

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(25 June – 1 July, 2018)**

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## Africa

- **Eritrea delegation arrives in Ethiopia ahead of landmark talks<sup>1</sup>**

A high-level Eritrean delegation led by foreign minister Osman Saleh arrived in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa on 26 June 2018, Tuesday, for talks on ending the decades-long conflict between the two countries. It is the first time in more than two decades that a top-level delegation from Asmara visits Ethiopia. The visit comes a week after President Isaias Afwerki said the East African country would dispatch a delegation to Addis Ababa to "gauge current development" in the region. Earlier this month, Ethiopia's new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said Addis Ababa would fully accept and implement the terms of a peace agreement between the countries. The UN-backed agreement, which was signed in 2000, awarded disputed territories, including the town of Badme, to Asmara.

The two countries fought a bloody border war in 1998 that left more than 80,000 people dead and displaced hundreds of thousands. Eritrea, which comprised of Ethiopia's only access to the sea, broke off from its larger neighbour in 1993 leaving Addis Ababa landlocked. For the first time since the start of the conflict, the Eritrean flag hung side-by-side with Ethiopia's on the streets in downtown Addis Ababa on Tuesday. Many in the Ethiopian capital welcomed the arrival of the delegation and the recent thawing of tensions between the two neighbours.

- **China-Africa Cooperation - First Defence, Security Forum Opens in Beijing<sup>2</sup>**

In order to strengthen cooperation, China, on 26 June 2018, opened a 15-day China-Africa Defence, Security Forum in Beijing, organized by the country's Defence Ministry. Invited to the pioneer event are African defence officials and diplomats from 50 African countries who will watch displays by Chinese soldiers and also inspect military hardware. The forum began is set to run until July 10.

- **Belt and Road Initiative Drives Africa's Integration, Economic Growth<sup>3</sup>**

African officials and scholars have hailed the role of China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative in fostering connectivity, thereby accelerating integration and economic diversification on the African continent at a seminar co-organized by the Chinese Embassy in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Foreign Relations Strategic Studies Institute in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, on 28 June 2018, with participation of government officials, diplomats and scholars, among others.

The seminar was organized to share ideas on the initiative as well as on the upcoming Beijing summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to

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<sup>1</sup> Aljazeera, 26 June 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/eritrea-delegation-arrives-ethiopia-landmark-talks-180626112950526.html>

<sup>2</sup> 28 June 2018 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201806280418.html>

<sup>3</sup> FOCAC, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201807020377.html>

be held in September. Speaking at the opening of the seminar, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Tan Jian, reiterated that the Belt and Road Initiative is a platform to promote global cooperation and common development based on win-win results.

With focus on connectivity in five areas including policy, infrastructure, trade, financing, and peoples, China seeks to align the initiative with the UN's sustainable development goals and the AU's Agenda 2063 which is a blueprint for Africa's development and prosperity, said the ambassador.

In his opening remarks, Afework Kassu, Ethiopia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs, said the Belt and Road Initiative is an advantage for African countries for infrastructure development and economic growth. He reiterated that the initiative would bring about economic cooperation, regional integration, as well as sustainable and speedy economic growth for Africa through infrastructure connectivity. The State Minister has also underlined that African governments need to give utmost priority particularly to transport infrastructure in an effort to overcome barriers to structural economic transformation of the continent.

- **Zimbabwe's VP Airlifted to South Africa for Treatment<sup>4</sup>**

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa has reportedly revealed that one of his deputies, Kembo Mohadi is in South Africa for medical treatment following a bombing incident in Bulawayo on June 21, 2018. Speaking at a press conference at State House in Tanzania after holding talks with host President Dr John Magufuli, President Mnangagwa said Vice President Kembo Mohadi and Minister Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri were taken to South Africa for treatment following an explosion. Mnangagwa said Mohadi was seriously injured and had to be airlifted to South Africa, where he is now recovering. Muchinguri-Kashiri, who is also Zimbabwe's Environment, Water and Climate Minister, was operated on as shrapnel reportedly pierced through her chest. She is understood to be recovering as well. The blast came as Zimbabwe prepared to hold its first post-Mugabe presidential election on July 30, with 75-year-old Mnangagwa and 40-year-old Nelson Chamisa, the leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, the main contenders.

- **Angola Finally Settles N\$700 Million Debt<sup>5</sup>**

The Bank of Namibia announced on June 27 that Angola's central Bank, Banco Nacional de Angola settled its outstanding debt. According to the central bank of Namibia, the last payment of N\$706.7 million was made on June 22, 2018. The debt was a result of the implementation of the Currency Conversion Agreement which entered in 2015, which went sour, as Namibia got the short end of the stick. The initial agreement between the two countries was for Angola to pay back an

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<sup>4</sup> Africa News, June 29, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/06/29/zimbabwe-s-vp-airlifted-to-south-africa-for-treatment/>

<sup>5</sup> Namibia Economist, June 29, 2018, <https://economist.com.na/36400/markets/angola-finally-settles-n700-million-debt/>

estimated US\$426 million which at the time amounted to about N\$5.4 billion on a quarterly basis.

