks to boost its resilience to the perceived threat from Russia. After decades of failed attempts, EU members signed a defence cooperation agreement in December, spurred to action by Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and claims of state-sponsored cyberattacks. The sum includes €6.5 billion for “military mobility”, an ambitious project to make it easier to move troops and equipment around the continent that NATO commanders say is essential to present a credible deterrent to would-be aggressors. But the bulk of the money – €13 billion – will go to the European Defence Fund, unveiled last June as part of French-German efforts to give the bloc fresh impetus in the wake of Brexit.<sup>49</sup>

- **Commission expects EU countries to set ‘high fines’ under new cybersecurity law**

European Commission officials who pushed through new cybersecurity legislation set to take effect next week are expecting EU countries to introduce high fines against companies that disobey the rules. So far, only the UK has announced the level of fines that firms will face if they do not inform regulators when they suffer a major cybersecurity incident. British authorities can impose sanctions of up to £17 million, or €19 million, if firms do not report serious data breaches. Commission officials expect other EU countries to set similarly high fines under the cybersecurity law. The directive is the first piece of EU-wide cybersecurity legislation, and national governments will need to start enforcing the law on 9 May. Under the new rules,

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<sup>47</sup> New Europe, 4 May 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/commission-tables-e1-279-trillion-eu-budget-plan-2021-2027/>

<sup>48</sup> Ne Europe, 2 May 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/eurozone-growth-slows-0-4/>

<sup>49</sup> Euractiv, 3 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/eu-defence-gets-e20-billion-budget-boost/>

national governments can choose the maximum level of fines that regulators can raise against companies.<sup>50</sup>

- **Basque separatist group Eta announces dissolution**

The Basque separatist group Eta, which killed more than 800 people during its 40-year terror campaign, has announced its full dissolution days after apologising to its victims and their families. In a letter dated 16 April, but published by a Spanish online newspaper on 2 May, the group informed Basque institutions and civil society groups that it had come to the end of its existence. The group, which abandoned its armed campaign seven years ago, said the move was part of a process intended to “bring about a new political cycle” in the Basque homeland.<sup>51</sup>

- **Germany starts to build Nord Stream 2**

Germany has started to pour concrete on a Russian gas pipeline that risks dividing the EU and harming its energy security. The construction began in Lubmin, on Germany's Baltic Sea coast, on Thursday (3 May), with the laying of foundations for a terminal that will receive 55bn cubic metres (bcm) a year of Russian gas via the Nord Stream 2 pipeline when it goes online in 2020. The Baltic pipeline is to run from Russia via the maritime zones of Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. Finland recently granted a permit, with the other two pending. Its opponents, including Poland, the Baltic states, and Nordic EU countries, have said Nord Stream 2 would help Russia to cut gas supplies to Western allies, including Ukraine, for strategic reasons.<sup>52</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Japan to host Trilateral-Summit with China, South Korea on May 9**

On May 2, 2018 Tokyo announced that it will host a summit with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Tokyo on May 9 to discuss regional issues. The meeting, which has been hosted in turn by each of the three nations since the first one was held in Japan in 2008, aims to strengthen dialogue and cooperation. It is the third time Japan has hosted the meeting. Regarding the meeting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, "I believe it will be an extremely important summit. I

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<sup>50</sup>Euractive, 4 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/cybersecurity/news/commission-expects-eu-countries-to-set-high-fines-under-new-cybersecurity-law/>

<sup>51</sup> The Guardian, 2 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/02/basque-separatist-group-eta-announces-dissolution>

<sup>52</sup> EU Observer, 4 May 2018, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/141756>

plan to have heart-to-heart talks with President Moon and Premier Li”.. and “hope to discuss thoroughly how we can get North Korea to walk on the right path”.<sup>53</sup>

- **South Korean President Moon to meet President Trump on May 22**

On May 4, 2018, South Korean Presidential Office announced that President Moon Jae-in will meet US President Donald Trump in White House on May 22 to discuss the upcoming US-North Korea Summit. Moon is expected to share the detailed outcome of his summit with Kim last month and convey the North Korean leader’s intentions to Trump. The presidential office said in a statement that the two leaders would “have an in-depth discussion over ways to make sure the North-U.S. summit will be successful on the back of achievements forged in the April 27 summit.” On the upcoming Moon-Trump meeting, the White House said the two “will continue their close coordination on developments regarding the Korean Peninsula following the April 27 inter-Korean summit,” and discuss “Trump’s upcoming meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.” The announcement on the Seoul-Washington summit was made following a visit by Chung Eui-yong, head South Korea’s National Security Office, to the U.S. capital to meet with John Bolton, the U.S. national security adviser.<sup>54</sup>

- **Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visits Pyongyang**

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi kicked off a two-day trip to Pyongyang on May 2-3, the first such trip in over a decade, ahead of a high-stakes summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump. During his visit Councilor Wang met North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and has meeting with foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho. According to North Korean newspaper Rodong Sinmun, during the meeting between Kim and Wang, there were wide-ranging and in-depth exchanges of opinions on the matter of comprehensively carrying forward and developing in depth the unity and traditional friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries and the issues of mutual concern including the direction and prospect of the development of the situation on the Korean peninsula.<sup>55</sup>

- **South Korea pullback propaganda speakers from the border**

On May 2, 2018, South Korea removed loudspeakers that blare K-pop and propaganda into North Korea, implementing an agreement that the two countries signed at their summit on April 28, to cease broadcasts across the border. The speakers, which served as weapons of psychological warfare, had already been silent since April 23, when the South Korean military turned them off in hopes of easing tension and creating a

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<sup>53</sup> "Japan to host summit with China, South Korea on May 9", Asahi Shimbun, May 2, 2018, [www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201805020020.html](http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201805020020.html)

<sup>54</sup> "Moon, Trump to discuss talks with North", JoongAng Daily, May 7, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3047788&cloc=joongangdaily|home|top](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3047788&cloc=joongangdaily|home|top)

<sup>55</sup> "Kim Jong Un Meets FM of China", Rodong Sinmun, May 4, 2018, [http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01\\_02\\_01&newsID=2018-05-04-0001](http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2018-05-04-0001)

conciliatory mood ahead of Friday's historic meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.<sup>56</sup>

- **North Korea resets its time standard**

On April 30, 2018, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK adopted a decree "On Resetting Pyongyang Time". According North Korean sources the decree reads, "the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK decides as follows to unify the times of the north and the south. The new time standard came into effect on May 5, 2018. Previously, Pyongyang time was 30 minutes later compared to Seoul."<sup>57</sup>

- **Abe, Xi agree to cooperate in tackling N. Korea nuclear issue**

On May 3, 2018 in a landmark telephone conversation, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping on agreed to closely cooperate in resolving the North Korean nuclear and missile issues and confirmed the importance of U.N. sanctions against the North to achieve that goal. The agreement was made during their telephone conversation, the first telephone talks ever between a Japanese prime minister and Chinese president — demonstrating the rapidly warming ties between Asia's two biggest powers. According to Japanese government sources, the two leaders also agreed to cooperate on resolving the abduction issue.<sup>58</sup>

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

- **Indonesia to host the Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo 2018**

Around 5,500 navy personnel from 37 countries which include China, the US, Russia, France, UK, etc, are set to participate in the 2018 Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo (MNEK). The MNEK for 2018 on the theme "Cooperation to respond [to] disasters and humanitarian issues" will be held in Lombok waters, West Nusa Tenggara, from May 5-9. According to Indonesian Navy's Eastern Fleet spokesperson Lt. Col. Suratno, "Out of a total of 51 war vessels, 35 units belong to the Indonesian Navy while 16 others are from our [allies]". This joint exercise aims to strengthen naval cooperation among countries in tackling disaster and humanitarian problems, especially those that occur in the sea. The MNEK is a biennial joint naval exercise between the Indonesian Navy and the navies of other countries. It will be the third time for Indonesia to host the

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<sup>56</sup> "South pulls back its speakers from border", Korea JoongAng Daily, May 2, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3047600](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3047600)

<sup>57</sup> "SPA Presidium of DPRK Decides to Reset Pyongyang Time", Rodong Sinmun, May 2, 2018, [http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01\\_02\\_01&newsID=2018-05-02-0003](http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2018-05-02-0003)

<sup>58</sup> "Abe, Xi agree to cooperate in tackling N. Korea nuclear issue", Japan Times, May 5, 2018, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/05/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-xi-agree-cooperate-tackling-n-korea-nuclear-issue/#.Wu87zpe\\_PIU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/05/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-xi-agree-cooperate-tackling-n-korea-nuclear-issue/#.Wu87zpe_PIU)

event. In 2014, the MNEK was held in Batam, Anambas and Natuna waters while in 2016, it was held at Padang and Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra.<sup>59</sup>

- **Indonesia seeks greater role of ASEAN in building the Indo-Pacific Framework**

