

Weekly Media Updates **(14-20 May, 2018)**

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Africa

- **ANC Must Give Direction On Expropriation Without Compensation : Ramaphosa¹**

As he opened its inaugural land summit on Saturday, 19 May 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa laid out the task to party members that the ANC must explore all options in order to bring about meaningful restitution, redistribution and tenure reform in South Africa. He said “to all people land is about dignity, it's about identity, it is about security.” The summit was mostly attended by its national executive members and leaders from some of its leagues. The workshop's aim was to comb through the many differing views within the liberation movement on the land question and carve a way forward. Party members are divided over whether section 25 of the Constitution should be amended and whether all land should be nationalized. A review committee has also been tasked with assessing whether there is a need to amend the country's constitution in order to allow for the state to expropriate land without compensation. It is currently receiving public comments on the issue. President Ramaphosa said the land summit was the direct result of a decision adopted at the ANC's watershed December conference, which saw him succeed Zuma. Ramaphosa said the party took a decision that expropriation of land without compensation should be one of the key mechanisms available to government to give effect to land reform and redistribution.

- **Palestine Opts for AU, Ethiopia to Mediate Israel Quandary Instead of U.S.²**

The Palestinian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Nasri Abujaish (PhD), called on Ethiopia and the African Union to engage in peace talks with Israel, as his country will no longer accept the US as a neutral negotiator after the US Embassy opening in Jerusalem. The Ambassador announced this during a press conference held on the 15th of May 2018, to condemn the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem. Ethiopia was among the 128 countries that voted in favor of the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly to nullify US's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

- **Korea Set to Host 2018 African Development Bank Annual Meetings³**

The Republic of Korea will host the 53rd Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank Group in the port city of Busan on May 21-25, 2018. Korea has a long history of supporting African development. It joined the Bank in 1982, and has significant status as a recipient-turned-donor country. On May 22 and 24, in tandem with the Annual Meetings,

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

² The Reporter, 19 May 2018, http://allafrica.com/stories/201805190014.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkwtb

³ African Development Bank, http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00061029.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Agroup%3Aabibnc

the 2018 Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation (KOAFEC) Conference will address, "Africa and the 4th Industrial Revolution: Opportunities for leapfrogging?"

Industrialize Africa is one of the Bank's High 5 priorities to speed up the continent's development. Africa's lack of industries is largely responsible for its low standing in global development. African industry generates an average of US \$700 of GDP per capita, barely one-fifth of East Asia's US \$3,400, which probably explains why it continues to depend for most needs on industrialized economies despite its own strong economic growth for almost two decades. Low-tech unprocessed natural resources comprise the bulk of African exports, representing more than 80% of exports from Algeria, Angola or Nigeria, for example.

- **China to help Uganda build and operate nuclear power plants⁴**

Uganda's energy ministry has said that China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) has signed a memorandum of understanding to help Uganda build and operate nuclear power plants. Uganda has some uranium deposits and President Yoweri Museveni has said his government was keen to exploit them for potential nuclear energy development. Eight potential sites have been identified in the country's central, southwest and northern regions that could potentially host nuclear power plants, the government said on Thursday. It signed a deal with Russia last year to cooperate on nuclear power.

- **Security Council Extends Support for African Union Force in Somalia⁵**

The Security Council on Tuesday gave its backing to the African Union force in Somalia, AMISOM, extending its deployment until at least the end of July. In the resolution, unanimously adopted, the Council also recalled its earlier decision to authorize the AU to reduce the Mission's level of uniformed personnel to 20,626 by 30 October this year from 22,126 now; but to include a minimum of 1,040 AMISOM police personnel, including five specialist Formed Police Units. It also requested that the UN Secretary-General continue to provide logistical support for AMISOM, its 70 civilian personnel; the 10,900-strong Somalia National Army jointly operating with AMISOM, and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The Council resolution adopted at the end of August last year, requested the AU and the UN to conduct a joint assessment of AMISOM's operations - but this assessment has been delayed, leading to Tuesday's decision to extend the deployment of AMISOM for just over two months, in order to assess the merits of a longer extension.

⁴ Energy World, 18 May 2018, <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/china-to-help-uganda-build-and-operate-nuclear-power-plants/64214672>

⁵ Un News, 16 May 2018, http://allafrica.com/stories/201805160315.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabljpw

- **Explosive Found at South African Mosque where Attackers Slit Throats⁶**

Police were called to the Imam Hussein mosque in the South African province of KwaZulu Natal after an explosive was discovered Sunday night on the premises, local media portals have reported. The mosque located in Durban is incidentally the same facility that was attacked last week with assailants slitting the throats of worshippers gathered for the midday prayers. Of the three people whose throats were slit, one is said to have died while the two others are in critical condition as per the last reports. Even though police have yet to make any arrests, President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday waded into the issue while sending his Ramadan message to Muslims.

- **DR Congo Ebola Outbreak 'Not Global Emergency'⁷**

An Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is not yet an international public health emergency, the World Health Organization has said. It said there was a "strong reason to believe that the outbreak can be brought under control". At least 45 people are believed to have been infected in the current outbreak and 25 deaths are being investigated. Cases emerged in a rural area with one now confirmed in the north-western city of Mbandaka. The city of about one million people is a transport hub on the River Congo, prompting fears that the virus could now spread further, threatening the capital Kinshasa and surrounding countries. The WHO said it had identified more than 500 people who had potentially come into contact with Ebola patients in the country. It said they would be closely monitored for symptoms of the disease and were likely to be among the first to be given an Ebola vaccine, which - although still in the experimental stage - proved effective during a trial. The WHO said some health workers had become infected with Ebola.

- **'It's a Private Matter,' Says Swaziland on Zambian Leader's US\$4 million Mansion⁸**

Swaziland has reportedly said that the issue involving Zambian President Edgar Lungu's plans to build a mansion in that country is a "private matter". According to Lusaka Times, Swaziland's government spokesperson Percy Simelane was quoted by the Times of Swaziland newspaper as "reluctantly saying that the purchase of land to build a family house for president Lungu is a private issue". This came falling media reports that Lungu was building a mansion worth millions of dollars for himself in the southern African country. Reports, according to BBC, put the mansion's price tag at around US\$4 million.

- **China's Top Legislator Visits Mozambique to Promote Friendship, Cooperation⁹**

⁶ Africa News, 14 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/14/explosive-found-at-south-african-mosque-where-attackers-slit-throats/>

⁷ BBC News, 18 May 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44164027>

⁸ News24, 17 May 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/its-a-private-matter-says-swaziland-on-zambian-leaders-4bn-mansion-20180517>

⁹ Xinhua Net, 16 May 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/16/c_137181439.htm

China's top legislator Li Zhanshu paid an official friendly visit to Mozambique from Saturday to Tuesday to promote friendship and cooperation between the two countries. In the capital city of Maputo, Li, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), met with Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi and held talks with the African country's Speaker of Parliament Veronica Macamo. During his meeting with President Nyusi, Li conveyed Chinese President Xi Jinping's sincere greetings. Li said the deep China-Mozambique traditional friendship was rooted in the history of their struggles against imperialism and colonialism, and has grown even stronger in their joint efforts for common development. During his stay in Maputo, Li also attended the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the Mozambique-China Cultural Center and the teaching building of a Confucius Institute and the communication and art school at the Eduardo Mondlane University, and the launching ceremony of the Mozambique part of the Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages Project, and visited a China-Mozambique pilot center of agricultural technology and the suspension bridge over Maputo Bay assisted by the Chinese side.

- **China-Tanzania Talks over Bagamoyo Port Project in Progress¹⁰**

China said on Saturday good progress was being made on negotiations with the Tanzanian government on the 10 billion US dollars Bagamoyo mega port and special economic zone, paving way for the long-delayed construction work to begin. "Negotiations between the governments of China and Tanzania on the Bagamoyo port project are progressing well. This is a huge and important project in our bilateral cooperation," Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania Wang Ke told journalists in Dar es Salaam during a visit to the Ministry of Finance and Planning. The initial framework agreement for the Bagamoyo port was signed way back in 2013, but progress has been slow in concluding a final agreement for the major investment undertaking. The state-run China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI) and Oman's State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) are teaming up with the Tanzanian government to invest in what is expected to become one of the biggest ports in Africa. Former President Jakaya Kikwete officiated at a groundbreaking ceremony for the project in October 2015 in the final weeks and days of his presidency and vowed that construction of phase I of the project would be completed in three years. But three years down the line, construction work is yet to start, amid suggestions that President John Magufuli's government has decided to shelve the project and instead focus on the expansion and modernization of the Dar es Salaam port.

- **Tanzania Losing Tourists Appeal, Economists Warn¹¹**

Foreign tourists' average spending in Tanzania has dropped by 43.3 per cent over the last five years. Last year, an average spending per tourist declined to US\$161 (about Sh363, 860 at the current exchange rate) from US\$284 (Sh641, 840) in 2013. Economists propose that what is needed is for players in the sector to create stimulants to enable tourists to spend more money while in Tanzania. Last year's tourism survey findings showed that an overall

¹⁰ Xinhua Net, 20 May 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/20/c_137191773.htm

¹¹ The Citizen, 17 May 2018, <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/magazine/businessweek/Tanzania-losing-tourists-appeal--economists-warn/1843772-4565916-qamjy5/index.html>

average length of stay of visitors in Tanzania in 2016 was nine nights, slightly fewer than 10 nights during the past five years.

- **Angola Sovereign Wealth Fund Takes Battle to UK Court¹²**

Angola's sovereign wealth fund has applied to a UK court to order banks to reveal information, another move in its dispute with its former boss, the son of long-serving ex-leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos, and the asset managers hired under him. President Joao Lourenco, who took over when dos Santos stepped down last year after nearly 40 years in power, has swiftly moved to push aside relatives and allies of dos Santos from positions of power and influence over the economy. The US\$5 billion sovereign wealth fund has been embroiled in a dispute with its former boss, the ex-president's son Jose Filomeno dos Santos, and the Swiss-based asset manager contracted to invest money for the fund, Quantum Global. The fund is trying to sack the fund manager, accusing it of mismanagement. Quantum Global denies wrongdoing and says the fund has violated its long-term contractual obligations.

- **Swiss Make Raids in Probe Linked to Angola Sovereign Wealth Fund¹³**

Swiss authorities have raided several locations in Switzerland as they ramp up a criminal investigation into suspected money laundering connected to crimes involving Angola's sovereign wealth fund and its central bank, prosecutors said on Friday. Switzerland's Attorney General opened criminal proceedings in April in response to the reports connected with alleged offences involving assets held by the National Bank of Angola and the Fundo Soberano de Angola, the Angolan sovereign wealth fund, the prosecutors said in a statement. "As part of the criminal proceedings being conducted against persons unknown on suspicion of money laundering, on 16 May 2018, the Office of the Attorney General with support from fedpol (federal police) conducted searches at several locations in Switzerland," they said. Swiss authorities declined to specify the locations searched during their probe, and have not specified which entities are currently under investigation. The attorney general said its raids were coordinated with another authority conducting searches on the same day.

- **Angola, Portugal Keen to Boost Military Cooperation¹⁴**

Angolan and Portuguese Defense Ministers, Salviano Sequeira and Jose Azevedo Lopes, respectively, reaffirmed on Monday in Luanda the interest in renewing and strengthening the partnership in the military field. Both officials said so at the opening ceremony of the 17th Angolan/Portuguese Joint Commission in the field of defense. The Angolan minister said that despite the global financial crisis, the government has invested in restructuring and resizing the security system, making it strong and effective in preserving stability and promoting development. He considered a great value the cooperation with Portugal in

¹² CNBC Africa, 16 May 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/news/africa/2018/05/16/angola-sovereign-wealth-fund-takes-battle-to-uk-court-source/>

¹³ Reuters, 18 May 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1IJ1GQ-OZATP>

¹⁴ Xinhua Net, 14 May 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/14/c_137178667.htm

the field of training, facilitated by the common language. The Angolan minister said that military cooperation between the two countries is developing and consolidating, becoming an example of brotherhood and solidarity between the two peoples.

- **South Sudan President Sets Conditions for Future Peace Deal¹⁵**

South Sudan President Salva Kiir has unveiled conditions for a future peace agreement, saying he would not accept any agreement creating two armies, dissolution of the security sector and the return of his former first deputy in government and party in an official capacity. The South Sudanese leader made the remark during a brief to the Dinka Council of Elders members who paid a courtesy visit to his official residence in Juba on Thursday evening. The peace revitalization forum has resumed in Addis Ababa on May 17, 2018. The parties are discussing outstanding issues related to the power-sharing and the security arrangements.