At the 32<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit in Singapore, Indonesia has urged ASEAN to strengthen its unity and take a central role in developing the framework of the Indo-Pacific strategy to move toward inclusive cooperation. President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo speaking at the Summit stated that, ASEAN must be able to play a role in developing the framework of Indo-Pacific cooperation which is important for ASEAN to stay relevant and maintain its centrality. President Jokowi said that for ASEAN to realize the goal, it needed to create an environment that was conducive to cooperation, address security challenges, including transnational crimes, and be proactive in establishing a new centre for economic growth. He brought to the table Indonesia's proposal on the Indo-Pacific strategy, which calls for cooperation among all countries with Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean coasts. Jakarta's proposal on the Indo-Pacific concept was previously conveyed by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi to her Southeast Asian counterparts during a retreat session of the ASEAN Summit in January. Indonesia has also held dialogues on the Indo-Pacific strategy with representatives of several country partners in the past, including the United States and Japan.<sup>60</sup>

- **Philippines verifying China's Missiles deployment on the disputed Spratly Island**

According to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano, the Philippine government is still verifying reports that China has quietly deployed missile system in the Spratly Islands despite China's foreign ministry already conforming to the missile deployment. CNBC earlier reported that China has installed anti-ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles on three Manila-claimed reefs in the area—Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef and Subi Reef. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying stated that the [deployment of defence facilities](#) in its "big three" islands was meant to safeguard China's sovereignty and security. Mr Cayetano said that the missiles were "not directed against us", while stressing that the Philippines would take every diplomatic action to protect its interest.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Panca Nugraha, "51 war vessels to participate in Lombok naval exercise", *The Jakarta Post*, May 1, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/01/51-war-vessels-to-participate-in-lombok-naval-exercise.html>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Marguerite Afrasapiie, "Indonesia wants ASEAN to take central role in developing Indo-Pacific cooperation", *The Jakarta Post*, April 29, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2018/04/29/indonesia-wants-asean-to-take-central-role-in-developing-indo-pacific-cooperation.html>, accessed on May 2, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Patricia Lourdes Viray, "Philippines still verifying missiles in Spratlys amid China's confirmation", *Phil Star Global*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/05/04/1812123/philippines-still-verifying-missiles-spratlys-amid-chinas-confirmation>, accessed on May 4, 2018.



## Myanmar

- **Ministry of the Office of The State Counsellor: Press Release**

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor in the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, met members of the United Nations Security Council on their visit. She welcomed the opportunity to discuss the situation in Rakhine State with them. “The Government of Myanmar is pleased to working in partnership with the United Nations to deal with many serious challenges that our country faces” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. “In particular, the engagement of UN agencies in Rakhine will strengthen the government’s ability to ensure that refugees can return safety, without fear”. The government of Myanmar is discussing a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The government of Myanmar believes this is the appropriate time for those bodies to work alongside Union Ministries and the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development for the good for all people in Rakhine<sup>62</sup>.

- **Government readies history of Northern Rakhine migration**

The contributions from Asian and European historians will be added in compiling the history of Muslim people who emigrated to northern Rakhine State to make it more credible, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko has said. The draft of the history of Muslim migration to northern Rakhine has been completed by local scholars and sent to the State Counsellor, but as more contributions from foreign experts are still coming, they will be added in the draft, he said<sup>63</sup>.

- **Refugees will be safe in areas ‘designated’ for them: Myanmar army chief**

Rohingya refugees who return to Myanmar will be safe as long as they stay in the model villages built for them, the country's army chief has said, renewing fears they will be kept in settlements indefinitely. "There is no need to be worried about their security if they stay in the areas designated for them," he told the delegation, according to a readout of the meeting posted on Min Aung Hlaing's official Facebook page on 5<sup>th</sup> May<sup>64</sup>.

- **India launches disaster mitigation systems in Myanmar**

The Ambassador of India, Mr. Vikram Misri, has inaugurated two projects supported by the Government of India – for developing Long-Lead Flood Early Warning System

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<sup>62</sup> MINISTRY OF THE OFFICE OF THE STATE COUNSELLOR PRESS RELEASE, 1 May 2018, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1921>

<sup>63</sup> Government readies history of northern Rakhine migration, 7 May 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-readies-history-northern-rakhine-migration.html>

<sup>64</sup> Refugees will be safe in areas ‘designated’ for them: Myanmar army chief, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/refugees-will-be-safe-areas-%E2%80%98designated%E2%80%99-them-myanmar-army-chief>

and Earthquake Monitoring System in Myanmar. The announcement was made at a press conference in Yangon on 4 May<sup>65</sup>.

- **Islamic nations seek global pressure on Myanmar over refugee crisis**

Islamic foreign ministers on Sunday launched a campaign to mobilise international support for action against Myanmar over the Rohingya refugee crisis, officials said. Foreign ministers and diplomats of the 53-member Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) set up a campaign committee during two days of talks in the Bangladesh capital Dhaka. OIC secretary general Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen called the move a key step toward ending a crisis caused by the exodus of about 700,000 Muslim Rohingya from Buddhist-majority Myanmar into camps in Bangladesh<sup>66</sup>.

- **ADB ready to help with Rakhine crisis**

The Asian Development Bank said it stands ready to fund efforts by Bangladesh and Myanmar in dealing with the Rohingya refugee crisis. ADB president Takehiko Nakao made the pledge at a news conference during the opening of the bank's annual general meeting in the Philippine capital of Manila, where the regional development bank is headquartered. Saying the bank was aware of the serious impact of the refugee crisis on the economies of Bangladesh and Myanmar, Nakao said, "We are prepared to support the countries which are recovering -- livelihood of those people and health and other sectors<sup>67</sup>."

## North America

### Canada

- **Party leaders to square off in 1st debate ahead of Ontario election**

The leaders of Ontario's three main political parties will square off on the same stage for the first time, just days before the official start of the province's spring election campaign. Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne, Progressive Conservative Leader Doug Ford and New Democratic Party Leader Andrea Horwath will all participate in the live debate in Toronto. It's the first of three debates scheduled before the June 7 vote and

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<sup>65</sup> India launches disaster mitigation systems in Myanmar, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/development-news/india-launches-disaster-mitigation-systems-myanmar>

<sup>66</sup> Islamic nations seek global pressure on Myanmar over refugee crisis, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-international/islamic-nations-seek-global-pressure-myanmar-over-refugee-crisis>

<sup>67</sup> ADB ready to help with Rakhine crisis, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/adb-ready-help-rakhine-crisis.html>

observers say it will give voters a clear view of how the parties and their leaders intend to campaign once the writ drops two days later.<sup>68</sup>

- **Canada's Trudeau grilled on efforts to turn back asylum seekers**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his ministers faced questions in parliament on after Reuters reported that Canada wants the legal authority to turn back thousands of asylum seekers crossing the border illegally. A Canadian official familiar with the matter told Reuters that Canada wants to amend a bilateral agreement to allow it to block border-crossing refugee claimants but that the United States is not cooperating. Under the Safe Third Country Agreement, or STCA, asylum seekers who arrive at a formal Canada-U.S. border crossing going in either direction are turned back and told to apply for asylum in the first country they arrived in. Canada wants the agreement rewritten to apply to the entire border. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has said it is reviewing Canada's proposal but has not made a decision. Immigration and Refugee Minister Ahmed Hussen would not say what Canada is asking the U.S. for, telling reporters there were no "formal negotiations" ongoing. But political opponents contrasted the Liberal government's welcoming rhetoric with officials' efforts to block asylum seekers.<sup>69</sup>

- **India could seek extradition of alleged Sikh militant based in Surrey, B.C.**

India's counter-terrorism law enforcement agency has registered a First Information Report (FIR) against a Surrey, B.C. man accused of plotting to carry out a major terrorist attack in India's Punjab state. Hardeep Singh Nijjar is accused of "conspiring and planning to carry out a major terrorist attack in India," the National Investigation Agency said in its Thursday FIR filing, a key step towards pursuing extradition per India's extradition treaty with Canada. Nijjar is no stranger to the Modi government, which previously filed an FIR against him in 2016 after claiming that he was actively working to "promote disharmony between different groups on grounds of religion and revive terrorism in the state of Punjab." He was also accused of running terror camps in B.C., and linked with a 2007 blast that killed six and injured 42 in the city of Ludhiana in Punjab, according to a 2016 report in the Times of India. Nijjar responded to the 2016 FIR by penning an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in which he admitted to participating in Sikh nationalist activism, but denied being involved in any acts of violence.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The Canadian Press, "Party leaders to square off in 1st debate ahead of Ontario election," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-debate-2018-1.4650966>, Accessed on 07 May 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Anna Mehler Paperny, "Canada's Trudeau grilled on efforts to turn back asylum seekers," Accessed on 07 May 2018

<sup>70</sup> Rahul Kalvapalle, "India could seek extradition of alleged Sikh militant based in Surrey, B.C.," <https://globalnews.ca/news/4189882/hardeep-singh-nijjar-fir-india-canada/>, Accessed on 07 May 2018.

## The United States

- **Giuliani won't rule out Trump taking the fifth in Mueller's Russia investigation**

Donald Trump's new attorney, Rudy Giuliani, would not on Sunday rule out the possibility that the president would assert his fifth amendment right against self-incrimination in the Russia investigation. Trump has expressed openness to an interview with the special counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian election interference and alleged links between Trump aides and Moscow. Giuliani said he would strongly advise Trump against it. Giuliani's latest interview came after days of conflicting statements about the investigations into the president. The former New York City mayor, who was hired by Trump last month, said he was still learning the facts of the Mueller case and Trump's knowledge of a \$130,000 hush payment to the adult-film actor Stormy Daniels.<sup>71</sup>

- **Trump: U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea is not on the table — for now**

President Trump said that he will not offer to remove U.S. troops from South Korea or reduce their presence there during his summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. But Trump left open the possibility of doing so in the future. Speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews, Trump said he was not considering such a move "at this moment" and emphasized that Pyongyang has not asked the United States to do so. But Trump added that "at some point in the future, I'd like to save the money" that it costs to base 30,000 troops on the peninsula, a security arrangement that has been in place since the Korean War armistice in 1953. Trump said a date and location have been decided for the summit with Kim, but he declined to disclose those details, saying they would be announced soon. The president has said that Singapore and the demilitarized zone between North Korea and South Korea were under consideration, and he has said the summit could take place in late May or early June<sup>72</sup>

- **India-US 2+2 Dialogue in Washington likely in late summer of 2018**

The postponed India-US 'two-plus-two ministerial dialogue' could be held in late summer this year, persons familiar with the development said, after the US Senate last week confirmed Mike Pompeo as the new Secretary of State. The meeting between the foreign and defence heads of the two nations, earlier scheduled for April 18-19, had to be postponed due to the uncertainty over the confirmation of the nomination of Pompeo. In March, US President Donald Trump had decided to replace the the then

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<sup>71</sup> The Guardian Staff and agencies, "Giuliani won't rule out Trump taking the fifth in Mueller's Russia investigation," <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/06/giuliani-trump-taking-the-fifth-mueller-russia>, Accessed on 07 May 2018.

<sup>72</sup> David Nakamura, "Trump: U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea is not on the table — for now," [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2018/05/04/trump-u-s-troop-withdrawal-from-south-korea-is-not-on-the-table-for-now/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.525715fdb652](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2018/05/04/trump-u-s-troop-withdrawal-from-south-korea-is-not-on-the-table-for-now/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.525715fdb652), Accessed on 07 May 2018.

Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, with 54-year-old Pompeo, a former director of the CIA. At a press conference on Thursday, chief Pentagon press secretary Dana White said the talks would be rescheduled, but did not give a date. It will be the first India-US 'two-plus-two' which will review bilateral relations in the context of the changing geo-politics in the Indo-Pacific, Eurasian and West Asian regions. It is understood that key developments in global politics will be discussed.<sup>73</sup>

## Mexico

- **Mexico's Ruling Party is a Dead Man Walking**

As Mexico hurtles toward a momentous election this July, the storied Institutional Revolutionary Party that dominated the country for nearly a century seems doomed. Sadly, however, while the PRI may implode, the clientelist system it created — and that holds Mexico back — will likely roll on. President Enrique Peña Nieto was going to be the PRI's savior. After the party's heavy legislative losses and dismal third-place showing in the 2006 presidential race, the photogenic governor used his political lineage, his made-for-TV personal story, and a revitalized party machine to win the 2012 election by some 3 million votes, and make the PRI again the largest party in both houses of Congress. After 12 years out in the cold, the PRI looked as if it was back and had adapted to a more democratic era. Olls portend the PRI's imminent dissolution. Its presidential candidate Jose Antonio Meade ranks a low third with voters — many surveys put fewer than two in 10 Mexicans in his corner. At the state level, the party trails the others in all but Campeche, which holds less than 1 percent of the country's population. It looks to surrender more than 30 of its current 55 Senate spots, and upwards of 100 seats in the House, leaving it third in terms of size and influence in a new Congress.<sup>74</sup>

- **Major issues still outstanding in NAFTA talks: Mexico**

Mexico's economy secretary has said here that much remains to be done before negotiations with the US and Canada on updating the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement can be deemed a success. Among the "very important" matters that remain to be settled are dispute-resolution mechanisms, rules of origin in the automotive sector and rules for agricultural trade, Ildefonso Guajardo told a press conference in Mexico City. "We are still at the negotiating table discussing a series of issues that have to be accommodated in a way that is positive for the three countries,"

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<sup>73</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India-US 2+2 Dialogue in Washington likely in late summer of 2018," <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-us-22-dialogue-in-washington-likely-in-late-summer-of-2018/articleshow/64031692.cms>, Accessed on 07 May 2018002E

<sup>74</sup> Shannon O'Neil, "Mexico's Ruling Party Is a Dead Man Walking," <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-05-03/mexico-s-ruling-pri-party-is-a-dead-man-walking>, Accessed on 07 May 2018

he said. “A negotiation cannot be declared successful until all of its issues are resolved.”<sup>75</sup>

## Latin America and the Caribbean

### Venezuela

- **Venezuela slams 'supremacist policies' of Pompeo, Trump 'regime'**

Venezuela slammed comments by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about the government of President Nicolas Maduro, denouncing “supremacist policies” and aggression by the “regime of Donald Trump.” In a speech, Pompeo said that “a dictator today in Venezuela cripples his economy and starves his people,” and urged the State Department help to those who flee the crisis-stricken country. “Mr. Pompeo shows false concern for the reality of Venezuela, while hiding the perverse effects of the unilateral coercive measures of his government,” Venezuela’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement, referring to financial sanctions levied against Venezuela by the Trump government. It said Trump’s government “has launched erratic maneuvers, typical of the arrogance and despair of imperialist politics, after having failed once and again in the face of the will of a free and independent people.”<sup>76</sup>

### Jamaica

- **Regional conservation body creating revolutionary map of Caribbean Basin**

The Nature Conservancy in the Caribbean has launched a ground-breaking initiative along with the Carnegie Institution for Science and Planet — a company that collects daily satellite imagery on a global scale — to create the first-ever, high-resolution map of the shallow waters of the entire Caribbean Basin. The goal of this initiative is to understand coral reef ecosystems in a comprehensive way in order to effectively plan for coral reef restoration and protection. “This advanced technology offers hope for vulnerable reefs, the marine wildlife that inhabits them, and the people whose livelihoods depend on them,” said The Nature Conservancy. The specialised aircraft, called the Carnegie Airborne Observatory (CAO), has already launched missions in St Croix, US Virgin Islands, where it is mapping critical reef habitats. The plane will fly two subsequent missions a day for 16 straight days, first in the Virgin Islands and then over the Dominican Republic, gathering detailed data of both healthy and degraded

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<sup>75</sup> IANS, “Major issues still outstanding in NAFTA talks: Mexico,” <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/major-issues-still-outstanding-in-nafta-talks-mexico/1152555/>, Accessed on 07 May 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Reuters, “Venezuela slams 'supremacist policies' of Pompeo, Trump 'regime',” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics/venezuela-slams-supremacist-policies-of-pompeo-trump-regime-idUSKBN1I8036>, Accessed on 07 May 2018.

coral reef ecosystems. The company says the plan is to expand this aerial imaging and mapping throughout the Caribbean.<sup>77</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia and the Internal Politics**

On 5 May, more than one thousand people were detained across Russia at protests against his extended rule. It was the first major protest against Putin since January. Then, opposition politician Alexei Navalny had called for a boycott of the March elections after he was barred from standing due to a fraud conviction that his supporters say is politically motivated. The mostly peaceful protests drew thousands onto the streets. Unlike January's demonstration, the protests on 5 May turned violent. While thousands across the country — from Vladivostok in the Far East to Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea — marched in the protests which were called by Navalny last month, it was in the capital where the clashes were most severe. Then came the arrests. Only fifteen minutes after Navalny's supporters arrived en masse, riot police, known colloquially as “cosmonauts” for their bulbous helmets and armor, spilled into the square, snatching protesters one by one.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, on 7 May, Vladimir Putin is taking the oath of office in the Kremlin after being re-elected as president for a fourth term. The swearing-in ceremony is to take place at the Andreyevsky Hall of the Kremlin Grand Palace.<sup>79</sup> On the same day before the inauguration, President Putin thanked the government for their efforts in overcoming past challenges, and briefly outlined future ones, in a meeting with a cabinet that will resign on 7 May. The Russian government, headed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, will resign on the day of the inauguration (scheduled for 7 May), although its members will temporarily retain their positions until a new cabinet has been formed. The president stressed that over the last six years they, the longest-serving Russian government ever, have faced a number of “*new challenges and extraordinary events in the country as well as in the world.*” “*The work of the government was mainly focused on implementation of the May decrees of 2012. Yes, there were difficulties, problems, not all achievements have been perfected to a T... But, I will repeat myself, there are tangible results, some dynamic changes. The strategic trajectory for development has been set right,*” the president added. Putin's so-called

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<sup>77</sup> ----Regional conservation body creating revolutionary map of Caribbean Basin”, [http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/regional-conservation-body-creating-revolutionary-map-of-caribbean-basin\\_132495?profile=1373](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/regional-conservation-body-creating-revolutionary-map-of-caribbean-basin_132495?profile=1373), Accessed on 07 May 2018.