- **UN Deploys More Peacekeepers to South Sudan's Unity State¹⁶**

The UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is sending 150 peacekeepers to Unity state to protect civilians who are being targeted in clashes between the government and rebel troops, the mission said on Thursday. Nearly 1.76 million people have been displaced internally since fighting broke out in 2013 between troops loyal to President Salva Kiir and the former vice president he sacked, Riek Machar, the UN said. Another 2 million have been displaced in neighboring states. A series of peace deals signed by the parties at the behest of regional groups like the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have been violated, with the latest violence taking place in Unity state, which hosts abandoned oil fields.

- **Kenya Signs Bill Criminalising Fake News¹⁷**

On Wednesday, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta signed a lengthy new Bill into law, criminalising cybercrimes including fake news, cyberbullying and cyberespionage. The Computer and Cybercrimes Bill, 2017 states that any person who violates one of the 17 offences outlined by the Bill will be convicted and sentenced to fines or imprisonment, depending on the offence. The purpose of the Bill is to “protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of computer systems, programs and data”, “prevent the unlawful use of computer systems”, “facilitate the investigation and prosecution of cybercrimes”, and “facilitate international co-operation on matters”. The Bill also details measures against child pornography, unauthorised access, illegal devices and computer forgery. Although punishments for some of the detailed offences are reasonable, retribution for crimes of fake news — under Clause 12 of the Bill — can potentially inconvenience the media including online journalists, social media influencers and bloggers. The clause says if a person “intentionally publishes false, misleading or fictitious data or misinforms with

¹⁵ Sudan Tribune, 17 May 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article65429>

¹⁶ Reuters, 17 May 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-unrest/u-n-deploys-more-peacekeepers-to-south-sudans-unity-state-idUSKCN1I1UQ>

¹⁷ Mail & Guardian, 16 May 2018, <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-05-16-kenya-signs-bill-criminalising-fake-news>

intent that the data shall be considered or acted upon as authentic,” they can be fined up to 5 000 000 shilling (nearly R620 000) or imprisoned for up to two years.

- **Uganda Govt Imposes New Tax on Bibles and Qurans¹⁸**

Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) has insisted on taxing religious material imported into the country, the privately-owned Daily Monitor reported on Tuesday. The move has been met by resistance from the two main religious groups in the country – Christians and Muslims. It follows a plan by government months back, to tax social media. An umbrella body for religious groups, the inter-Religious Council of Uganda said even if taxes were to be imposed, the current 18 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT) on such materials was ‘erroneous.’ Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) boss, Doris Akol, is on record to have said the failure to tax the religious materials over the years was an ‘anomaly,’ and they were working to fix it with the latest move.

- **Top Indian Executive of Cement Company Gunned Down in Ethiopia¹⁹**

An Indian manager of a leading Nigeria-based cement company has been killed along with two others by unidentified gunmen in Ethiopia, media reports said today. Deep Kamra, the country manager of Dangote Cement -- owned by Nigeria's Dangote Industries Limited -- was attacked yesterday in the restive Oromiya region while returning to Addis Ababa from the factory, PM News Nigeria reported. Kamra's secretary and driver, both Ethiopians, were also killed by the assailants, the report said. "The company's director died following an attack by unknown gunmen that took place while returning from the factory alongside two company employees," a government statement said. The Dangote plant, one of the 10 established in Africa and outside Nigeria, was commissioned in May 2015. The plant is Ethiopia's largest cement producer.

- **Ethiopia in Talks With Exiled Group, Signaling Rapprochement²⁰**

Ethiopia’s government began talks with the exiled Oromo Democratic Front, signaling the start of a broader engagement with the opposition group. A “high-level” government delegation met ODF officials May 11 and May 12 to discuss reforms being implemented by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the group said in a statement Sunday, without disclosing the location of the talks. An ODF delegation will travel to Ethiopia “soon for more substantive talks,” it said. The discussions held so far have been “successful,” the ruling-party funded Fana Broadcasting Corp. reported, citing a government statement. The government is also prepared to hold talks with political parties that “operate peacefully and in line with the constitution,” it said.

¹⁸ Africa News, 15 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/15/uganda-govt-imposes-new-tax-on-bibles-and-qurans/>

¹⁹ The Economic Times, 17 May 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/top-indian-executive-of-cement-company-gunned-down-in-ethiopia/articleshow/64204558.cms>

²⁰ Bloomberg Quint, 14 May 2018, <https://www.bloombergquint.com/politics/2018/05/14/ethiopia-starts-talks-with-exiled-group-signaling-rapprochement#gs.NYdqdN4>

- **Saudi Arabia 'to Release 1,000 Ethiopian Prisoners'²¹**

Saudi Arabia has agreed to release 1,000 Ethiopian nationals who have been in prison in the Gulf state for a variety of offences, Ethiopian state-affiliated media said. The decision was made after a request by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was in Riyadh on an official two-day visit that ended on Saturday, Fana Broadcasting Corporation reported on Saturday. Among the detainees were 100 women, the agency said, without disclosing what charges they were held on. The prisoners will be released on Sunday, the news agency added. Hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian nationals live in the Gulf region, mostly in Saudi Arabia. Riyadh has not commented on the report.

- **Doha to Continue Support for Unity, Stability in Somalia: Qatari Emir²²**

Qatar has pledged to continue support for the stability and sovereignty of Somalia amid heightened tensions between the East African country and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a party to the Saudi-led quartet of Doha's boycotters. Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who held talks Monday with visiting Somali President Mohammad Abdullahi, said the relationship between Doha and Mogadishu were based on "brotherhood and mutual respect." "Qatar will continue to support the unity, stability, sovereignty and well-being of the people of Somalia," Sheikh Tamim said in a tweet following the meeting. Earlier this month, a Qatari official told Reuters that Doha had provided US\$385 million in infrastructure, education and humanitarian aid to the Somali government. The Monday meeting, which is the third in less than a year, comes at a particularly sensitive time when Mogadishu abandoned a military deal with Abu Dhabi and seized millions of dollars from an Emirati plane. Tensions between Somalia and the UAE emerged in March after the Dubai-based DP World granted a 19 per cent stake to Ethiopia in the Berbera port in breakaway Somaliland, which Somalia has not recognized as independent.

- **Claims China Turning Djibouti Base into Military Foothold 'Groundless'²³**

Live ammunition exercises at the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) support base in Djibouti are legitimate and necessary, and should not be over-interpreted as transforming the logistics center into a military foothold, Chinese experts said on Wednesday. The PLA website on Tuesday said that the base in Djibouti conducted live-fire drills at a national shooting range in Djibouti on Saturday to gauge the performance of weapons and make troops more combat-ready for counter-terrorism operations. The drills also enhanced their emergency response capabilities in a high-temperature environment. The exercises tested operational command ability, communication coordination, logistics and equipment support, the report said. The PLA Djibouti support base conducted its first live-fire drills in September, followed by another in November.

²¹ Al Jazeera, 20 May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/saudi-arabia-release-1000-ethiopian-prisoners-180520053522987.html>

²² Press TV, 15 May 2018, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/05/15/561764/Qatar-EmirSheikh-Tamim-bin-Hamad-alThani-Somali-President-Mohammad-Abdullahi-UAE>

²³ Global Times, 16 May 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1102599.shtml>

- **US Secretary of State Calls Buhari, Reaffirms Nigeria, US Relations²⁴**

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Nigeria's President Muhamadu Buhari and reaffirmed the longstanding relationship between the US and Nigeria, US Department of State, said. Spokesperson for the Department, Ms Heather Nauert, said Pompeo, during the call, also underscored Buhari's visit to the US on April 30, and recognised Nigeria's leadership in Africa. The *News Agency of Nigeria* recalls that Buhari visited the US on April 30 at the invitation of President Donald Trump, and held bilateral meetings with the US counterpart at the White House. The meetings, which also had cabinet members from both sides, focused on security, economy and the fight against corruption.

North Africa

- **Egyptian Court Adds 241 Members of IS-Affiliated Group to Terror List²⁵**

In continuation of their fight against Islamic terrorism and growing radicalism, an Egyptian court on Wednesday added 241 more members of Wilayat Sinai terrorist group, which is loyal to the Islamic State (IS) group, on terrorist list for five years. Those who have been added to the terror list are facing many charges of murder and attempted murder against army forces and police personnel in Egypt's North Sinai province, according to official MENA news agency.

They are also accused of forming 43 terror cells across the country and reportedly have committed 63 acts of terrorism in collaboration with other 314 people of the militant group. The ruling was made by the Cairo Criminal Court. it is worth mentioning here that Wilayat Sinai, (Sinai Province) declared its allegiance to the IS in 2014.

In past, the group claimed responsibility for dozens of terror attacks across the country that led to the deaths of hundreds of policemen, army personnel and civilians. Terrorism prevailed in Egypt since the military ousted former Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in early July 2013 in response to mass protests against his 12-month reign and his currently outlawed Muslim Brotherhood group.

- **The bodies of 20 Egyptian Christians beheaded in Libya arrives Cairo²⁶**

The bodies of 20 Egyptian Christian beheaded in Libya in 2015 were flown back to Cairo. The victims had been among thousands of poor Egyptians who risked their lives to find

²⁴ Punch, 18 May 2018, <http://punchng.com/us-secretary-of-state-calls-buhari-reaffirms-nigeria-us-relations/>

²⁵ African News , http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/17/c_137184546.htm?utm_source=Media+Review+for+May+17%2C+2018&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+May+17%2C+2018&utm_medium=email

²⁶ Ath-Thaurah, A Yemeni Arabic Daily: <http://www.althawranews.net/archives/502938>

work in the lawless chaos of Libya following the downfall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 and subsequent civil war.

The Coptic Christians were beheaded in 2015 on a beach in Islamic State's former Libyan stronghold of Sirte, wearing orange jumpsuits, according to a video posted by Islamic State. Their bodies were recovered in October after the area where they were buried was recaptured from the militant Islamist group.

It is worth mentioning here that Islamic State took control of Sirte in 2015 and lost the city late last year to local forces backed by U.S. air strikes. A total of 21 people were beheaded in the incident. The body of a Ghanaian killed was not on board the plane that brought the Egyptian bodies from Misrata in western Libya to Cairo.

The head of the Coptic Church in Egypt, Pope Tawadros II, was at the airport to receive the remains, brought in coffins aboard an aircraft from Misrata, a local television station, which broadcast live from the airport, said. The bodies are expected to be taken back for burial in Egypt's Minya province.

Central Asia

- **India-Kyrgyzstan Discuss Bilateral Economic Relations**

In association with the JIA Business Association and the National Institute of Strategic Studies, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, the Indian Embassy in Bishkek organized a round table discussion on 'India-Kyrgyzstan Economic Relations: Current Realities and the Way Ahead' on 15 May 2018.

The participants deliberated on areas for enhancing cooperation including in trade & investment, logistics, IT, tourism and healthcare etc. India's Ambassador to Kyrgyz Republic urged innovative solutions to increase economic engagement between the two countries.²⁷

- **Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Resume Bus Service**

After a gap of more than 25 years, the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have resumed bus services between the two countries since 15 May.²⁸ It was stopped in 1992 due to civil war in Tajikistan.

²⁷ AKI Press, "Bishkek hosts round table discussion on India-Kyrgyzstan economic relations," 16 May 2018, <https://akipress.com/news:606509/>

²⁸ Azernews, "Uzbekistan, Tajikistan resume bus connection after 26-year break," 15 May 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/region/131994.html>

The first demonstration service on the ‘Tashkent-Khujand-Tashkent’ route was organized for working group with representatives from various ministries and departments.²⁹ This route covers about 170 kilometers distance in about four and half hours.

In recent months, Uzbekistan is taking initiatives in restoring connectivity with regional countries. Bus service between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was resumed since 8 January 2018, with Kyrgyzstan in early May.

Air services between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, discontinued in 1992, has been resumed since April 2017. Rail connection between the two countries’ southern regions has been re-linked after a gap of seven years.³⁰

China

- **Embassy of India in Beijing Commemorates Birth Anniversary of Shri Rabindranath Tagore**

The Embassy of India in Beijing commemorated 157th birth anniversary of Shri Rabindranath Tagore on 19th May. Shri Gautam Bambawale, Ambassador of India to Beijing noted “Rabindranath Tagore was fascinated by China and its ancient civilization and was one of the earliest modern thinkers of India who understood and comprehended the benefits of mutual understanding and cooperative partnership between India and China, the two great civilizations of Asia”.³¹

- **China, U.S. issue joint statement on economic, trade consultations**

China and the United States issued a joint statement on 19 May on economic and trade consultations, vowing not to launch a trade war against each other.

Based on the directions of Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, the Chinese and U.S. delegations conducted constructive consultations on trade issues on 17 -18 May, the statement said. The two sides agreed to take effective measures to substantially decrease the U.S. trade deficit in goods with China.

China will significantly increase its purchase of US goods and service to meet the consumption needs of the Chinese people and propel the high-quality economic development of China, which also helps support the U.S. economic development and employment, according to the statement.

²⁹ UzDaily, “Uzbekistan and Tajikistan resume regular bus service,” 15 My 2018, <https://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-43906.htm>

³⁰ Azernews, “Uzbekistan, Tajikistan resume bus connection after 26-year break,” 15 May 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/region/131994.html>

³¹ <http://indianembassybeijing.in/pdf/Ambassador's%20Speech-TAGORE.pdf>

The two nations agreed to meaningfully increase the export of U.S. agriculture and energy products. The U.S. side will send a delegation to China for further consultations.³²

- **Book published to teach Xi Thought**

Party organizations of all levels must arrange the study of a newly published book about Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the Party's top publicity authority said in a statement released on May 17.

The book, whose title translates as *30 Chapters about Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, was compiled by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. It covers 30 topics highlighting the significance, system, connotation and practical aspects of new era thought.³³

- **Wang Yi Talks about Palestine-Israel Situation**

On May 17, 2018 China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Alfonso María Dastis Quecedo of Spain jointly met the press after their talks in Madrid. Wang Yi talked about his view on the current Palestine-Israel situation at inquiry.

Wang Yi noted that peace and life are the two most precious things in the world.... Wang Yi expressed that the Palestinian issue is the root cause for various problems in the Middle East while the status of Jerusalem is the most sensitive crux for the Palestinian issue. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China unswervingly supports and advances the Middle East peace process as well as unswervingly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring the legitimate national rights.³⁴

- **Qingdao plans frugal SCO summit**

China's port city of Qingdao is making final preparations to host a frugal Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit next month. Zhang Jiangting, the city's Party secretary, told a news conference last week that hosting the summit will bring new opportunities to Qingdao and the wider Shandong province.

He said a three-year plan issued by the city government last year included renovations and public-service improvements ahead of the summit. "Qingdao is beefing up security and public services," Zhang said. "We will work to make sure preparations for the summit are frugal, bring benefits to the people and do not disturb residents' lives".³⁵

³² http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/20/c_137191803.htm

³³ <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/18/WS5afe0469a3103f6866ee9186.html>

³⁴ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1560915.shtml

³⁵ <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/17/WS5afcd6dea3103f6866ee8e4a.html>

- **Chinese firm, Nigeria sign 6 bln USD rail project agreement**

On May 15, 2018, Nigeria signed an agreement worth \$6.68 billion with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) for a major segment of rail line linking the economic capital Lagos with Kano, northern Nigeria's commercial hub. The Lagos-Kano rail modernisation project started in 2006.³⁶

- **Wang Yi Meets with Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes of Brazil**

On May 15, 2018, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes in Beijing. Wang Yi expressed that Brazil should jointly promote the cooperation between China and the Latin American region, strengthen communication and coordination within the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the BRICS countries, the G20, the United Nations and other international multilateral mechanisms, deepen strategic mutual trust, unity and cooperation, and jointly maintain multilateralism, economic globalisation and free trade, so as to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries. Aloysio Nunes expressed that the Brazilian side stands ready to constantly expand strategic consensus and common interests, strengthen cooperation and coordination within multilateral mechanisms, jointly safeguard multilateralism and oppose trade protectionism.³⁷

- **China, Serbia vow enhanced cooperation through Belt and Road, 16+1**

On May 16, 2018, Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress Cao Jianming met with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic in Belgrade. Both sides have agreed to step up pragmatic cooperation through the Belt and Road initiative and through the "16+1" cooperation mechanism between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries.³⁸

- **Air Force bombers land on island airport for first time**

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) landed its H-6K bomber aircraft on an airport located in Woody Island on May 18, 2018. Several bomber aircraft took off from an undisclosed air base in South China and conducted a simulated strike against sea targets before landing on the airport. The landing and take-off exercises on island in the South China Sea were aimed at strengthening the PLAAF's combat capability. The exercises point in the direction of China's efforts to extend its defence parameters in the South China Sea.³⁹

³⁶“Chinese firm, Nigeria sign 6 bln USD rail project agreement”, May 16, 2018, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t1559784.htm>, Accessed on May 21, 2018.

³⁷ “Wang Yi Meets with Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes of Brazil”, May 15, 2018, MOFA, PRC, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1560114.shtml, Accessed on May 21, 2018.

³⁸ “China, Serbia vow enhanced cooperation through Belt and Road, 16+1”, *The China Daily*, May 17, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/17/WS5afcc196a3103f6866ee8d8c.html>, Accessed on May 21, 2018.

³⁹ “Air Force bombers land on island airport for first time”, *The People's Daily*, May 19, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0519/c90000-9461810.html>, Accessed on May 21, 2018.

- **Chinese, Portuguese FMs hold talks to deepen bilateral cooperation**

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Augusto Santos Silva on May 18, 2018. Wang expressed China's readiness to synergise its Belt and Road Initiative and Portuguese development strategies and strengthen cooperation in trade, investment, energy, finance and other fields. Both sides also agreed to tap cooperation potentials and broaden maritime cooperation. Wang said both sides should make good use of the China-Portugal forum to expand cooperation in third-party markets in Africa, Latin America and other areas, and boost exchanges in international and regional affairs.⁴⁰

- **Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte's Visit to India**

Prime Minister of The Netherlands, Mark Rutte will be visiting India on 24-25 May 2018. It will be second visit of Prime Minister Rutte to India since June 2015. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation; Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management; Minister for Medical Care; and about 231 business delegates. Prime Minister Rutte is also likely to visit Bengaluru.⁴¹

- **Sergei Skripal Discharged from Hospital**

Reportedly, Sergei Skripal has been discharged from hospital. Police did not give any details of the Skripals' new security arrangements and his new whereabouts.⁴²

European Union

- **Tusk: With friends like Trump, who needs enemies**

The European Union's top official launched a stinging attack Wednesday (16 May) on President Donald Trump, slamming his "capricious assertiveness" and saying the US leader acted more like an enemy than a friend. Council president Donald Tusk urged leaders meeting in Bulgaria to form a "united European front" against Trump's withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal and his move to impose trade tariffs on Europe.

⁴⁰ "Chinese, Portuguese FMs hold talks to deepen bilateral cooperation", *The China Daily*, May 19, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/19/WS5b0009b5a3103f6866ee96cf.html>, Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁴¹ Ministry of External Affairs, GoI, Visit of Prime Minister of the Netherlands to India (May 24-25, 2018), http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29905/Visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_the_Netherlands_to_India_May_2425_2018

⁴² Alistair Smout, Sarah Young, Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal discharged from UK hospital, Reuters, May 18, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia/ex-russian-spy-sergei-skripal-discharged-from-uk-hospital-idUSKCN1I10G>

Tusk even compared the US administration to Europe's traditional foes Moscow and Beijing as he launched his broadside before a dinner of the 28 leaders in Sofia where they discussed the issue. "Looking at the latest decisions of President Trump, someone could even think with friends like that, who needs enemies," Tusk told reporters.⁴³

- **Europe rules out generous quotas as solution for Trump trade dispute**

EU leaders demanded on Thursday (17 May) "permanent" and "unlimited" exemption from US President Donald Trump's tariffs as a precondition for any trade negotiation with his administration, including market access. The 28 heads of state and government discussed late on Wednesday in Sofia (Bulgaria) how to respond to Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminium. The leaders supported the Commission's preliminary talks with the US Administration, but insisted on not starting proper trade negotiations unless an unconditional exclusion is granted. One of the options floated during the discussions between the EU and US trade teams was to impose generous quotas on the metals to escape the penalties and avert a trade war. The quota could be higher than last year's steel and aluminium exports to the US. But various officials and diplomats were sceptical about this option because of the impact it could have on European producers and the legality of the quotas themselves.⁴⁴

- **EU moves to block US sanctions on Iran**

The European Commission has revealed that it plans to use a series of legal measures that will block US sanctions against European companies that are currently doing business in Iran. The move came about after the EU heads of states unanimously backed proposals by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Brussels' foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini during a summit in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia to use a "blocking statute" first adopted in 1996, which prohibits EU-based companies from complying with certain US sanctions and provides compensation if they were adversely affected by Washington's decision to target them. The European Commission said on May 18 that it had launched the formal process to activate the blocking measures by updating the list of US sanctions on Iran that fall within its scope and said it would use the financial backing of the European Investment Bank to help support ongoing and future EU projects in Iran.⁴⁵

Italy

- **Italian leaders tell Brussels to back off as combative government is in sight**

The two main parties negotiating the formation of a government in Italy called on Brussels to stop interfering in the process. The far-right leader of the Lega, Matteo Salvini,

⁴³ Euractiv, 16 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/tusk-with-friends-like-trump-who-needs-enemies/>

⁴⁴ Euractiv, 18 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/europe-rules-out-generous-quotas-as-solution-for-trump-trade-dispute/>

⁴⁵ New Europe, 19 May 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/eu-moves-block-us-sanctions-iran/>

and the leader of the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement (M5S), Luigi Di Maio, talked about EU “interference” on Tuesday. Salvini accused Brussels of meddling with the negotiations following a statement by Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, who expressed the hope that Italian policy on asylum seekers will not change. Avramopoulos praised Italy for the management of the Mediterranean migration crisis, crediting Italy with saving migrant lives at sea. Following an agreement with Libya, the flow of migrants from North Africa has slowed down, although human rights groups have expressed concerns over human rights abuses and torture. Salvini wants the policy line on migration to get tougher. Di Maio charged against the Financial Times and unelected Eurocrats for undermining the prospect of an M5S-league government.⁴⁶

UK

- **Theresa May struggles to rally support among EU leaders for new customs plan**

A bold attempt by [Theresa May](#) to crack the [Brexit](#) impasse ran into trouble on Thursday as the Irish prime minister warned a new customs plan signed off by her warring ministers could be insufficient to avoid a hard border. The prime minister has persuaded reluctant Brexiters to agree to a plan to continue applying EU tariffs beyond the end of 2020, if no agreement has been reached to alleviate the need for border checks. May is now expected to deliver formal proposals within a couple of weeks, following a frantic day of diplomacy in the margins of an EU security conference that took her to Bulgaria and Macedonia. She sought to rally support from EU leaders for a new plan for the so-called “backstop”, which would kick in if no solution has been found to the challenge of avoiding a hard border. After a 45-minute bilateral, the taoiseach, [Leo Varadkar](#), reported that he had seen “new thinking”. He said that he welcomed anything that would align all of the EU and the UK in terms of customs into the future. Brussels has made it clear that Ireland must be satisfied before any deal is accepted. But he suggested checks would still be required at the border if the UK left the single market.⁴⁷

East Asia /South-East Asia

[Korean Peninsula and Japan](#)

- **Japan focuses on maritime security in new ocean policy**

On May 15, 2018, Japan approved a new ocean policy that highlights maritime security, amid perceived growing threats from North Korea and China, in a reversal from the previous version which focused largely on sea resource development. The ocean program

⁴⁶ New Europe, 16 May 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/italian-leaders-tell-brussels-back-off-combative-government-sight/>

⁴⁷ The Guardian, 17 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/may/17/theresa-may-tries-to-rally-support-for-customs-plan-from-eu-leaders>

cited threats from North Korea's launching of ballistic missiles, and operations by Chinese vessels around the Japan-controlled and China-claimed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. On releasing the new policy Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, "amid an increasingly severe maritime situation, the government will come together to protect our territorial waters and interests at sea." The contents of the third Basic Plan on Ocean Policy are expected to be reflected in the government's defense buildup guidelines that are set to be revised in December 2018. Since its first adoption in 2008, the ocean policy has been reviewed every five years.⁴⁸

- **Japan to dispatch senior diplomat Kenji Kanasugi to Singapore for U.S.-North Korea summit**

Japan will dispatch a senior diplomat to Singapore to collect information on the planned summit next month between the United States and North Korea. Japan aims to use the momentum generated by their improving ties to help resolve the long-standing abduction issue. Kenji Kanasugi, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, will head the liaison team for the June 12 summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un. He will be accompanied by Masaaki Kanai, director of the bureau's Northeast Asia Division. Although North Korea threatened last week to cancel if the United States continues to pressure it to unilaterally relinquish its nuclear weapons, Japan believes the summit is likely to be held.⁴⁹

- **Japan, Pacific isles agree over North Korea**

On May 19, 2018, leaders from Japan and 18 Pacific island countries and territories wrapped up their two-day meeting on Saturday by adopting a declaration urging North Korea to resolve its abduction, nuclear and missile issues. It is the first time for a document adopted at a Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting to mention North Korean issues. On releasing the joint declaration Prime Minister Abe said, "we agreed to aim for the dismantlement [by North Korea] of all types of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner." The summit, the eighth of its kind, was held in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture.⁵⁰

- **Pyongyang cancels high-level talk with South Korea and 'reconsiders' summit with U.S.,**