<sup>78</sup>“He's Not Our Tsar': Russians Protest Putin Ahead of Inauguration”, *The Moscow Times*, May 5, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/navalny-61362> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>79</sup>“Russian presidential inauguration ceremony underway in Moscow (WATCH LIVE)”, *RT*, May 7, 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/426009-vladimir-putin-inauguration-ceremony/> Accessed on May 7, 2018.



'May decrees' of 2012 focused on economic and demographic policies, education, scientific research and healthcare, among other developmental aspects.<sup>80</sup>

A total of 82 percent of Russians approve of President Vladimir Putin's achievements, according to a poll conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center between 2-3 May 2018. The report said that women, elderly respondents, rural residents and wealthy people tend to respond positively more often than other groups.<sup>81</sup> This is Putin's fourth term as head of state. His first two terms lasted four years each. The head of state's tenure was extended to six years after the Russian Constitution had been amended. Putin's first six-year term began in 2012, while the second term of office will end on May 7, 2024. According to Article 81 of Russia's Constitution, an individual cannot serve as president for more than two consecutive terms. After winning the presidential race in March 2018, Putin commented on his possible return to the presidency in 2030, dismissing such assumptions as ridiculous.<sup>82</sup>

- **Syria**

French Ambassador to Russia Sylvie Bermann said in an interview with the *Kommersant* on 6 May that Paris no longer insists on resignation of Syrian President Bashar Assad as a precondition for settling the conflict in that country. "We will not decide for the Syrian people but Bashar Assad's unconditioned resignation is out of the question," she said, adding however that France is against the situation when control over territories liberated from terrorists and opposition militants is simply taken by Damascus.<sup>83</sup>

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova highlighted on 6 May the role of Iran's anti-terrorist activity in Syria. "In the search for a political settlement and efficient anti-terrorist activity in Syria, Iran can play and does plan an indeed effective and important role in fight against terrorism," the diplomat said. The Islamic Republic News Agency quoted her as saying that Iran's role in fight against terrorism was important not only for Syria, but for the whole region as well. The Russian diplomat also noted that an attitude to Iran, first of that of the US, "will bring neither peace nor

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<sup>80</sup>"Putin talks past & future challenges, thanks incumbent cabinet ahead of inauguration", *RT*, May 7, 2018. <https://www.rt.com/politics/425990-putin-ministers-meeting-inauguration/> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>81</sup>"Overwhelming majority of Russians approve of Putin's performance, poll indicates", *TASS*, May 7, 2018. <http://tass.com/society/1003080> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>82</sup>"Putin takes office for second six-year term as Russia's president", *TASS*, May 7, 2018. <http://tass.com/politics/1003092> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>83</sup>"France no longer insists on Assad's resignation - ambassador to Russia", *TASS*, May 6, 2018. <http://tass.com/world/1003046> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

tranquility in the region, will not make Europe more secure".<sup>84</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Kabul Suicide Attack Deadliest Day for Afghan Journalists**

A suicide attack killed nine Afghan journalists that included photographers, cameramen and reporters on 30 April 2018 in the capital Kabul. The attack was referred as the one of the worst attacks on journalists. Najib Danesh, spokesman of interior ministry said, "The bomber appeared to have deliberately targeted journalists, presenting a press card to police before joining the group standing near the first blast site". The Islamic State (IS) claimed the responsibility of both attacks.<sup>85</sup>

- **Iran 'Shares Info On Daesh' With Afghan Govt**

On 3 May 2018, Iran's Ambassador to Afghanistan Reza Bahrami maintained that Iran had shared valuable information with Afghanistan on the issue of Daesh's infiltration into the country. Both countries are worried on account of rise of Daesh activities in the region. According to him, "One part of confidential information by security services about details of the transfer of some members of Daesh from other areas into Afghanistan were given to security systems of Afghanistan".<sup>86</sup>

- **Pakistan Can Do More To Help US In Afghanistan: Pentagon**

On 3 May 2018, the US Department of Defense viewed that both Pakistan and US have numerous opportunities to bring stability in Afghanistan. Differences of opinion have been going on between the US and Pakistan in their counter-terrorism operations. Dana White, a spokesperson for US Department of State said, "with respect to Pakistan, we have opportunities with Pakistan. We think Pakistan can do more, and we'll look to them and work with them to find opportunities to further regional security". In Afghanistan, one, we have to remember that the Taliban and ISIS (Daesh), their motive is to scare people. It's fear. And they are purposely targeting

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<sup>84</sup>"Russian diplomat highlights Iran's role in fight against terrorism in Syria", TASS, May 6, 2018. <http://tass.com/politics/1003023> Accessed on May 7, 2018.

<sup>85</sup>"Kabul Suicide Attack Deadliest Day for Afghan Journalists," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 1, 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20827](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20827), accessed on May 1, 2018.

<sup>86</sup>Tolo News, 3 May 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/iran-%E2%80%98shares-info-daesh%E2%80%99-afghan-govt>

voting registration. That is what they're doing in order to ensure -- because they can't win at the ballot box".<sup>87</sup>

- **New Alliance Formed Ahead of Afghan Elections**

New alliances have emerged for the upcoming parliamentary and provincial elections. Afghan Second Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum, a prominent Afghan Uzbek-ethnic leader along with General Atta Mohammad Noor, the former influential governor of northern Balkh province formed "great national alliance of Afghanistan". According to General Noor, "This alliance would execute to strengthen and reform the government, as well as to play an essential and leading role in provincial, parliamentary, and presidential elections".<sup>88</sup>

- **MPs Call For Consensus On National Issues By Govt Leaders**

A serious disagreement occurred amongst government leaders with regard to a policy issue. President Ashraf Ghani's decision to start the roll out of Electronic Identify Cards (e-NIC) attracted severe criticisms from the members of Afghanistan's Wolesi Jirga. Earlier CEO Abdullah Abdullah also criticised this move of the government. In addition, according to first deputy of senate, speaker Mohammad Alam Ezedyar, "Leaders of national unity government need to address issues of national importance with unity and consensus and avoid any kind of brawls and disagreement". Daud Kalakani, M.P viewed that this kind of situation would weaken Afghan society, strengthening its enemy. However, Afghan population asked the government to resolve their dispute and focus more on real issues like unemployment, poverty and increase of suicides in the country.<sup>89</sup>

## Bangladesh

- **OIC wants Global Pressure on Myanmar**

Islamic foreign ministers on Sunday (May 6) launched a campaign to mobilise international support for action against Myanmar over the Rohingya crisis. Foreign ministers and diplomats of the 53-member Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) set up a campaign committee during two days of talks in the capital Dhaka. OIC secretary general Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen called the move a key step toward ending a crisis caused by the exodus of about 700,000 Muslim Rohingya from Buddhist-majority Myanmar into camps in Bangladesh. He said the new committee

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<sup>87</sup> "Pakistan Can Do More To Help US In Afghanistan: Pentagon," *Tolo News*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistan-can-do-more-%E2%80%98-help-us-afghanistan%E2%80%99-says-pentagon>, accessed on May 4, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> "New Alliance Formed Ahead of Afghan Elections," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 6, 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20862](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20862), accessed on May 6, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> "MPs Call For Consensus On National Issues By Govt Leaders," *Tolo News*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/mps-call-consensus-national-issues-govt-leaders>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

would "mobilise and coordinate international political support for accountability for human rights violations against the Rohingya community."<sup>90</sup>

- **MoU Signed with China for Padma Bridge Rail Link**

The government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Exim Bank of China for the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project. "Bangladesh government and the Exim Bank of China signed a MoU worth \$2,667.94 million (around Tk21,036.70 crore) for the much-awaited Padma Bridge rail link project on April 27 in Beijing," Railways Minister Md Mujibul Haque said.<sup>91</sup>

- **BNP Demands EC Reconstitution**

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Saturday (May 5) demanded reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) with neutral persons before the announcement of the schedule for the next general election, reports UNB. The party also turned down the recent re-demarcation of 25 parliamentary constituencies by the commission for what he said doing it with a 'motive to help' Awami League candidates in the next polls. "We reject the re-delimitation of the 25 parliamentary seats as the Election Commission did it abusing its power," said BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed. Speaking at a discussion, he further said, "We would like to say a fair and credible election is not possible under the current Election Commission. That's why the current commission must be reconstituted before the announcement of the next national election."<sup>92</sup>

- **Political Stability a Big Challenge: ADB**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said it remains very optimistic about Bangladesh's continuous growth but how the country will maintain the current political stability remains a big challenge. "It's a big challenge for Bangladesh how it will maintain political stability. Political stability is very important," ADB's director general of South Asia Regional Department Hun Kim told UNB. With political stability, he said, bureaucrats become more accountable, motivating and empowered ones enabling the development trend to continue.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "OIC wants global pressure on Myanmar," *Prothom Alo*, May 6, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/175148/OIC-wants-global-pressure-on-Myanmar>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> "MoU signed with China for Padma Bridge rail link," *Dhaka Tribune*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/05/06/mou-signed-china-padma-bridge-rail-link/>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> "BNP demands EC reconstitution," *Prothom Alo*, May 6, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/175107/BNP-demands-EC-reconstitution>, accessed on May 6, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> "Political stability a big challenge: ADB," *Prothom Alo*, May 5, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/economy/news/175069/Maintaining-political-stability-in-Bangladesh-a>, accessed on May 5, 2018.