On May 16, 2018, Pyongyang threatened to pull out of its planned summit with Washington, saying it had no choice but to "reconsider" the landmark meeting if the United States keeps driving the regime into a "corner" by forcing it to abandon its nuclear arsenal. A statement issued by North Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan

⁴⁸ "Japan focuses on maritime security in new ocean policy", The Japan Times, May 15, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/15/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-focuses-maritime-security-new-ocean-policy/#.WwEsQyC_PIU

⁴⁹ "Japan to dispatch senior diplomat Kenji Kanasugi to Singapore for U.S.-North Korea summit", The Japan Times, May 20, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/20/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-dispatch-senior-diplomat-singapore-u-s-north-korea-summit/#.WwEtHiC_PIU

⁵⁰ "Japan, Pacific isles agree over North Korea", The Japan News, May 20, 2018, the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004452269

and published by Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), came shortly after the North called off a high-level meeting with South Korea just hours before it was to take place in the border village of Panmunjom. Pyongyang informed Seoul that it would "indefinitely suspend" a high-level meeting that was to take place on May 16, blaming Seoul's ongoing air force drill with Washington, which it described as an "undisguised challenge" to the inter-Korean declaration signed at the South-North summit last month.⁵¹

- **No 'Libya model' for N. Korea's denuclearization: Says Trump**

US President Donald Trump on May 17, 2018 tried to put his summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un back on track, saying he would not seek to implement a so-called "Libya model" for denuclearization that would force Pyongyang to give up its arms and see Kim ousted. Pyongyang on Tuesday threatened to cancel the summit set for June 12 in Singapore, blaming US demands for "unilateral nuclear abandonment." That was a reference to comments made by Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton, who referred to the "Libya model from 2003, 2004" as a blueprint for the denuclearization promised by North Korea. Trump also mentioned that Kim "will get protections that will be very strong," Trump told reporters. "He'd be in his country and running his country."⁵²

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD) launches multiple bombings and attacks in Indonesia**

On the morning of May 13th, a family of suicide bombers linked to JAD attacked three churches across Surabaya, killing at least 12 people and injuring 41 others. Two attempted bombings were reported at two other churches in the East Java capital. Later the same day, another explosion was reported at a low-cost apartment in the neighboring city of Sidoarjo. Further, on May 14, a bomb exploded at the Surabaya Police headquarters. In total, 25 people, including 13 suicide bombers, were killed and dozens injured in the series of bombings in Surabaya. According to National Police chief Gen. Tito Karnavian, the attacks are connected to JAD, which is the main supporter of ISIS in Indonesia and founded by Aman Abdurrahman. JAD, is the largest local terror group pledging allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group, and has played a significant role in the terror attacks. The attack carried out resembled the pattern of attacks carried out by the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) movement at dozens of churches across Indonesia at the start of the millennium. JI is said to have renounced violent jihad, leaving pro-IS group JAD as the most lethal terror group in the archipelago.⁵³

⁵¹ "Pyongyang 'reconsiders' Trump summit", The JoongAng Daily, May 16, 2018, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3048199>

⁵² "Trump says no 'Libya model' for N. Korea's denuclearization ", The Korea Times, May 18, 2018, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/05/103_249232.html

⁵³ Karina M. Tehusijarana and Moses Ompusunggu, "What is JAD? Terror group behind Mako Brimob riot, Surabaya bombings", *The Jakarta Post*, May 14, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/14/what-is-jad-terror-group-behind-mako-brimob-riot-surabaya-bombings.html>, accessed on May 15, 2018.

On May 16, shortly after 9 am, four sword-wielding men were shot dead after ramming a car into a security checkpoint at a provincial police headquarters in Pekanbaru, the capital of Riau Province in central Sumatra. According to the Spokesman of the National Police, Inspector General Setyo Wasisto, one police officer died in a hospital after being hit by the vehicle, while two others suffered cuts in the attack.⁵⁴

- **President Jokowi ask Parliament to clear new anti-terror law by June**

President Joko Widodo speaking at a press conference on May 14, condemned the suicide bombings in Surabaya, and said he will push through new anti-terror laws. President Jokowi has given the Parliament till June to complete their deliberation of the draft on the anti-terror law that his administration proposed in February 2016. If not passed by the June deadline he would issue a perppu, which is an emergency presidential decree that the head of state may issue in lieu of law. In the new terror law the government has proposed police powers to take pre-emptive measures in fighting terrorism. The current law requires police to have ample evidence or wait until a terrorist attack is launched before they can make arrests. Other amendment to the existing law would include the TNI supporting the police in counter-terrorism efforts as well as act on terror threats against foreign embassies, special economic zones, commercial vessels and aircraft, as well as terror cells in jungles or mountainous areas in Indonesia.⁵⁵

- **Indonesia Condemns the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem**

Indonesian government in a press statement by its Foreign Minister Marsudi, strongly condemned the United States' decision to open its Embassy in Jerusalem. According to the statement the decision of the United States has violated various United Nations Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, as well as threatened the peace process and peace itself. Indonesia has urged the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly to immediately convene in order to take firm position and action. Further, Indonesia has called on other UN member states not to follow the path of the United States. It was also stated that the Government and the people of Indonesia will continue to stand with the Palestinians in fighting for their inalienable rights and independence.⁵⁶

- **Defence Ministry to Monitor Foreigners in Thailand**

Lt Gen Kongcheep, the Spokesman for Thailand's Defence Ministry on May 16, stated that in the meeting of the government's fifth public administration reform steering committee, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwon,

⁵⁴ Joe Cochrane and Hannah Beech, "Indonesia Sword Attack on Police Follows String of Deadly Bombings", *The New York Times*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/world/asia/indonesia-swords-terrorism-sumatra.html>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

⁵⁵ "Jokowi vows to push through tougher anti-terror laws", *The Straits Times*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/jokowi-vows-to-push-through-tougher-anti-terror-laws>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

⁵⁶ "Indonesia's Response on the Opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/Indonesias-Response-on-the-Opening-of-the-US-Embassy-in-Jerusalem.aspx>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

a computer database is being developed to store information about foreigners to help authorities keep track of them while they are in Thailand. Tourists, investors, and migrant workers are the core groups that the Thai security authorities want to better monitor with the help of the new database system. This is part of the government's internal security reform and measures to prevent and resolve transnational crimes and terrorism. The officers of the Ministry of Defence are developing the database and are being advised by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society. The database would be linked to other systems containing information about foreigners to better keep tabs on them from when they enter Thailand until they leave the country.⁵⁷

- **Laos and Cambodia Foreign Ministry meet to discuss Border demarcation issue**

A bilateral meeting between the delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Laos and that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia was held on May 16 in Vientiane. The meeting was held according to the agreement reached last year between Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and his Cambodia counterpart Hun Sen which had assigned the Foreign Ministries of the two countries to work together to find resolutions to border demarcation issues as 14 % of the total length of the common border of 535 km remains un-demarcated. Both sides agreed to encourage border committee in their respective countries to hold meetings more frequently to seek solutions to the border issues. They also agreed to establish department-level collaboration mechanisms at the foreign ministries of the two countries to ensure peace and security along the Lao-Cambodian common border thus restoring normalcy to the cooperation between the two countries.⁵⁸

- **Philippines and the US to cooperate in military intelligence sharing**

According to a statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines on May 20, Manila and Washington have committed to bolstering joint efforts in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism by sharing military intelligence information. The DFA said the agreement was reached during a recent meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii between a high-level Philippine delegation led by Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano and Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea. The US Pacific Command Admiral Harry Harris Jr and the commanders of all US Pacific Command's service components represented the US delegation. The DFA said Washington and Manila have also reaffirmed their firm resolve to bolster their enduring alliance anchored on common values and interest, historic ties and the Mutual Defence Treaty signed in 1951 between the two allies.⁵⁹

⁵⁷“Foreigners to be tracked by Defence Ministry”, *Bangkok Post*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1466714/foreigners-to-be-tracked-by-defence-ministry>, accessed on May 17, 2018.

⁵⁸ “Lao, Cambodian Foreign Ministers Meet On Border Issues”, *Laos News Agency*, May 17, 2018, <http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=33789>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

⁵⁹ “US, Philippines agree to bolster information sharing to fight terrorism”, *The Straits Times*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/us-philippines-agree-to-bolster-information-sharing-to-fight-terrorism>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

Myanmar

- **EU calls for immediate end to hostilities**

The heads of EU missions and EU member states have called for an immediate halt to all hostilities in Kachin, northern Shan and Kayah states, and urges all parties to cease military operations to protect civilians. Escalating armed clashes and military action in Kachin, northern Shan and in parts of Kayah States resulted in the displacement of more than 10,000 civilians, affecting communities and resulting in the loss of civilian lives and property. Reports on the use of excessive force, of civilians being prevented from fleeing and denial of humanitarian assistance for civilians in need are extremely worrying, they stated.⁶⁰

- **UN says Myanmar is getting close to graduate from 'least developed' status**

Myanmar has met all three eligibility criteria for the first time to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status according to the assessment mentioned in the recent Report of Committee for Development Policy (CDP) of the United Nations. It was stated in the report of the meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Committee for Development Policy held in March 2018 which was issued at the UN Headquarter in New York on 19 April 2018⁶¹.

- **Progress made at Dhaka repatriation talks, minister says**

Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Minister Win Myat Aye said progress is being made in talks between senior Myanmar and Bangladesh officials on the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled violence in northern Rakhine State. "We are always looking for positive way on this issue, and we are pleased to report that, based on the information I got from Dhaka, the discussions are making progress," U Win Myat Aye told The Myanmar Times. The talks on 17th were aimed at breaking the deadlock and speeding up repatriation of the estimated 700,000 refugees who fled violence in Rakhine to Bangladesh⁶².

- **USAID rep discusses development issues with Myanmar leader Suu Kyi**

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Mark Green met with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw. As US Government Spokesperson Clayton M. McCleskey reported on the meeting, the USAID Administrator voiced the United States' deep concern about the crisis in Rakhine State, which has displaced nearly 700,000 Rohingya since August 2017. He noted U.S. support for

⁶⁰EU calls for immediate end to hostilities, 18 May 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/eu-calls-immediate-end-hostilities.html>

⁶¹UN says Myanmar is getting close to graduate from 'least developed' status, 19 May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/development-news/un-says-myanmar-getting-close-graduate-%E2%80%98least-developed%E2%80%99-status>

⁶²Progress made at Dhaka repatriation talks, minister says, 18 May 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/progress-made-dhaka-repatriation-talks-minister-says.html>

Myanmar's transition to a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic state, and noted the importance of resolving the crisis to this transition⁶³.

- **Myanmar-India border crossing pact aims to increase caravan tourism**

Myanmar caravan tour operators said they expect a rise in the number of travellers through two crossings on the border between India and Myanmar. The two countries signed border crossing agreements last week that will allow tourists from both countries to pass thru Tamu-Moreh gate and Rikhawdar-Zokhawthar gate. Under the Myanmar-India border crossing agreement, border residents in both countries can apply for one-year border crossing permits and can cross the border anytime. The first gate located in upper Sagaing region and the second in Falam district in Chin state in Myanmar side, whereas the gates belong to Manipur and Mizoram states in India⁶⁴.

- **Myanmar Delegation attends the Second Joint Working Group Meeting on the Repatriation of Verified Displaced Persons from Bangladesh**

Myanmar delegation led by U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar visited Dhaka, Bangladesh from 15 to 18 May 2018 to attend the Second Meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Repatriation of Verified Displaced Persons. The delegation included representatives from various Ministries and the Rakhine State government. During the Meeting, both sides exchanged views on the repatriation process, including conducive environment, safety and security for the prospective returnees, current situation of displaced persons in Bangladesh.⁶⁵

Russia

- **Russia and India**

Ahead of the informal meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin at Sochi, on 20 May, Indian Ambassador to Russia, P Saran informed, "Russia is already participating in the construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. It has committed to building 6 plants in Kudankulam. We have signed an agreement with Russia to construct more units in India."⁶⁶

⁶³USAID rep discusses development issues with Myanmar leader SuuKyi, 19 May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/usaid-rep-discusses-development-issues-myanmar-leader-suu-kyi>

⁶⁴Myanmar-India border crossing pact aims to increase caravan tourism, 16 May 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-india-border-crossing-pact-aims-increase-caravan-tourism.html>

⁶⁵Myanmar Delegation attends the Second Joint Working Group Meeting on the Repatriation of Verified Displaced Persons from Bangladesh, 17 May 2018, <http://www.mofa.gov.mm/?p=11719>.

⁶⁶"Russia committed to build more nuclear power units in India: Indian envoy to Russia", *Economic Times*, May 20, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/russia-committed-to-build-more-nuclear-power-units-in-india-indian-envoy-to-russia/videoshow/64245131.cms> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

The Modi government has emphasised that it will not allow India's defence requirements to be dictated by any other country amid US sanctions on Russian defence firm that could impact defence sales to Delhi.⁶⁷

On 16 May, Defence Ministry said that India has moved a step further and reached a milestone in its project of procuring and co-producing 200 Kamov Ka-226T helicopters worth Rs 21,000 crore from Russia for the Indian Army and Indian Air Force. The ministry issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the project to the manufacturer, Russian Helicopters, part of Russian corporation, Rostec. The RFP is an important document in the Indian defence procurement process and elaborates on the general requirement of the equipment, the numbers required, delivery timeframes, maintenance and support package.⁶⁸

- **Russia and Germany**

Sanctions imposed by the Trump administration that could hurt companies in Germany and Russia were among the issues discussed by President Vladimir Putin and Chancellor Angela Merkel during their latest meeting on 16 May. On Nord Stream 2 pipeline, The US, which wants the EU to reduce the share of Russian gas it imports in favor of liquefied natural gas (LNG) produced in America, is threatening sanctions for European companies involved. *"Donald is not just the president of the US. He is also a robust businessman, so he is furthering his business interests, I believe,"* Putin explained, adding that American LNG is currently about 20 to 30 percent more expensive than Russian pipeline gas. Putin and Merkel expressed their nations' commitment to the Minsk agreement, a roadmap towards peace for Ukraine, and said that a new meeting of the so-called Normandy format, which includes Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France, may soon be convened, but refrained from providing a timeline.⁶⁹ Economy minister Peter Altmaier defended the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. He issued a stark warning to the United States about the risks of placing "America First," accusing Washington of seeking to block a planned Russia-Germany gas pipeline to shore up its own exports.⁷⁰

- **Russia and China**

⁶⁷Dipanjan Ray Chaudhury, "India's defence needs not be dictated by any 3rd country: Modi govt's message ahead of Sochi Summit", *Economic Times*, May 18, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indias-defence-needs-not-be-dictated-by-any-3rd-country-modi-govts-message-ahead-of-sochi-summit/articleshow/64215231.cms> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁶⁸Shaurya Karanvir Gurung, "India issues an RFP for acquiring 200 Kamov helicopters from Russia", *Economic Times*, May 16, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-issues-an-rfp-for-acquiring-200-kamov-helicopters-from-russia/articleshow/64191899.cms> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁶⁹"Putin, Merkel discuss defense against Trump's sanctions drive", *RT*, May 18, 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/427156-putin-merkel-us-sanctions/> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁷⁰"German Minister Blasts U.S. Efforts to Block Russian Gas Pipeline As 'Self-Interest'", *The Moscow Times*, May 18, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/german-minister-blasts-us-efforts-to-block-russian-gas-pipeline-as-self-interest-61491> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

On 17 May, China warned Russian oil firm Rosneft and Vietnam against conducting oil exploration in the disputed South China Sea, also claimed by Beijing, without Chinese government permission, saying any such move would affect bilateral ties, regional peace and stability. The report said Rosneft Vietnam BV is drilling at LD-3P well about 370 kms from Vietnam which reportedly is located "within the area outlined by China's nine-dash line" of the SCS.⁷¹

- **Russia and Crimea**

On 15 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin inaugurated a bridge that connects Crimea to Russia, [saying](#), "A miracle has come true." The automobile section of the Kerch Strait Bridge, said to be the longest bridge in Europe.⁷²

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **German Troops to Remain In Afghanistan**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on 14 May 2018 stressed that Germany would not pull out troops from Afghanistan. Germany would always adhere to rules and guidelines of NATO alliance and spend two percent of GDP on defense and that includes fighting for Afghanistan's peace and stability. Criticising US move of partial withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan's soil, Angela Markel said, "This reveals something which I think Germany can be proud of. It's sometimes said that 'it takes forever before you guys reach a decision where you're going.' Yes, sometimes it might take a little longer than with others but once we're there, we're staying. So we have decided and I fought hard politically for this, already with President Obama not to pull out of Afghanistan too hastily. We are staying and our work in the north cannot be done without the United States of America, that's correct."⁷³

- **Construction of TAPI Could be Delayed**

Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has stated that construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India would be delayed on account of ambiguous routes. Abdul Qadir Mutfi, a spokesman for the Ministry of Mines mentioned, "We will first do

⁷¹"China warns Russian firm against drilling oil off Vietnam ", *Economic Times*, May 17, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/china-warns-russian-firm-against-drilling-oil-off-vietnam/articleshow/64207528.cms> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁷²"Putin's Bridge Linking Russia To (Annexed) Crimea Opens", *NPR*, May 15, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/15/611392565/putins-bridge-linking-russia-to-annexed-crimea-opens> Accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁷³ Shabeer Ahmadi, "German Troops To Remain In Afghanistan," *Tolo News*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/german-troops-remain-afghanistan>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

assessments on the environment and the acquisition of land on the TAPI route and then we will step into the construction phase. It means that we will need to go through some stages ahead of construction.” Earlier, President Ashraf Ghani assured that the project would be completed by 2019. However, this delay for practical work would severely impact the economy of Afghanistan.⁷⁴

- **Afghan Forces Fighting Terror on Behalf of All Humanity**

Gen. John Nicholson , NATO’s Resolute Support and US Forces Commander in Afghanistan on 18 May 2018, held that Afghan National Defense and Security Forces along with US and its allies were fighting bravely against global terrorism. According to Nicholson, “Your National Defense and Security Forces are defending your country and fighting for peace. These brave men and women are the true heroes of your nation who continue to sacrifice and put their lives on the line to protect you, your families and to provide a prosperous and peaceful future for this country”.⁷⁵

- **Iran has Contacts not Links with Taliban: Envoy**

On 19 may 2018, Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Reza Bahrami said that although Iran had contacts but no relation with the Taliban. Iran has always supported peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Previously, it was reported that Iran has been involved with the Taliban that created havoc in the provincial capital of Farah Province with recent attacks. According to Bahrami, “Personally I don’t accept the concept. This impression is not real and will create concerns to public. This impression and mentality is not documented”. With regard to Iran’s encouragement of Afghan nationals in fighting as Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in Syria, he said, “We have not encouraged or guided them; it has been based on their will. We are in Syria based on the request of Syrian government. We have had advisory role there and we are doing this with the agreement of Syrian government.”⁷⁶

- **Ghani off to Turkey to Participate in OIC Meeting Regarding Jerusalem**

On 19 may 2018, President Ashraf Ghani visited Turkey to participate in Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference held by Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in Istanbul. Afghanistan was concerned with the move of US in 2017 when US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The country believed that it

⁷⁴ “Construction of TAPI Could be Delayed,” *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 14, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20933, accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁷⁵ Mir Aqa Popalzai, “Afghan Forces Fighting Terror On Behalf Of All Humanity,” *Tolo News*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/%E2%80%98afghan-forces-fighting-terror-behalf-all-humanity%E2%80%99>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

⁷⁶ “Iran has Contacts not Links with Taliban: Envoy,” *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 20, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20961, accessed on May 20, 2018.

would hurt the feelings of Muslims around the world, endangering the peace process in West Asia.⁷⁷

Bangladesh

- **China, Russia Unmoved at UNSC**

UN Security Council members, except China and Russia, have called for robust council actions so that Myanmar addresses the root cause of the Rohingya crisis, grants the refugees citizenship and holds those who carried out atrocities against them accountable. The Council must find a suitable solution to the issue for improving the situation on the ground. Otherwise, the crisis may constitute a threat to international peace and security, they warned.⁷⁸

- **SC Upholds Bail for Khaleda**

The Supreme Court upheld bail for BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case, in which she is currently serving a five-year jail term. However, this will not mean Khaleda will be released from jail because, as her lawyers said, she is being held behind bars in some other cases. The Supreme Court, however, directed the HC bench, led by Justice Enayetur Rahim, to hear and dispose the appeal filed by Khaleda challenging conviction verdict in the case by July 31.⁷⁹

- **Bangladesh to Get 500MW Electricity from India**

Bangladesh will get an additional 500MW of electricity from India starting next month, increasing its power import from the neighbouring country to 1,160MW. Bangladesh Power Development Board Chairman Khaled Mahmood said he hoped the import would start from June 10, adding that they were making last moment preparations. The Cabinet Committee on Public Purchases approved a proposal on April 11 to buy power from India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), and Power Trading Corporation (PTC).⁸⁰

- **Repatriation Date Not Finalised**

The JWG, responsible for overseeing the repatriation, held its second meeting in Dhaka yesterday (May 17) after about four months, but it ended without any concrete decision. "This type of repatriation is always complex and difficult. But there is no difference of

⁷⁷ "Ghani off to Turkey to Participate in OIC Meeting Regarding Jerusalem," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 19, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20955, accessed on May 19, 2018.

⁷⁸ "China, Russia still unmoved at UNSC," *The Daily Star*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/rohingya-crisis-china-russia-still-unmoved-uns-1576906>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

⁷⁹ "SC upholds bail for Khaleda," *The Daily Star*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/politics/khaleda-zia-supreme-court-bail-zia-orphanage-trust-corruption-case-1577098>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

⁸⁰ "500MW electricity from India starting June 2018," *Dhaka Tribune*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/power-energy/2018/05/17/500mw-to-be-imported-from-india-in-june>, accessed on May 17, 2018.

opinion that the repatriation should happen. Both the sides feel that the repatriation should be done quickly,” Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said yesterday (May 17).⁸¹

- **Govt Trying to Keep Khaleda Away from Election**

BNP yesterday (May 18) alleged that the government is trying to promptly dispose of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's appeal to keep her away from the national elections. “Unprecedented incidents are happening under this government...there's no instance of giving direction by the Supreme Court to settle any appeal within three to four months,” said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.⁸²

- **BNP Interested in Building Relationship with India**

A powerful faction of the BNP wants to end the party's historic hostility to India and build sustainable ties with the neighbouring country based on more than a short term “election-centric” relationship. The development comes as the foreign affairs wing of the country's main opposition party continues to work on its policies ahead of the upcoming 11th national election. As part of this, BNP has reviewed and strengthened its foreign policies towards the world's most powerful countries, which include the economic giant on its own doorstep.⁸³

नेपाल

द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध आपसी हित पर आधारित: प्रधानमंत्री ओली

भारत के प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की नेपाल यात्रा के बारे में संसद को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि मोदी की इस नेपाल यात्रा से द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध नई ऊँचाईयों पर पहुंचे है. उन्होंने आगे कहा कि दोनों देशों ने राष्ट्रीय हितों को वरीयता देते हुए देशों के विरुद्ध कोई गतिविधि न होने की बात कही. ओली ने कहा कि नाकेबंदी के बाद आपसी द्विपक्षीय संबंधों में तनाव था लेकिन अभी माहौल सौहार्द्रपूर्ण है. ओली ने यह भी कहा कि भारत के प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने वक्तव्य में नेपाल की संप्रभुता और अखंडता का भी जिक्र किया और द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों में समानता की बात कही तथा नेपाल की आवश्यकता अनुसार मदद की जाएगी.⁸⁴

⁸¹ “No date for repatriation,” *The Daily Star*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/no-date-repatriation-1577992>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

⁸² “Govt trying to keep Khaleda away from election,” *The Daily Star*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/govt-trying-keep-khaleda-away-election-1578388>, accessed on May 19, 2018.

⁸³ “BNP interested in building relationship with India,” *Dhaka Tribune*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2018/05/21/bnp-interested-in-building-relationship-with-india>, accessed on May 21, 2018.

⁸⁴ “Bilateral ties based on mutual benefit: PM”, *The Rising Nepal*, May 14, 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-14/f440b14b2c748e020dc365806b49635f.jpg>, accessed on May 15, 2018.

गणतंत्र दिवस का उत्सव मनाये:ओली

शुक्रवार को गृह मंत्रालय की गणतन्त्र दिवस समारोह समिति को संबोधित करते हुए प्रधानमंत्री ओली ने कहा कि गणतंत्र समारोह का आयोजन सार्वजनिक रूप से कराया जाना चाहिए. यह केवल एक सरकारी कार्यक्रम नहीं होना चाहिए बल्कि इसे हर वर्ष 29 मई को सार्वजनिक उत्सव के रूप में मनाना चाहिए.⁸⁵

एमाले और माओवादी केंद्र ने एकीकरण की घोषणा की:

एमाले और माओवादी केंद्र ने बुधवार तक दोनों दलों के विलय का अंतिम चरण पूरा कर लिया है. सूत्रों के मुताबिक दोनों दलों की बैठक हो रही है और गुरुवार को विलय की घोषणा होगी. एमाले सांसदों के हिसाब से सबसे बड़ा दल है और माओवादी केंद्र तीसरे नंबर पर आता है.⁸⁶

पार्टी का एकीकरण विकास का मजबूत आधार बनेगा: प्रधानमंत्री

प्रधानमंत्री के पी शर्मा ओली ने कहा कि एमाले और माओवादी केंद्र का विलय देश के विकास और आर्थिक उन्नति के लिए अनुकूल माहौल पैदा करेगा. इस एकीकरण से नेपाल में अगले दस सालों तक राजनीतिक स्थिरता रहेगी और विदेशी निवेश भी बढ़ेगा.⁸⁷

Pakistan

• Caretaker Government in Pakistan

The government and the opposition will announce the name of the caretaker prime minister on May 22nd. The caretaker prime minister will lead the interim set-up and attend to day-to-day matters of governance till the federal elections are held.⁸⁸ Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on May 20th called on PML-N leaders Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif at Jati Umra and discussed the matter of caretaker prime minister ahead of his final meeting with Opposition Leader Khursheed Shah on May 22nd. It was predicted that PML-N might accept the nomination put forward by Shah.⁸⁹

• Pakistan and China

⁸⁵ "Republic day should be public celebration: PM", *The Rising Nepal*, May 19, 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-19/03451dd965e9faeb8ffae104f43442ca.jpg>, accessed on May 19, 2018.