## Indian Ocean Region

- **Chinese Military movement has raised concerns about China's intent in the region: Admiral Sunil Lanba**

Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba said that the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) is here to stay in the Indian Ocean.<sup>94</sup> Addressing a function organised for the presentation of all gallantry and non-gallantry awards announced by the President on the Republic Day this year, at the Southern Naval Command (SNC) in Kochi, he said that PLAN's movements in the Indian Ocean has raised concerns about Chinese motives in the region.<sup>95</sup> Hence, Indian Navy is keeping eyes on "the pattern and periodicity of extra-regional deployments"<sup>96</sup> in the Indian Ocean Region, further he mentioned.<sup>97</sup> "At any given time, they (China) have six to seven warships deployed in the region. Also, they send two conventional submarines to the area every year. This year we have detected no submarine movement,"<sup>98</sup> he said.

- **INS Tarangini is on three-day visit to Jeddah**

INS Tarangini, reached Jeddah on May 05, 2018.<sup>99</sup> The ship, with the theme "Sailing through Different Oceans and Uniting Nations"<sup>100</sup>, was on three day visit to Jeddah as part of a seven-month long to 13 countries including Saudi Arabia.<sup>101</sup> Speaking to media onboard INS Tarangini, Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ahmad Javed, said that the arrival of this ship at Saudi coast reflects the growing ties between the two countries – India and Saudi Arabia. "Building upon the rich and longstanding relations that have existed between India and Saudi Arabia, both nations have developed warm relations in several spheres. The current visit seeks to underscore India's peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly countries of the Indian Ocean and, in particular, to strengthen the existing bonds between India and Saudi Arabia,"<sup>102</sup> Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia quoted by media. .

- **India and the US discussed maritime security in the Indo-Pacific**

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<sup>94</sup> China here to stay in Indian Ocean, its military movement cause for concern: Navy chief Sunil Lanba, May 07, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-here-to-stay-in-indian-ocean-its-military-movement-cause-for-concern-navy-chief-sunil-lanba/story-9IXNkSBEhTOetMPEX3qZ8l.html> (Accessed on 07 May 2018).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Indian navy ship in Jeddah on a visit aimed at enhancing defence cooperation, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/313412-indian-navy-ship-in-jeddah-on-a-visit-aimed-at-enhancing-defence-cooperation> (Accessed on 07 May 2018).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

India and the US during their third round of Maritime Security Dialogue discussed cooperation and developments in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>103</sup> The third round of the Dialogue was held on 30 April-01 May, 2018 in Goa. According to press release issued by MEA, "during the Dialogue, the two sides discussed developments in the maritime domain in the Indo-Pacific Region and exchanged views on ways to further strengthen bilateral maritime security cooperation. They also reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during the previous Maritime Security Dialogues."<sup>104</sup> "The Indian delegation was led jointly by Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Joint Secretary (D&ISA), Shri Munu Mahawar, Joint Secretary (AMS), Ministry of External Affairs and Smt. Richa Misra, Joint Secretary (Navy), Ministry of Defence. Mr. David Helvey, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs and Mr. Daniel Rosenblum, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs led the US side."<sup>105</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **International Maritime Boundary Line meeting Held**

The 29th International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) meeting between Sri Lanka and India was held onboard Indian Naval Ship 'Sumithra' at the Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Line off Kankasanthurai on 3rd May. The IMBL meeting is held to strengthen relationship and operational readiness between the navies and Coast Guard personnel of two neighbouring countries. During its 29th sitting, matters related to maritime security in the region were discussed at length. Mementoes were also exchanged to mark the significance of this occasion.<sup>106</sup>

- **NFF Condemns TNA's Attempt to Halt Construction of Temples**

The National Freedom Front (NFF) condemned the Tamil National Alliance's (TNA) alleged attempt to halt the construction of Buddhist temples in the Northern and Eastern regions. NFF National Organiser MP Jayantha Samaraweera said, according to media reports, the TNA had informed the Unity Government that it completely opposed the construction of Buddhist temples in the Northern and Eastern areas.<sup>107</sup>

- **FAM in Touch with Malaysian Authorities**

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<sup>103</sup> Indo-Pacific region in focus of India-US maritime talks, May 02, 2018,

<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/oSV6WkzVRzT14loWjt3bJJ/IndoPacific-region-in-focus-of-IndiaUS-maritime-talks.html> (Accessed on May 07, 2018)

<sup>104</sup> Third Round of the India-US Maritime Security Dialogue, Press Release, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, May 02, 2018, [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29858/Third\\_Round\\_of\\_the\\_IndiaUS\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Dialogue](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29858/Third_Round_of_the_IndiaUS_Maritime_Security_Dialogue) (Accessed on May 07, 2018)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Sri Lanka, India hold 29th International Maritime Boundary Line meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/20415-sri-lanka-india-hold-29th-international-maritime-boundary-line-meeting>

<sup>107</sup> Building of Buddhist temples in North, East-- NFF condemns TNA, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Building-of-Buddhist-temples-in-North-East-NFF-condemns-TNA-149555.html>.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FAM) in a statement said the Sri Lanka High Commission in Malaysia is working closely with the relevant Malaysian authorities over the detention of 131 Lankans taken into custody when the Malaysian police intercepted a tanker believed to be bound for Australia and New Zealand. It said the Royal Malaysian Police Special Branch had confirmed that 131 persons believed to be Sri Lankans have been detained at Tanjung Gamoh, Sedili, in Johor Baru on 1 May 2018.<sup>108</sup>

- **UNP will form its own Govt: PM**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe today said that the United National Party (UNP) would form its own government in 2020. “We will form a UNP government in 2020. This is the objective behind the party’s recent reorganisation. I am not looking at a government which will last only for five years but one that will last for 20 to 25 years. However, I will not be able to do it alone. Others in the party should come forward to fulfil this task,” he said at the UNP’s May Day rally held at the Sugathadasa Stadium<sup>109</sup>.

## Maldives

- **MDP Ready for Presidential Primary**

The Maldives’ largest opposition party said on Thursday (May 3) that it will hold its presidential primary on May 30. The Maldivian Democratic Party’s (MDP) National Committee met and voted on a resolution submitted by the party’s leader, former president Mohamed Nasheed. Nominations to stand will be open on May 15 and voting will take place on May 30 on a “one-member-one-vote” basis, according to a brief party statement.<sup>110</sup>

- **Ex-President Maumoon in poor health: family**

The detained former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was in poor health, claimed his family. Maumoon was arrested under the state of emergency declared after the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling on February 1, over the accusations of bribery and attempting to stage a coup. He has been charged with terrorism and remanded until the end of his trial.<sup>111</sup>

- **Maldives Drops on World Press Freedom Index**

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<sup>108</sup> 131 SL detainees: FAM in touch with Malaysian authorities, 6 May 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/-SL-detainees-FAM-in-touch-with-Malaysian-authorities-149553.html>

<sup>109</sup> UNP will form its own Govt. in 2020: PM, 5 May 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/UNP-will-form-its-own-Govt-in-PM-149560.html>

<sup>110</sup> MDP sets date for presidential primary, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/mdp-sets-date-for-presidential-primary-137901>

<sup>111</sup> Arrested ex-pres Maumoon in poor health: family, 3 May 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/arrested-ex-pres-maumoon-in-poor-health-family/>



The rank of the Maldives has again dropped in the World Press Freedom Index, compiled by the international NGO, Reporters Without Borders (RWB), to promote and defend the freedom of information across the world. According to the Paris-based organisation's annual index which analyses the freedom of press across 180 countries, the Maldives is currently ranked 120, three rankings down from the previous year's placing at 117. The nation's global score is 37.95 compared to the score of 39.30 in 2017.<sup>112</sup>

- **Resorts Could be Developed for \$16 Million: Saeed**

Economic Minister Mohamed Saeed has said that once the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China comes into effect, resorts that were developed with 20 million dollars could be developed for 16 million dollars. In addition he said that guest houses that now cost 1 million dollars could be developed for 800,000 dollars. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Hotelier Summit TTG 2018, the minister said that the FTA will come into effect this year and at once duty from 95% of the items imported from China will be waived. He said that this will decrease the price of many goods and it will benefit investors.<sup>113</sup>

- **Maumoon's Daughter Seeks Indian Support**

Detained former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's daughter, Dunya Maumoon, has appealed neighbouring India to push for the release of her father and other relatives arrested over the alleged coup of February 1. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs made the strong appeal in an interview to Deccan Chronicle newspaper during her current visit to the United Kingdom. She declared that the future of the Maldives was "uncertain" and "democracy may be failing".<sup>114</sup>

## West Asia

### Iraq and GCC

- **Iraq's top cleric opposes return to power of "corrupt" and "failed" leaders<sup>115</sup>**

Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, making a rare intervention into politics ahead of an election on May 12, said on Friday Iraqis "should avoid falling in the trap of those ... who are corrupt and those who failed, whether they have been already tried or not."

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<sup>112</sup> Maldives again drops on World Press Freedom Index, 3 May 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-again-drops-on-world-press-freedom-index/>

<sup>113</sup> Once FTA comes into effect resorts that were developed with 20 million dollars could be developed for 16 million dollars : Saeed, 30 April 2018, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10369>

<sup>114</sup> Ex-pres Maumoon's daughter seeks India support for father's release, 2 May 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/ex-pres-maumoons-daughter-seeks-india-support-for-fathers-release/>

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-election-sistani/iraqs-top-shiite-cleric-hints-at-renewed-opposition-to-maliki-return-idUSKBN1I511X>

Sistani, whose opinion is sacrosanct for millions in Iraq's Shi'ite Muslim majority and beyond, said he was keeping an "equal distance" from all candidates and did not identify any of them by name in his sermon, read by one of his envoys, Sheikh Abdulmehdi al-Karbalai, and broadcast on television. But the reference to Maliki was clear from his mention of the collapse of security forces in the face of Islamic State militants in 2014, when Maliki was in power. Sistani successfully blocked Maliki from taking the premiership after winning the 2014 election, paving the way for the appointment of the current prime minister, Haider al-Abadi.

- **Abadi orders new strikes on ISIS targets in Syria<sup>116</sup>**

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi orders the Air Force to strike Daesh leadership near al-Dashisha in Syrian territory," Abadi tweeted Sunday morning, using an Arabic name for ISIS. Iraqi Air force has been striking the militant group in Al-Dashisha, a desert region along the Syrian border with Iraq in Deir ez-Zor province. Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool said the strikes were carried out in coordination with the Syrian government and the global anti-ISIS coalition said they had provided intelligence support for the operation. On April 19, Iraqi jets struck ISIS targets in Syria, killing 36 fighters, including six leaders, a military official stated.

- **Turkey offers Iraq billions for reconstruction and second border gate<sup>117</sup>**

Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari headed a high-level delegation to the Turkish capital Ankara on Saturday where they met Turkey's Minister of Trade and Customs Bulent Tufenkci and other Turkish officials from business, education and energy sectors. "Iraq possesses the elements needed for standing up because it's rich with natural resources but it has faced exceptional circumstances such as a war with ISIS and a decline in oil prices," Jaafari was quoted by the foreign ministry as saying.

In a tweet, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that he and his Iraqi counterpart had discussed "cooperation between both countries in combating terrorism and participation in Iraq's reconstruction and we promised to offer \$5 billion." According to the statement, the Turkish minister of trade and customs Tufenkci had promised to work on expanding the Ibrahim Khalil border gate and opening a second one at Fish Khabur for increasing trade.

Relations between Turkey and Iraq soured in early 2016 when Turkish troops crossed the border and built a base at Bashiqa near Mosul, which is still a concern for Iraqi leaders. "The minister demanded the Turkish side to withdraw their troops from Iraqi territories," Jaafari was quoted in a foreign ministry statement as saying. "And he reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to helping regional countries in overcoming their crisis and sticking to good neighborly relations and not tolerating anyone trying to use Iraqi territories to destabilize neighboring or regional countries."

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<sup>116</sup> <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/060520181>

<sup>117</sup> <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/06052018>

## Turkey

- **Chronic human rights problems of Turkey during the EU accession process**

or a long time the Republic of Turkey has been associated with violations of human rights. Despite Turkey being a signatory to the fundamental conventions on human rights it has been unable to demonstrate stability as regards safeguarding these rights. In the human rights sphere Turkey made progress with reforms that began with the European Union (EU) accession process that started in 1999, and advanced further with radical changes to the constitution in 2004 made with the participation of deputies from the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The harmonisation laws introduced as an extension of this process and of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) brought in at least developments on the normative level. However, these normative changes were not sufficiently reciprocated in practice and were not sufficiently internalised by public mechanisms, in particular the security forces.<sup>118</sup>

- **Turkey's lira tumbles as inflation nears record high**

Turkish currency traders huddled in a tiny back street outside Istanbul's Grand Bazaar on Thursday, seeking euros and dollars. The lira has sunk to a new record low after the government said inflation is running higher than expected. Three dozen men with walkie-talkies and cellphones barked out orders at the open-outcry exchange at Tahtakale, an informal currency market located outside the 15th century bazaar that is the symbolic heart of Turkey's financial world.<sup>119</sup>

- **Turkish, South Korean agencies to boost cooperation**

The heads of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) signed an agreement Wednesday to boost cooperation in development activities. TIKA and KOICA agreed to renew a cooperation protocol in order to work together throughout the world, especially in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The head of TIKA, Serdar Cam, is in South Korea together with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, according to a press release from the Turkish aid agency. Erdogan's two-day trip makes him Turkey's first leader to pay a state visit to South Korea since the countries upgraded bilateral relations to

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<sup>118</sup> "Chronic human rights problems of Turkey during the EU accession process", 02 May 2018 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/ozgur-h-cinar/chronic-human-rights-problems-of-turkey-during-eu-accession-process>

<sup>119</sup> "Turkey's lira tumbles as inflation nears record high, 03 May 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/05/turkey-lira-falls-inflation-record-high.html>

the level of a strategic partnership in 2012, a year before signing a free trade agreement.<sup>120</sup>

- **Turkey vows to launch new cross-border military operations**

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan today said Turkey would launch cross-border offensives, like previous military operations in Syria, in the “new era” after snap polls on June 24. “Turkey will launch additional offensives like Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations to clear its border of terror organisations in the new era,” Erdogan said as he revealed the ruling Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) manifesto in Istanbul. Operation Euphrates Shield took place between August 2016 and March 2017 against the Islamic State group, while the Olive Branch offensive targeted the People’s Protection Units (YPG) militia in its western enclave of Afrin earlier this year.<sup>121</sup>

- **Turkey threatens to retaliate if US halts weapons sales**

Turkey has vowed to retaliate if the United States halts weapons sales to the country, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Sunday. Cavusoglu said that a proposal put forward in the US House of Representatives to temporarily halt weapons sales was not fitting of the alliance between NATO allies. “If the United States imposes sanctions on us or takes such a step, Turkey will absolutely retaliate,” Cavusoglu told local broadcaster, CNN Turk. “What needs to be done is the US needs to let go of this.” US representatives released details on Friday of a \$717bn annual defence policy bill, including efforts to compete with Russia and China and the measure on weapons sales to Turkey.<sup>122</sup>

## Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Arabia Receives Guantanamo Bay Detainee – Ahmed Al-Darbi**

Saudi Arabia has confirmed of receiving Ahmed Mohammed al-Darbi, who was detained in Guantanamo Bay for his complicity in the attack of the French tanker VM Limburg by Al Qaeda in 2002.<sup>123</sup> Al-Darbi was nabbed from Azerbaijan airport in June 2002 on charge of possessing counterfeit currency. Initially he was sent to Bagram

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<sup>120</sup> Turkish, South Korean agencies to boost cooperation”, 03 May 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkish-south-korean-agencies-to-boost-cooperation/1133825>

<sup>121</sup> “Turkey vows to launch new cross-border military operations”, 06 May 2018. <http://www.india.com/news/agencies/turkey-vows-to-launch-new-cross-border-military-operations-3038337/>

<sup>122</sup>“ Turkey threatens to retaliate if US halts weapons sales”, 06 May 2018. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-threatens-retaliate-if-us-halts-weapons-sales-1135030278>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/guantanamo-prisoner-sent-to-saudi-arabia-first-under-trump/ar-AAwEsPG>

base in Afghanistan then to Guantanamo Bay. Amhed al-Darbi pleaded guilty of five charges, including of killing one person and injuring 12 in the attack. His charges included 'conspiracy, attacking civilian objects, terrorism and aiding the enemy for helping to arrange the 2002 al-Qaida attack on the French tanker MV Limburg. Ahmed al-Darbi would serve out his remaining 13 years of imprisonment in Saudi Arabia, where he would be kept in Saudi rehabilitation centre. The Saudi rehabilitation center for convicted extremists aims to help them assimilate back into society through frequent visits with relatives, religious counseling with moderate clerics, art therapy and even cash assistance to help them once out.

Darbi's transfer was cleared after he met the terms of an agreement following his prior admission to guilt, the Pentagon statement said. Under the plea deal, Darbi agreed not to sue the US over his capture and the conditions of his confinement.<sup>124</sup> A total of 180 Saudis had been kept in Guantanamo Bay. 140 have been sent to Saudi Arabia and the remaining 40 would be deported after completing their imprisonment terms and procedures.

The agreement to repatriate Al-Darbi was made during President Obama, who had announced to close down the detention centre but the Trump administration has reversed that policy and has vowed to continue continuing using the centre. However, Al-Darbi is the first detainee to leave Guantanamo bay under Trump.