⁸⁶ "UML, MC to announce unification today", *The Rising Nepal*, May 17, 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-17/5c4b2325b72bfb8b0b8a3e51b024b9ac.jpg>, accessed on May 17, 2018.

⁸⁷ "Party unification has built strong basis for development: PM Oli", *The Rising Nepal*, 20 May 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-20/4443f1b5629eafb5f8f8984576d9f9bdf.jpg>

⁸⁸ "Caretaker PM's name to be announced on Tuesday, says Shah," *The Dawn*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408596> as accessed on May 21, 2018

⁸⁹ Zulqernain Tahir, Abbasi may endorse Shah's nominee for caretaker PM, *Dawn*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409001> as accessed on May 21, 2018

Acting President Sadiq Sanjrani conferred the Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) to vice chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission, Gen Zhang Youxia, at an investiture ceremony held at Aiwan-i-Sadr on May 18th in Islamabad. The event was attended by Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Naval Chief Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing and other senior officials.⁹⁰

- **Pakistan Refugee and Australia**

Australia's highest court on May 16th rejected the refugee claim of two Pakistanis asylum seeker because they could find somewhere safe in their homelands to live. One of the two Pakistani men, who is a resident of Peshawar, had told the courts he feared being persecuted by the Taliban if he returned to Peshawar. The court found while there was a real possibility he would be harmed in Peshawar, he could move elsewhere in Pakistan. The other Pakistani was from Sialkot but had lived most of his life in Karachi, where the Muttahida Qaumi Movement is headquartered. He feared the party would harm him because he had injured one of its senior members. The court found that he could live in Punjab, where the party had no power or influence.⁹¹

- **Pakistan and Afghanistan**

The new Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral engagement framework—Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS)—became operational on May 14th with both sides hoping that its implementation would contribute to promoting peace in the region. The seven principles agreed between Pakistan and Afghanistan for the new framework for engagement included commitments that Pakistan would support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation; the two countries would undertake effective actions against fugitives and the irreconcilable elements posing security threats to either of the two countries; both countries would deny use of their respective territory by any country, network, group or individuals for anti-state activities against either country; they would put in place a joint supervision, coordination and confirmation mechanism through liaison officers for realisation of the agreed actions; territorial and aerial violations of each other's territory would be avoided; there would be no public blame game and instead APAPPS cooperation mechanisms would be utilised to respond to mutual issues of contention and concerns; and working groups and necessary cooperation mechanism would be set up as per APAPPS.⁹²

⁹⁰ "Nishan-i-Imtiaz conferred on China's top military official," *The Dawn*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408592/nishan-i-imitiaz-conferred-on-chinas-top-military-official> as accessed on May 21, 2018

⁹¹ "Australian court rejects refugee claim of two Pakistanis," *The Dawn*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408172> as accessed on May 21, 2018

⁹² "New framework for talks with Afghanistan becomes operational," *The Dawn*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407732> as accessed on May 21, 2018

Indian Ocean Region

- **Indonesia gives India economic and military access to the strategic port of Sabang**

Indonesia might provide India economic and military access to a strategic port of Sabang at the northern tip of Sumatra.⁹³ While speaking on India-Indonesia maritime cooperation at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi on 17 May 2018, Luhut Pandjaitan, Maritime Affairs Minister, Government of Indonesia, said, “India and Indonesia have started naval drills in 2017, but we can explore doing more between our coast guards. This will become even better when the Sabang seaport is established with India. Sabang port has a depth of 40 metres which is good even for submarines.”⁹⁴ Sabang port is located 710 km southeast of Andaman Islands and about 500 km from the busy Malacca Strait.⁹⁵ “We don’t have to lean towards any superpower, and this makes India a sensible partner for Indonesia”⁹⁶, further he added. The Minister also said, “Indonesia does not want to be controlled by Belt and Road Initiative. Indonesia follows an independent foreign policy and is not aligned to one big power or the other like India. Jakarta has good relations with Beijing but wants to balance BRI. We are focusing on Indo-Pacific concept and global maritime fulcrum is necessary as a balancing tool.”⁹⁷

India is also planning to support Indonesia in developing port in Aceh closer to Andaman Nicobar Islands.⁹⁸

- **IORA's centre on medicinal plants in Lucknow**

The Indian Ocean Rim Association's regional science and technology transfer coordination centre on medicinal plants inaugurated in Lucknow on 07 May 2018.⁹⁹ The centre was inaugurated at the Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) campus in Lucknow.¹⁰⁰ “The establishment of the Centre follows the signing of an MoU between CSIR-CIMAP and the Tehran based IORA-RCSTT on 24 February 2018

⁹³ Indonesia likely to give India access to deep seaport in Sabang, 17 May 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indonesia-likely-to-give-india-access-to-deep-seaport-in-sabang/articleshow/64209190.cms> (Accessed on 20 May 2018).⁹³

⁹⁴ Indonesia gives India access to strategic port of Sabang, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indonesia-gives-india-access-to-strategic-port-of-sabang/story-KPXWKy7PGAHFUi0jCL26yJ.html>, 17 May 2018 (Accessed on 20 May 2018).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ India seeks to aid Indonesia in developing port in Aceh, 17 May 2018, [indiatimes.com/india/indonesia-likely-to-give-india-access-to-deep-seaport-in-sabang/articleshow/64214909.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=ppst](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indonesia-likely-to-give-india-access-to-deep-seaport-in-sabang/articleshow/64214909.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=ppst) (Accessed on 20 May 2018).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ IORA's centre on medicinal plants inaugurated in Lucknow: MEA, 09 May 2018 (Accessed on 20 May 2018).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

in Tehran," mentioned press release issued by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.¹⁰¹

- **9th India-Seychelles Joint Commission held in Seychelles**

The 9th India-Seychelles Joint Commission was held in Seychelles on 14-15 May 2018. The meeting was co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary of India, Mr. Vijay Gokhale, Secretary of State and Executive Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Seychelles, Ambassador Barry Faure.¹⁰² According to news published by Department of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of Seychelles, "during the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral, political and economic relations, expressing satisfaction on the progress achieved in various areas of cooperation since the 8th India-Seychelles Joint Commission that was held in New Delhi, India in 2013. They further agreed to explore other areas of cooperation in fields such as family affairs, gender, population, space, science & technology, trade and commerce, solid waste management and forestry management, amongst others."¹⁰³ Both countries also exchanged their views on regional and multilateral cooperation.¹⁰⁴ During the meeting the two countries also reviewed the status of preparation for the visit of President Danny Faure to India in June 2018.¹⁰⁵

Sri Lanka

- **AI Welcomes Progress on Disappearance**

Amnesty International (AI) has commended Sri Lanka for its 'welcome progress' on the issue of disappearances with the criminalisation of enforced disappearances in March 2018, giving partial effect to the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance and operationalising the Office of Missing Persons. AI said the government must support the spirit of these measures by proactively supporting truth-seeking efforts by the families of the disappeared to get answers, almost a decade after the end of the armed conflict.¹⁰⁶

- **Mangala says Gota was Most Dangerous Officer**

Finance and Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera accused former Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa of being the most corrupt and dangerous public officer ever

¹⁰¹ Inauguration of IORA-RCSTT Coordination Centre on Medicinal Plants at CSIR-CIMAP, Lucknow, 08 May 2018, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29877/Inauguration+of+IORARCSTT+Coordination+Centre+on+Medicinal+Plants+at+CSIRCIMAP+Lucknow> (Accessed on 20 May 2018).

¹⁰² 9th India-Seychelles Joint Commission, Mahé, Seychelles, 15th May 2018, 15 May 2018, http://www.mfa.gov.sc/static.php?content_id=36&news_id=1566, (Accessed on 20 May 2018).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "AI WELCOMES PROGRESS ON DISAPPEARANCES," May 20, 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/20619-ai-welcomes-progress-on-disappearances>, accessed on May 20, 2018.

appointed in this country. In a media statement, Samaraweera said that Gotabhaya Rajapaksa invented the 'white van' terror in Sri Lanka that attracted world attention and is being investigated over a corrupt MIG deal, plundering public money to construct memorial museums and naming them after his parents, unleashing assaults on journalists and over the enforced disappearance some of them, instigating corruption and terror and maintaining illegal armoury thereby depriving the Government of its due income.¹⁰⁷

- **Wigneswaran Urges International Mechanism**

Addressing crowds gathered at the Tamil genocide remembrance event in Mullivaikkal memorial ground on 18th May, the chief minister of the Northern Province called on the international community to set up without delay international strategic mechanism to ensure justice. Declaring May 18 as 'Tamil Genocide Day', Mr Wigneswaran said, "As a group of people who have faced institutional genocide, the international community must come forward to assure us a sustainable political settlement based on our sovereignty, our homelands and our individuality." "Sri Lanka consented to install a hybrid Inquiry Panel before the world body. Now they refuse to abide by their promise and undertaking. This would point out to the world the manner in which our successive governments for 70 years have deceived and fooled our Tamil people."¹⁰⁸

- **UNHRC Has Not Accused Sri Lanka of War Crimes: President**

President Maithripala Sirisena insisted that Sri Lanka has not been accused by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) of committing war crimes. Speaking at the National War Heroes Day event held at the war heroes monument near Parliament today (Saturday), the President said that some groups who support the LTTE and those who are against the Government and the security forces are making false claims that the military has been accused of war crimes in the resolution on Sri Lanka passed by the UNHRC.¹⁰⁹

- **Govt. on Borrowing Spree: MR**

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the incumbent Government, having committed public funds to win elections, began the biggest borrowing spree in Sri Lanka's history to meet the increased expenditure. Issuing a statement, he said this Government had borrowed a total of around USD 19.5 billion in foreign commercial loans and well over six trillion in rupee loans from January 2015 to date. He said following the recent

¹⁰⁷"Mangala says Gota was most dangerous public officer ever," *Colombo Gazette*, May 20, 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/05/20/mangala-says-gota-was-most-dangerous-public-officer-ever/>, accessed on May 20, 2018.

¹⁰⁸"Wigneswaran urges international mechanism to ensure justice on Tamil Genocide Day," *Tamil Guardian*, May 18, 2018, <http://www.tamilguardian.com/content/wigneswaran-urges-international-mechanism-ensure-justice-tamil-genocide-day>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

¹⁰⁹"President insists UNHRC has not accused Sri Lanka of war crimes," *Colombo Gazette*, May 19, 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/05/19/president-insists-unhrc-has-not-accused-sri-lanka-of-war-crimes/>, accessed on May 19, 2018.

increase in fuel prices, transport costs and the prices of goods and services had started rising.¹¹⁰

Maldives

- **Nasheed Submits Candidacy Papers for MDP Primary**

Former President Mohamed Nasheed on 19th submitted his candidacy papers as the sole contender in the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party's presidential primary. Along with support letters from 7,739 members, the application was handed over to the MDP chairman by MP Mohamed Aslam, the exiled opposition leader's campaign manager. The 51-year-old—who remains barred from contesting September's presidential election due to a 13-year prison sentence—launched his Jazeera Raees (Island President) campaign earlier this month, proposing a “blue economy” manifesto focused on decentralisation, transitional justice and a low carbon development strategy.¹¹¹

- **Two Separate States Possible without MDP Candidate: Nasheed**

Former President Mohamed Nasheed has proclaimed that two separate states might result unless there was a candidate from his party, the main opposition Maldives Democratic Party (MDP). In an interview to Raajje MV, he said that the election would not be credible if incumbent President Abdulla Yameen was running. Pointing out that similar elections in other countries have led to the formation of separate states in the past, he stated that it was likely to happen in the Maldives as well. Nasheed went on to say that the opposition had a right to take part in the elections; otherwise, the Maldives would not be able to overcome the current political chaos.¹¹²

- **Maldives Backs UN Human Rights Probe**

The Maldives has backed the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council's resolution to set up an independent commission to investigate Israel's recent killing of Palestinians in Gaza. The council's 36th Session was held on 18th over the “deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory” after Israeli forces killed 60 Palestinians and injured over 2,700 during an unarmed protest against the move of the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that Dr Hala Hameed, the Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the UN, condemned “Israel's systematic violations of the human rights of Palestinians, including the right to

¹¹⁰ “Govt. on borrowing spree, says MR, 16 May 2018,” *Daily Mirror*, May 16, 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Govt-on-borrowing-spreesays-MR-150017.html>, accessed on May 16, 2018.