- **UK Activists Win Appeal Against Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Amid Yemen War**

Campaigners aiming to stop UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia warn that the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen will only compound existing tensions in the crisis-ridden Arab country. A British Court of Appeal will take up an appeal against a decision to let the government continue its arms exports to Saudi Arabia, which uses them in its ongoing military campaign in Yemen. The appeal was filed by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), which challenged an earlier High Court decision that ruled the UK arms exports to Riyadh lawful. The Court of Appeal said that the case will be heard within the next few months.<sup>125</sup>

- **Saudi entertainment industry begins to take shape**

Change in Saudi Arabia has been fuelled by initiatives stemming from the Vision 2030 reform programme, including the creation of culturally alerting entertainment and recreational industry. In less than a year, the kingdom has started scheduling music concerts, lifted a 35-year ban on movie theatres and allowed women to join male

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<sup>124</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43984683>

<sup>125</sup> "UK Activists Win Appeal Against Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia Amid Yemen War", 05 May 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201805051064171523-uk-arms-activists-appeal/>

counterparts at live sporting events. There have also been two popular comic con events. These are events that would have been unthinkable in the conservative kingdom a few years ago but economic realities — and potential revenues — spurred cultural change as Riyadh looks to limit its dependence on oil.<sup>126</sup>

- **Iran opposes higher oil prices, signaling divide with Saudis**

Iran, faced with a possible restoration of U.S. sanctions, came out against higher oil prices, signaling a split with fellow OPEC member Saudi Arabia, which is showing a willingness to keep tightening crude markets. A “suitable price” for crude is \$60 to \$65 a barrel, Amir Hossein Zamaninia, deputy oil minister for international and commercial affairs, said in an interview Sunday in Tehran. Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said earlier in the day that Iran supports “reasonable” oil prices and is not an advocate of costlier crude.<sup>127</sup>

- **IMF: Saudi Arabia’s economy seen to grow to 1.7% in 2018**

Following the rise in crude oil prices, IMF has marginally raised Saudi Arabia’s 2018 economic growth forecast to 1.7% (previous: 1.6%). This is expected to further accelerate to 1.9% in 2019 (previous estimate: 2.2%) on account of a possible increase in oil production post the expiry of output cut agreement. SAMA data supported IMF’s contention of pick-up in economic activity as total credit growth stood at 0.5% m-o-m in March 2018, driven by private sector credit (+0.6% m-o-m, highest in 22 months). Consumer spending was also strong, as indicated by the 19.8% y-o-y jump in POS transactions (second highest growth in three years), led by ‘Restaurants and Hotels’, ‘Food and Beverage’ and ‘Clothing and Footwear’ segments.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “Saudi entertainment industry begins to take shape”, 06 May 2018. <https://thearabweekly.com/saudi-entertainment-industry-begins-take-shape>

<sup>127</sup> “Iran opposes higher oil prices, signaling divide with Saudis”, 07 May 2018. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Regional/2018/May-07/448250-iran-opposes-higher-oil-prices-signaling-divide-with-saudis.ashx>

<sup>128</sup> “IMF: Saudi Arabia’s economy seen to grow to 1.7% in 2018”, 07 May 2018. <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/534306/BUSINESS/IMF-Saudi-Arabias-economy-seen-to-grow-to-17-in-2018>

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	April 30	Balochistan	At least three people were killed and two others were injured in a firing incident at a shop on Jan Muhammad Road in provincial capital Quetta. The assailants managed to escape unhurt after the attack. The identities of the victims was not ascertained. <sup>129</sup>	3	2
2	May 1	Balochistan	A suspected militant leader of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi(LeJ), identified as Maqsood Ahmed, was killed during a search operation jointly launched by the Police and Frontier Corps in areas of Splingy and Qabu of Mastung district.  According to Deputy Inspector General of Police, Quetta, Abdul Razzaq Cheema, the LeJ leader and his accomplices were trying to establish their hideout in the rugged Koh-e-Mehran area of the district. <sup>130</sup>	1	0
3	May 4	Balochistan	Six Punjabi labourers were killed and one injured in an incident of firing in Laijay area of Kharan district. No outfit claimed	6	1

<sup>129</sup>Syed Ali Shah, 3 dead in suspected target killing in Quetta: police, *Dawn*, April 30, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1404647/3-dead-in-suspected-target-killing-in-quetta-police>, accessed on May 4, 2018

<sup>130</sup> Suspected LJ leader killed in Mastung operation, *Dawn*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1404852/suspected-lj-leader-killed-in-mastung-operation>, accessed on May 5, 2018



			responsibility for the attack. <sup>131</sup>		
4	May 4	FATA	<p>The Pakistan Army stated that the number of checkpoints in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have been reduced from 32 to five after the restoration of peace in the region.</p> <p>Inspector General Frontier Corps South Major General Abid Latif Khan confirmed the news and said it was made possible after return of normalcy to the area. He added that almost 30 kilometers of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has also been fenced to check unauthorized movement.<sup>132</sup></p>	Checkposts reduced in SWA	
5	May 5	Balochistan	A man was killed and three others were injured in a grenade attack targeting a funeral in Mand area of Kech district. No outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. <sup>133</sup>	1	3
6	May 6	Punjab	The Federal Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal escaped an assassination attempt during a corner meeting in his constituency in	0	0

<sup>131</sup>Syed Ali Shah, 6 labourers gunned down in Kharan, Balochistan, *Dawn*, May 4, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1405581/6-labourers-gunned-down-in-kharan-balochistan>, accessed on May 5, 2018

<sup>132</sup>Umer Farooq, Check-posts reduced in South Waziristan as peace returns to region, *The Express Tribune*, May 4, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1702262/1-check-posts-reduced-in-south-waziristan/>, accessed on May 5, 2018

<sup>133</sup> Grenade attack on funeral prayer kills one in Gwadar, *Dawn*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1405715/grenade-attack-on-funeral-prayer-kills-one-in-gwadar>, accessed on May 5, 2018

			<p>Narowal district.</p> <p>Inspector General of Police (IGP) retired Capt Arif Nawaz said that they had arrested a suspect, a 22-year-old man, from the spot in Kanjroor town of the Shakargarh tehsil (revenue unit), who confessed to opening fire on the Minister due to the issue of Khatm-e-Nubuwat (finality of prophethood).<sup>134</sup></p>		
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## Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 2	Kabul	<p>The Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has reported that the Taliban's control of districts as of the end of January 2018 remains virtually unchanged. According to SIGAR's latest report, the Taliban continues to maintain its grip on half of Afghanistan, despite US military's reinvigorated effort to force the group from its strongholds.</p> <p>Early 2018 has already seen an increase in the</p>	Taliban area of control remains same as in January 2018	

<sup>134</sup>Abid Mehmood & Imran Gabol, Ahsan survives assassination bid, hospitalized, *Dawn*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406127/ahsan-survives-assassination-bid-hospitalised>, accessed in May 7, 2018

			number of US air strikes conducted in Afghanistan. The US air force dropped 378 munitions in January, 469 in February, and 339 in March 2018 during 215 missions. <sup>135</sup>		
2	May 4	Nangarhar	At least five militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) were killed during airstrikes launched by US forces in n Haska Mina district. The officials said that some heavy and light weapons belonging to the terror group were also destroyed during the airstrikes. <sup>136</sup>	5	0
3	May 4	Washington	<p>The US goal in Afghanistan is to force the enemy to a political solution, Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana W White said during abriefing as the Taliban and Daesh terrorists ramped up attacks to disrupt the electoral process in the country.</p> <p>The spokesperson said the attacks in the past weeks were desperate attempts, adding that the US goal was to force the enemy to a political solution.“... This is not easy. But we’re committed to ensuring that there’s ultimately a</p>		US goal in Afghanistan to force the enemy to a political solution

<sup>135</sup> Taliban Control Of Districts Remains Unchanged: SIGAR, *Tolo News*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/taliban-control%2%A0%2%A0districts-remains-unchanged-sigar>, accessed on May 6, 2018

<sup>136</sup> US forces kill five ISIS militants in Nangarhar province, *Khaama Press*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/us-forces-kill-five-isis-militants-in-nangarhar-province-05068/>, accessed on May 5, 2018

			political solution,” she said. <sup>137</sup>	
4	May 5	Badakhshan	The Government forces retook the control of Kohistan district. The district had fallen to the Taliban on May 3, 2018. The Interior Ministry confirmed the government action and said that the operation will continue to clear all the district from militants. <sup>138</sup>	Government forces retake Kohistan
5	May 6	Kunduz	At least 1,000 families have been displaced following clashes between security forces and the Taliban in Qala-e-Zal district. Kunduz Provincial Council Aminullah said, “Their situation is concerning.” Many of the displaced families are living in Dasht-e-Abdan area in the outskirts of Kunduz City. <sup>139</sup>	1,000 families displaced in Kunduz
6	May 6	Baghlan	Seven Indian engineers working on a power plant in Baghlan province were abducted along with their Afghan driver. Baghlan Governor Abdulhai Nemati said that the Taliban had abducted the engineers and moved them to Pul-e Khumri district, which is the provincial capital. The engineers were working	Seven Indian Engineers abducted

<sup>137</sup> US trying to force political solution on Taliban: Pentagon, *The Express Tribune*, May 5, 2018,

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1702750/3-us-trying-force-political-solution-taliban-pentagon/>, accessed on May 5, 2018

<sup>138</sup> Govt Forces Retake Badakhshan’s Kohistan District, *Tolo News*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/govt-forces-retake-badakhshan-s-kohistan-district>, accessed on May 6, 2018

<sup>139</sup> Conflicts Displace Almost 1,000 Kunduz Families, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 6, 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=20860](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20860), accessed on May 6, 2018

			for Da Afghanistan BreshnaSherkat (DABS). <sup>140</sup>		
7	May 7	Khost	At least 17 people, including a woman, were killed and 33 others were wounded in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast on an election-related facility. Khost police chief Abdul Mannan said that the IED was placed inside a mosque which was a facility center for registering voters. <sup>141</sup>	17	33

## Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 2	Iraq	A total of 68 Iraqis were killed and another 122 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in April 2018, according to United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Anbar was the worst affected Governorate, with 53 civilian casualties (24 killed, 29 injured), followed by Baghdad with 8 killed and 30 injured, and Kirkuk with 10 killed and 21 injured. <sup>142</sup>	UNAMI Monthly Report	
2	May 3	Nineveh	Police troops arrested 20 IS militants as they were planning to carry out terrorist operations during the parliamentary elections	IS militants arrested	

<sup>140</sup>7 Indian Engineers Kidnapped In Afghanistan's Baghlan, *NDTV*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/afghanistan-6-indian-engineers-kidnapped-by-unidentified-armed-men-in-baglan-reports-local-media-1847936>, accessed on May 7, 2018

<sup>141</sup>IED Blast Targets Registration Center In Khost, 17 Killed, *Tolo News*, May 6, 2018,

<https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ied-blast-targets-voter-registration-center-khost-12-killed>, accessed on May 7, 2018

<sup>142</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, UN agency says 68 Iraqis killed, another 122 injured in April clashes, *Iraqi News*, My 2, 2018,

<https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/un-agency-says-68-iraqis-killed-another-122-injured-in-april-clashes/>, accessed on May 2, 2018

			in Nineveh.  “Information from the intelligence helped in arresting 20 terrorists who were planning to carry out terrorist operations during elections in Mosul city and its vicinity,” the police source said. <sup>143</sup>		
3	May 4	Diyala	Three people were killed and five security personnel were injured in a bomb blast on an agricultural road near Berwana region. <sup>144</sup>	3	5
4	May 5	Anbar	IS fighters are hiding out in the deserts of Anbar province disguised as police officers and shepherds to elude security officers and launch pre-election attacks, local tribal leaders have reported. <sup>145</sup>	IS hiding in Anbar	

## Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 6	al-Sweida	A roadside bomb killed 11 soldiers in an attack targeting a military vehicle carrying the soldiers. The attack was claimed by Islamic State (IS) via its semi-official Amaq news agency. <sup>146</sup>	11	0

<sup>143</sup> 20 Islamic State members, planning to target parliamentary elections, arrested in Nineveh, *Iraqi News*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/20-islamic-state-members-planning-to-target-parliamentary-elections-arrested-in-nineveh/>, accessed on May 6, 2018

<sup>144</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Eight people killed, wounded in bomb blast, northeast of Baquba, *Iraqi News*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/eight-people-killed-wounded-in-bomb-blast-northeast-of-baquba/>, accessed on May 6, 2018

<sup>145</sup> IS hiding out in Iraq 'disguised as policemen and shepherds', *The News Arab*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/5/5/is-hiding-in-iraq-disguised-as-policemen-and-shepherds>, accessed on May 6, 2018

<sup>146</sup> Bomb kills eight soldiers in Syria, *news.com.au*, May 6, 2018, <http://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/bomb-kills-eight-soldiers-in-syria/news-story/2cd1add4881a50ece5c2c6c770e17469>, accessed on May 7, 2018

2	May 2-6	Syria-Iraq border	The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) made a significant advance against the ISIS in the past five days, seizing a big chunk of the Syria-Iraq border. The SDF were able to seize approximately 18kilometer of territory near the Iraqi border. <sup>147</sup>	SDF makes advance against ISIS	
3	May 6	Deir Ezzor	The Iraqi air force carried out airstrikes against “a position for ISIS commanders” south of Dhasha inside Syrian territory.Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi ordered the strikes near Syria’s border with Iraq, a statement from his office said. <sup>148</sup>  Four terrorists were killed in the attack. <sup>149</sup>	4	o

### International Economic Issues

- **AIIB Approves Membership of Papua New Guinea and Kenya**

On May 2, 2018, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank’s (AIIB) Board of Governors has adopted resolutions approving two applicants - Papua New Guinea and Kenya - to join the Bank, bringing AIIB’s total approved membership to 86. This round of approved applicants includes one regional (Papua New Guinea) and one non-regional (Kenya) prospective member. The two prospective members will officially join AIIB once they complete the required domestic processes and deposit the first installment of capital with the Bank. The shares allocated to the new prospective members come from AIIB’s existing pool of unallocated shares.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>147</sup>Leith Aboufadel, US-backed forces seize 18km of territory near Syria-Iraq border, *Al Masdar News*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/us-backed-forces-seize-18km-of-territory-near-syria-iraq-border/>, accessed on May 7, 2018

<sup>148</sup> Mohammed Tawfeeq & Susannah Cullinane, Iraqi air force targets ISIS in Syria, *CNN*, May 6, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/06/middleeast/iraq-syria-strike-isis/index.html>, accessed on May 7, 2018

<sup>149</sup>Leith Aboufadel, Iraqi forces attack ISIS inside Syria, 4 terrorists killed, *Al Masdar News*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/iraqi-forces-attack-isis-inside-syria-4-terrorists-killed/>, accessed on May 7, 2018

<sup>150</sup> AIIB, “AIIB Approves Membership of Papua New Guinea and Kenya”, May 2, 2018, [https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2018/20180502\\_001.html](https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2018/20180502_001.html) (accessed on May 4, 2018)



- **India notifies food subsidies to WTO, says it's within the 10% limit**

The *Livemint* on May 2, 2018 reported that India has informed the World Trade Organization (WTO) that its public procurement of rice stood at \$2 billion in 2015-16, or around 6% of the total value of paddy produced in the country, was well within the 10% limit mandated by the multilateral trade body. WTO rules cap government procurement for subsidized food programmes by developing countries at 10% of the total value of agricultural production based on 1986-88 prices and are always reported in dollar terms. India has secured an indefinite peace clause at the WTO under which its existing food subsidy programmes will not be challenged if they breach the 10% limit. However, the peace clause comes with onerous obligation under which countries need to notify their food subsidy levels to WTO till the previous year. Such countries are also not allowed to start any new subsidized food programme after those that existed till 2013. India has notified food subsidies for 2014-15 and 2015-16.<sup>151</sup>

- **New Collaboration Announced Between IDB Group and NDB**

On May 3, 2018, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), IDB Invest and the New Development Bank (NDB) announced that they have agreed to collaborate on areas of common interest and general cooperation. The memorandum facilitates collaboration between the parties and provides a general framework for cooperation in a range of areas and services. The memorandum focuses on the following areas of work:

- Joint participation in programs and projects for sustainable development and infrastructure in common borrowing member countries;
- Support for the development of clean transportation, renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable water management and sewage treatment;
- exploration and pursuit of opportunities in areas such as South-South cooperation, economic and business information, treasury and financial services; and
- Exchange of information, knowledge-sharing and joint analysis to benefit from each other's experience and expertise.<sup>152</sup>
- **China urges ADB to back Belt and Road Initiative, AIIB**

China on May 5, 2018, pressed the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to expand its role in Beijing-led projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Outlining his proposals to accelerate regional growth, Chinese Deputy Finance Minister Yu Weiping at an annual meeting of the bank's governors in the Philippines said the bank must "keep up with the times" and bolster its lending activities, even to countries that have attained upper middle-income status. Yu also called on the ADB to "increase the linkage between the Belt

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<sup>151</sup> Asit Ranjan Mishra, "India notifies food subsidies to WTO, says it's within the 10% limit", *Livemint*, May 2, 2018,

<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/yXBkUg5W0nrDZ7tgmlD1vM/India-notifies-food-subsidies-to-WTO-says-its-within-the-1.html> (accessed on May 4, 2018)

<sup>152</sup> NDB, "New Collaboration Announced between IDB Group and NDB", Press Release, May 3, 2018, [https://www.ndb.int/press\\_release/new-collaboration-announced-idb-group-ndb/](https://www.ndb.int/press_release/new-collaboration-announced-idb-group-ndb/) (accessed on May 4, 2018)

and Road Initiative and other regional cooperation programs.” Meanwhile, Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso, who spoke before Yu, said the ADB should shift its emphasis from "quantity to quality" financing, even as developing Asia and the Pacific needs \$1.7 trillion annually to build infrastructure. Noteworthy, China's initiatives have sparked concerns of a “debt trap,” such as in Sri Lanka.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Cliff Venzon, “China urges ADB to back Belt and Road Initiative, AIIB”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, May 5, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/China-urges-ADB-to-back-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-AIIB> (accessed on May 7, 2018)