¹¹¹ “Nasheed submits candidacy papers for MDP primary,” *Maldives Independent*, May 19, 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/nasheed-submits-candidacy-papers-for-mdp-primary-138228>, accessed on May 19, 2018.

¹¹² “Two separate states possible without MDP candidate: Nasheed,” *The Edition*, May 18, 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/5984>, accessed on May 18, 2018.

property, freedom of movement, development and self-determination" during the session.¹¹³

- **Gayoom's Family Appeals for Ramadan Release**

The former first lady has appealed to the authorities to transfer her husband Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to house arrest for Ramadan. Citing doctor's recommendation for round-the-clock care for his ailing health, Nasreena Ibrahim made the appeal in letters to the criminal court's chief judge and Prosecutor General Aishath Bisham. The 82-year-old former strongman is suffering from a condition called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) that causes dizziness and difficulty standing without assistance. Gayoom could not fast and attend to Ramadan prayers and rituals on his own at the Dhoonidhoo detention centre, she wrote. The first lady has been allowed to regularly visit Gayoom at the nearby police detention island since his health worsened two weeks ago.¹¹⁴

West Asia

Iraq and GCC

- **Sadr wins Iraqi Parliamentary Elections with 54 Seats¹¹⁵**

The Independent High Electoral Commission released the final results for national assembly elections in the country. The Sayirun or Marching towards Reforms alliance of Muqtada al-Sadr and Communist Party has won the most seats - 54 of the parliament's total 329. The Fatih or Conquest alliance with ties to Iranian-backed militias came second with 47 seats, pushing the Victory (Nasr) alliance of incumbent Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi into third place with 42 seats.

Among the Kurdish parties, the KDP won the most seats with 25, putting it fifth overall in the country, one seat behind Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition. The PUK won 18 seats.

- **Six Kurdish parties consider withdrawing from Iraqi political process¹¹⁶**

After receiving no response to their calls for a manual recount or a full do-over of the election in the Kurdistan Region and the disputed territories because of reports of fraud, six Kurdish parties are contemplating pulling out of the political process. Gorran, the Coalition for Democracy and Justice (CDJ), the Kurdistan Islamic League (Komal), the Kurdistan Communist Party, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), and the Kurdistan

¹¹³"Maldives backs UN human rights probe into Gaza killings," *Maldives Independent*, May 19, 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/5988>, accessed on May 19, 2018.

¹¹⁴"Gayoom's family appeals for Ramadan release," *Maldives Independent*, May 17, 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/gayooms-family-appeals-for-ramadan-release-138183>, accessed on May 17, 2018.

¹¹⁵ <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/180520182>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/180520181>

Islamic Movement (IMK) have formed a united front as they protest “systematic and pre-planned fraud” in last Saturday’s parliamentary elections. These smaller and new Kurdish parties had hoped to challenge the political dominance of traditional Kurdish parties of KDP and PUK after botched Kurdish referendum and loss of disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk to Baghdad.

- **Bahrain revokes citizenship of 115 people in mass trial¹¹⁷**

Bahrain court today revoked the citizenship of 115 people at a mass terrorism trial, sentencing dozens to prison amid a years-long crackdown on all dissent in the island kingdom. Bahrain's Public Prosecution said the case involved a little-known militant group it identified as the "Zulfiqar Brigades," whose mass arrests authorities previously announced in 2016. Prosecutors said those accused built and detonated bombs, received weapons training and plotted to kill police officers in Bahrain, an island off the coast of Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf. A statement from prosecutors said 53 defendants received life sentences, while dozens of others faced prison time. It said 23 defendants were acquitted.

- **Qatar Pledges to Continue Support for Stability and Sovereignty of Somalia¹¹⁸**

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who held talks Monday with visiting Somali President Mohammad Abdullahi, said the relationship between Doha and Mogadishu were based on “brotherhood and mutual respect.” “Qatar will continue to support the unity, stability, sovereignty and well-being of the people of Somalia,” Sheikh Tamim said in a tweet following the meeting.

Earlier this month, a Qatari official told Reuters that Doha had provided \$385 million in infrastructure, education and humanitarian aid to the Somali government. The Monday meeting, which is the third in less than a year, comes at a particularly sensitive time when Mogadishu abandoned a military deal with Abu Dhabi and seized millions of dollars from an Emirati plane.

Turkey

- **US directly responsible for Gaza massacre, says Turkey’s Deputy PM**

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Government Spokesman Bekir Bozdağ on Tuesday held the U.S. directly responsible for the massacre carried out by Israel in the besieged Gaza Strip on Monday which killed 60 peaceful Palestinian protesters near the border. “The blood of the oppressed is only on the hands of the terrorist Israel; the U.S. is directly

¹¹⁷ http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/bahrain-revokes-citizenship-of-115-people-in-mass-trial-118051501110_1.html

¹¹⁸ <https://www.albawaba.com/news/qatar-pledges-continue-support-stability-and-sovereignty-somalia-1132016>

responsible for the massacre,” Bozdağ said in the Turkish Parliament during a session dedicated to the latest developments in Jerusalem and Gaza.¹¹⁹

- **Turkey urges Islamic world to review Israel ties after Gaza massacre**

Turkey on Tuesday urged Islamic countries to review their ties with Israel and said it would call an extraordinary summit of the world’s main pan-Islamic body after Israel massacred dozens of Palestinians during protests in Gaza on May 14. Ankara has reacted with fury to the killing of at least 61 Palestinians in Gaza on the same day as the US formally moved its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv in defiance of international outrage.¹²⁰

- **Erdoğan receives anti-Zionist Jewish group in London**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received members of the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta International organization in a closed-to-press meeting in London on Tuesday. The Orthodox Jew group led by Rabbi Elahanan Beck held a meeting with Erdoğan, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik and Deputy Secretary General and Spokesperson of the Presidency Ibrahim Kalın in Intercontinental Hotel that lasted for about half an hour, sources said.¹²¹

- **Turkish chief of staff urges Greece not to make ‘miscalculations’ over Aegean**

Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar has indirectly urged Greece not to make “miscalculations” amid a rise in tension between Turkey and Greece over the Aegean. “We can conduct operations in Afrin [in northwest Syria]. We can conduct operations in [Turkey’s] east and southeast. If necessary, we will fulfill any duty that may be assigned to us in the Mediterranean and in the Aegean without hesitation. No one should make any miscalculation on this issue,” Akar was quoted as saying by the state-run Anadolu Agency on May 20.¹²²

¹¹⁹ **“US directly responsible for Gaza massacre, says Turkey’s Deputy PM”**, 15 May 2018. <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/us-directly-responsible-for-gaza-massacre-says-turkeys-deputy-pm-3391412>

¹²⁰ **“Turkey urges Islamic world to review Israel ties after Gaza massacre”**, 18 May 2018. <http://newtr.tv/>

¹²¹ **“Erdoğan receives anti-Zionist Jewish group in London”**, 16 May 2018 <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/05/15/erdogan-receives-anti-zionist-jewish-group-in-london>

¹²² **“Turkish chief of staff urges Greece not to make ‘miscalculations’ over Aegean”**, 20 May 2018 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-chief-of-staff-urges-greece-not-to-make-miscalculations-over-aegean-132062>

- **Greece: Turkish PM slams okaying of FETO members asylum**

The Turkish premier on Sunday condemned the acceptance of asylum requests of two coup plotters by the Greek Asylum Commission. Speaking to Greek daily To Vima, Binali Yildirim said: "However, we welcome the Greek government's objection to the decision." On May 8, the Greek commission accepted the petition of former Maj. Ahmet Guzel, suspected of involvement in the July 2016 defeated coup in Turkey. Guzel is one of eight former Turkish soldiers who fled to Greece a day after the defeated coup. They are accused by Turkish authorities of involvement in the defeated coup and being members of the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO). FETO and its U.S.-based leader Fetullah Gulen orchestrated the defeated coup on July 15, 2016, which left 250 people martyred and nearly 2,200 injured.¹²³

Saudi Arabia

- **Arab foreign ministers council authorizes the SG of the AL to put a comprehensive plan to confront the US decision recognizing Al-Quds as capital of Israel 2 Cairo**

The Arab foreign ministers also condemned a few countries reportedly considering to transfer their embassies to Al-Quds, assigning the secretariat general of the AL to advise such countries to desist from such a move. They demanded the UN Security Council to follow up the implementation of its former relevant decisions on Palestine. The ministers paid tribute to the courage and steadfast of the Palestinian people in their stand against the Israeli aggression and in defense of their sanctities, territory and rights.¹²⁴

- **Maj. Gen. Yahya in Indonesia to discuss POC system**

Saudi Arabian authorities have been gradually expanding the state-of-the-art technology to render a comfortable and hassle free journey for pilgrims across the world. Saudi Passport officials are keen to extend the pre-clearance facility to pilgrims from different parts of the world. Saudi authorities have introduced the Proof of Concept (POC) system for pre-clearance at the point of departure in home countries. The POC system enables

¹²³"Greece: Turkish PM slams okaying of FETO members asylum", 20 May 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greece-turkish-pm-slams-okaying-of-feto-members-asylum/1152016>

¹²⁴" Arab foreign ministers council authorizes the SG of the AL to put a comprehensive plan to confront the US decision recognizing Al-Quds as capital of Israel 2 Cairo", 18 May 2018. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1767436#1767436>

immigration checks in home countries at time of departure, instead of upon arrival in Kingdom.¹²⁵

- **Abu Dhabi Crown Prince meets Pakistani army chief**

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, met today with Pakistani Army Commander General Qamar Javed Bajwa, who is currently visiting Abu Dhabi.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and means of developing them to serve their common interests.¹²⁶

- **Saudi team develops payload for use in joint lunar exploration with Chinese Space Agency**

Saudi engineers and researchers have completed work on a payload for a Chinese space vehicle that will explore the moon, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Monday.

The joint exploration is in line with a memorandum of understanding concluded between China and Saudi Arabia during King Salman's visit to Beijing in mid-March 2017, the SPA said, quoting Prince Turki bin Saud bin Mohammed, president of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST).¹²⁷

- **Central Bahrain: Saudi Arabia is an Attractive Investment Destination for Banks**

"The financial environment in Saudi Arabia has many advantages that have made the Kingdom a destination for Bahraini banks," said Rasheed Al Maraj, Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain, Bahraini bankers, as well as four investment companies affiliated to Bahraini banks, benefited from the attractive financial environment in Saudi Arabia to expand its financial activity outside Bahrain," said Rashid Al Maraj, Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain.¹²⁸

¹²⁵"Maj. Gen. Yahya in Indonesia to discuss POC system", 20 May 2018. <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/535262/SAUDI-ARABIA/Maj-Gen-Yahya-in-Indonesia-to-discuss-POC-system>

¹²⁶ "Abu Dhabi Crown Prince meets Pakistani army chief", 20 May 2018. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1768157#1768157>

¹²⁷ "Saudi team develops payload for use in joint lunar exploration with Chinese Space Agency", 21 May 2018. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1306466/saudi-arabia>

¹²⁸ "Central Bahrain: Saudi Arabia is an Attractive Investment Destination for Banks", 21 May 2018. <https://www.zawya.com/mena/ar/story/>

Israel

- **Israel and the Palestinian Crisis**

While protesting the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem, 62 Palestinians got killed in the border fence dividing Israel from the Gaza Strip by IDF forces.¹²⁹ The events in Gaza sparked a diplomatic row between Turkey and Israel, with both countries expelling each other's senior diplomats on May 15th. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on May 16th that the United Nations had "collapsed" in the face of events in Gaza.¹³⁰ It can be noted that following U.S.'s lead, Paraguay moved embassy to Jerusalem on May 21st.¹³¹ The President of Paraguay Horacio Cartes arrived in Israel on May 20th for the opening of the embassy.¹³²

- **Boeing and Israel**

Israeli industrial 3D-printing company Asembrix signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Boeing on May 14th to use its technology to safely design, manage and protect intellectual property shared with vendors throughout the production process, making this the most significant partnership for the Israeli company so far. What sets Asembrix apart is that its printing technology offers full control to manufacturers to remotely control 3D printing, allowing them to virtually print safely from anywhere in the world.¹³³

- **Present state of President Mahmud Abbas**

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was taken to a Ramallah hospital May 20th for the third time in a week. As per eyewitnesses said he "had trouble walking" and

¹²⁹ Hamas official: 50 of the 62 Gazans killed in border violence were our members, *The Times of Israel*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-official-50-of-the-people-killed-in-gaza-riots-were-members/> as accessed on May 21, 2018; Tensions high as Palestinians mark Nakba Day, *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/LIVE-COVERAGE-Tensions-high-as-Palestinians-mark-Nakba-Day-556442> as accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³⁰ Erdogan: Turkey will not allow Israel to steal Jerusalem from Palestinians, *Jerusalem Post*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Erdogan-Turkey-will-not-allow-Israel-to-steal-Jerusalem-from-Palestinians-556681> as accessed on May 21, 2018; Turkey expels Israel's consul in Istanbul in escalating tit for tat, *The Times of Israel*, May 16, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/turkey-expels-israels-consul-in-istanbul-in-tit-for-tat/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=bc12072b82-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_05_16&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-bc12072b82-55556173 as accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³¹ Following U.S.'s lead, Paraguay moves embassy to Jerusalem, *Egypt Today*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/50459/Following-U-S-%E2%80%99s-lead-Paraguay-moves-embassy-to-Jerusalem> as accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³² Paraguay president lands in Israel for Jerusalem embassy opening, *The Times of Israel*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/paraguay-president-lands-in-israel-for-jerusalem-embassy-opening/> as accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³³ Boeing signs landmark deal with Israeli start-up, *The Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Boeing-signs-landmark-deal-with-Israeli-start-up-556495> as accessed on May 21, 2018

even “needed artificial respiration” at the hospital. The report quoted hospital sources saying Abbas had a chest infection, and had been given antibiotics.¹³⁴

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 17	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	At least 12 people, included six security forces personnel, were injured in a suicide blast targeting a Frontier Corps (FC) vehicle at Kutchehry Chowk in Nowshera District. The motorbike-borne suicide attacker detonated the explosives. FC personnel were travelling from Rawalpindi (Punjab) to Peshawar (KP) at the time of the attack. ¹³⁵	1	12
2	May 21	Punjab	The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed that the four terrorist attacks in Punjab in July 2017 were carried out by Jama’at-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), which was operating from Afghanistan. It said all facilitators of the attackers had been arrested. ¹³⁶	JuA responsible for terrorist attacks	
3	May 20	Balochistan	The CTD recovered a large cache of weapons and explosives during a raid at a hide-out used as a weapon factory by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) ‘commander’ Salman Badeni and other militants in Kili Barat area of provincial capital Quetta. ¹³⁷	CTD raid	

¹³⁴ Suffering chest pains, Abbas taken to hospital for the third time in a week, *The Times of Israel*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-taken-to-hospital-for-3rd-time-in-a-week-said-to-suffer-chest-pains/> as accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³⁵ Ali Akbar & Bacha Khan, 12 injured in suicide attack on FC vehicle in Nowshera, *Dawn*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408260/12-injured-in-suicide-attack-on-fc-vehicle-in-nowshera>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³⁶ Mohammad Asghar, ‘Afghan-based group carried out attacks in Punjab’, *Dawn*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408936/afghan-based-group-carried-out-attacks-in-punjab>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³⁷ Mohammad Zafar, CTD Balochistan recovers massive cache of weapons, explosives, *The Express Tribune*, May 21, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1715329/1-ctd-balochistan-recovers-massive-cache-weapons-explosives/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 15	Nangarhar	The US forces confirmed that they had conducted an airstrike on April 23, 2018, that killed an al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) leader, Hazrat Abbas, and his bodyguard in Sherzad district. ¹³⁸	2	0
2	May 19	Kabul	Ministry of Defense said the Commando Unit of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces are conducting 68 operations in different provinces. It admitted that in addition to Farah the Taliban is trying to capture strategic areas in 12 provinces. "The enemy selects strategic areas which have high importance for them in terms of propaganda even if they capture it for one hour," said Atiqullah Amarkhail, a former military officer. ¹³⁹	ANDSF Commandos conducting operations	68
3	May 19-20	Ghazni	Heavy clashes between security forces and militants continue in Ajristan district as Taliban took control of the district. A day earlier, the district governor for Ajristan, Hamdullah, had warned that if within one hour reinforcements are not sent to the district, the district would fall to the Taliban. The clashes had begun on May 18, 2018. ¹⁴⁰	Ghazni district falls to Taliban	
4	May 20	Kabul	Over Hundred thousand Afghans have been forced to leave their homes because of war and growing	100,000 displaced	

¹³⁸ Al-Qaeda Leader Killed in US Strike in Nangarhar, *Tolo News*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/al-qaeda-leader-killed-us-strike-nangarhar>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹³⁹ Commandos Involved in 68 Operations to Combat Taliban Attacks, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 19, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20953, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴⁰ Clashes Ongoing As Taliban 'Advance' On Ghazni District, *Tolo News*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/heavy-clashes-ongoing-taliban%C2%A0%E2%80%98advance%E2%80%99-%C2%A0ghazni%C2%A0district>, accessed on May 21, 2018

			<p>insecurity in the last five months of 2018, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said.</p> <p>The insecure provinces, Kunduz, Baghlan, Faryab, Sar-e-Pul, Nangarhar, Helmand and Farah, have forced over hundred thousand of residents to leave their houses in a bid to save their skin, the ministry said—and with this, the Internally Displace Persons (IDP) in Afghanistan have further increased.¹⁴¹</p>	in 2018
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Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 11-17	Iraq-Syria	Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) officials said that CJTF-OIR and its partners continued to strike Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) targets in designated parts of Syria and Iraq between May 11-17, conducting 66 strikes consisting of 80 engagements. ¹⁴²	NS	NS
2	May 18	Diyala	One civilian was killed and another injured in a bomb blast in the outskirts of Khanaqin village. A total of 68 Iraqis were killed and another 122 injured in acts of terrorism in Iraq in April 2018, according to United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). ¹⁴³	1	1
3	May 20	Kirkuk	Five ISIS militants were killed in an ambush in Kirkuk while preparing to attack a village in al-Rashad district. Captain Hamed al-Obaidi said that	5	0

¹⁴¹ Insecurity Displaced over 100,000 in 2018, *Afghanistan Times*, May 21, 2018, <http://afghanistantimes.af/insecurity-displaced-100000-2018/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴² Coalition Strikes Target ISIS Terrorists in Syria, Iraq, *US Department of Defense*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1525500/coalition-strikes-target-isis-terrorists-in-syria-iraq/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴³ Nehal Mostafa, Two people killed, injured in bomb blast, northeast of Diyala, *Iraqi News*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/two-people-killed-injured-in-bomb-blast-northeast-of-diyala/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

			several other militants had fled unscathed. ¹⁴⁴		
4	May 20	Anbar	Six ISIS militants were killed in an airstrike that targeted a haven in Wadi al-Mahrouk region. The shelling had destroyed a rest house and several vehicles. According to an unnamed security source, “airstrikes against the group’s havens across the western region will not stop.” ¹⁴⁵	6	0

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 17	Iraqi-Syrian border	Three Iraqi soldiers were wounded after repelling an attack by IS militants on the borders with Syria. The foiling of the attack caused material and human losses among Daesh, as well as the injury of three border guards 460 kilometers west of Ramadi. ¹⁴⁶	0	3
2	May 20	Iraqi-Syrian border	The pro-government paramilitary troops’ command in western Anbar announced intensifying efforts to secure the Iraqi-Syrian borders. Qassim Mosleh, the commander, indicated high cooperation “between al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) and the border troops to guarantee safety of the Iraqi-Syrian borders and prevent infiltration of the terrorists into Iraq coming from Syria.” The troops, according to Mosleh, “intensified efforts along the border troops.” ¹⁴⁷	Intensification of efforts to secure Iraqi-Syrian borders	

¹⁴⁴ Five ISIS Militants Killed in Ambush in Iraq's Kirkuk, *Al Bawaba News*, May 20, 2018,

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/five-isis-militants-killed-ambush-iraqs-kirkuk-1134296>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴⁵ Nehal Mostafa, Six Islamic State members killed in airstrike by Iraqi army, west of Anbar, *Iraqi News*, May 20, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/six-islamic-state-members-killed-in-airstrike-by-iraqi-army-west-of-anbar/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴⁶ Mohamed Mostafa, Three Iraqi soldiers wounded in Islamic State attack at borders with Syria, *Iraqi News*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-iraqi-soldiers-wounded-in-islamic-state-attack-at-borders-with-syria/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴⁷ Nehal Mostafa, Iraqi paramilitaries intensify efforts along borders with Syria: Commander, *Iraqi News*, May 19, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-paramilitaries-intensifies-efforts-along-borders-with-syria-commander/>, accessed on May 21, 2018

3	May 21	Damascus	A temporary humanitarian ceasefire is in place to allow women, children and the elderly to evacuate the IS-held area of al-Hajar al-Aswad in south Damascus, according Syrian state media. ¹⁴⁸	Ceasefire
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International Economic Issues

- **Japan to host RCEP ministerial meeting in Tokyo on July 1**

The Economy, Trade and Industry Minister of Japan, Hiroshige Seko, told the media on May 15, 2018 that Ministers from 16 Asia-Pacific countries negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal will meet in Tokyo on July 1. He further added that he hoped to “pave the way for the conclusion of negotiations” by narrowing down contentious points at the meeting. It will be the first time that a country outside the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be hosting the ministerial meeting to negotiate the RCEP deal. The gathering will be co-chaired with Singapore.¹⁴⁹

- **India and EU give WTO lists of US goods for potential tariff retaliation**

India and the European Union (EU) have given the World Trade Organization (WTO) lists of the U.S. products that could incur high tariffs in retaliation for U.S. President Donald Trump’s global tariffs on steel and aluminium. The EU said Trump’s steel tariffs could cost \$1.5 billion and aluminum tariffs a further \$100 million, and listed rice, cranberries, bourbon, corn, peanut butter and steel products among the U.S. goods that it might target for retaliation. India said it was facing additional U.S. tariffs of \$31 million on aluminum and \$134 million on steel, and listed U.S. exports of soya oil, palmolein and cashew nuts among its potential targets for retaliatory tariffs.¹⁵⁰

- **With TPP ratification in sight, Abe raises banner of free trade**

The reworked Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement moved a little closer to enactment after approval from Japan’s parliament on May 18, 2018. Tokyo hopes to use speedy ratification of the agreement as a bulwark against a growing protectionist trend in global trade. Japan’s lower house approved a bill to ratify the Pacific Rim free trade deal,

¹⁴⁸ Temporary ceasefire in Damascus militant pocket: Syrian state media, *Reuters*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria/temporary-ceasefire-in-damascus-militant-pocket-syrian-state-media-idUSKCN1I1M0N5>, accessed on May 21, 2018

¹⁴⁹ “Japan to host RCEP ministerial meeting in Tokyo on July 1”, *The Mainichi*, May 15, 2018, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180515/p2g/00m/0bu/062000c> (accessed on May 16, 2018)

¹⁵⁰ “India and EU give WTO lists of US goods for potential tariff retaliation”, *Reuters*, May 18, 2018, <https://in.reuters.com/article/usa-trade-eu-india/india-and-eu-give-wto-lists-of-u-s-goods-for-potential-tariff-retaliation-idINKCN1IJ28E>

making it all but certain to pass before the current parliamentary session ends next month. Once the approval process is complete, Japan will become the second of the 11 TPP member countries to ratify the agreement, after Mexico. The pact will enter into force 60 days after ratification by at least six members, kicking off tariff cuts and regulatory harmonization across a zone constituting 15% of global trade. Quick approval by Japan would brighten prospects for the deal to take effect by year-end. Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, Colombia and the U.K., which is looking to get trade deals lined up as it prepares to leave the European Union, have also expressed interest.¹⁵¹

- **U.S. underscores importance of concluding new NAFTA deal**

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, John Sullivan, underscored the importance of concluding a new NAFTA trade deal in talks on May 20, 2018 with Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray on the sidelines of the G-20 foreign ministers meeting in Buenos Aires. According to a statement released by the State Department, Sullivan and Videgaray discussed “continued cooperation on managing a shared border and the importance of working together to disrupt transnational criminal organizations,” apart from the importance of concluding a NAFTA deal. U.S. Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, said on the same day that President Donald Trump is focused on getting a good NAFTA deal, whether it is passed by the current or future U.S. Congress.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ “With TPP ratification in sight, Abe raises banner of free trade”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, May 19, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/With-TPP-ratification-in-sight-Abe-raises-banner-of-free-trade> (accessed on May 21, 2018)

¹⁵² “U.S. underscores importance of concluding new NAFTA deal”, Reuters, May 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-nafta/us-underscores-importance-of-concluding-new-nafta-deal-idUSKCN1IM04N> (accessed on May 21, 2018)