- **Eni Reports Offshore Angola Discovery<sup>6</sup>**

Eni announced a new oil discovery in Block 15/06 in the Kalimba exploration prospect in Angola's deep offshore. The Italy-based company estimates the new discovery contains from 230 to 300 million barrels of light oil in place. The West Gemini drillship drilled the Kalimba-1 NFW well in a water depth of 458 meters and reached a total depth of 1,901 meters, Eni said in a written statement. Kalimba-1 NFW, located approximately 150 kilometers offshore and 50 kilometers southeast from the Armada Olombendo FPSO (East Hub) proved 23 meters net oil pay of high-quality oil (33 degrees API) in Upper Miocene sandstones, the company added. Moreover, it stated that data from the well indicate a production capacity exceeding 5,000 barrels of oil per day.

- **Coffee, Honey, Timber: Angola Eyes Cleaner, Greener Economic Growth<sup>7</sup>**

The breakneck economic growth that Angola enjoyed following the end to decades of civil conflict in 2002 came to a sudden stop when the price of oil crashed in 2014. To get growth back on track but in a more sustainable direction, the government has its eyes set on greener goods, such as coffee, honey and timber. These are three of a handful of products for which government officials and industry representatives believe Angola could be competitive. The list, which also includes fish, salt and bananas, was compiled during a two-week workshop in Luanda held from 11 to 22 June 2018 as part of a 4-year project financed by the EU to help Angola strengthen and diversify its economy.

- **Angolan President Receives Putin's Invitation to Visit Russia<sup>8</sup>**

Secretary of Russia's Security Council Nikolai Patrushev delivered an invitation from Russian President Vladimir Putin to Angolan leader Joao Lourenco to visit Russia in 2018, Patrushev's spokesman Yevgeny Anoshin said on June 27, 2018. "Nikolai Patrushev who was received by the president of Angola delivered a verbal invitation from Vladimir Putin to visit Russia until the end of 2018," Anoshin said. The secretary of Russia's Security Council also noted that the Russian president attached great significance to the development of Russia-Angola relations, the spokesman said. At a meeting with Angola's president in the capital of Angola on Tuesday, Patrushev discussed with Lourenco the prospects of developing bilateral relations and bringing them to the strategic level. Russia's security chief confirmed Moscow's plans for close and long-term cooperation with Luanda. "The secretary

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<sup>6</sup> Rigzone, June 25, 2018,

[https://www.rigzone.com/news/eni\\_reports\\_offshore\\_angola\\_discovery-25-jun-2018-156060-article/](https://www.rigzone.com/news/eni_reports_offshore_angola_discovery-25-jun-2018-156060-article/)

<sup>7</sup> UNCTAD, June 29, 2018,

<http://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1789>

<sup>8</sup> TASS, June 27, 2018, <http://tass.com/world/1011078>

of Russia's Security Council welcomed Angola's active position on settling conflicts in Africa," the spokesman said.

- **Mozambique President Confirms Arrests after Jihadist Attacks<sup>9</sup>**

Mozambique's president on June 25, 2018 announced that several arrests were made following a wave of deadly attacks blamed on jihadists. In his first comments on the violence engulfing the northeastern Cabo Delgado region, President Filipe Nyusi vowed that security forces would be "firm and ruthless" in pursuing the shadowy group blamed for more than 30 deaths. Vast riches of natural gas were recently discovered off the region's coast but the violence has thrown the viability of exploiting the reserves into doubt. "We condemn these acts and will not rest until their perpetrators and collaborators are neutralised and held accountable for their crimes," said Nyusi as he marked Mozambique's 43rd year of independence at a media conference in Maputo.

- **Mozambique Takes Step Closer to Becoming a Global LNG Player<sup>10</sup>**

Mozambique moved closer to becoming a player on the fast-growing global market for liquefied natural gas, eight years after the first major deep-water discovery there. The development of hydrocarbon resources is crucial for the southern African country, which has struggled this year to service its debt. While the LNG projects will require tens of billions of dollars in funding and take years to develop, they offer a way to stimulate growth in one of the world's poorest countries. Exxon Mobil Corp. and Eni SpA said on June 28, 2018 that they have started marketing gas that would be produced from the planned Rovuma LNG project. The companies expect to make a final decision on whether to proceed with the onshore plant next year. Anadarko Petroleum Corp., which said in April that it had secured enough customers for its own project, also plans to make its investment decision in the first half of 2019, Mitch Ingram, executive vice president for international deep water and exploration, said at the World Gas Conference in Washington on June 27, 2018.

- **Zambia Launches China-Funded Digital TV Project to Benefit 500 Villages<sup>11</sup>**

Zambia on June 25, 2018 launched a Chinese-funded digital television project which will see 500 villages in the southern African nation access satellite television services. The project, part of the Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages, is undertaken by StarTimes Group, and will be completed in the country by the end of 2018. Zambian President Edgar Lungu and officials from the Chinese embassy graced the occasion which was held in eastern Zambia's Vubwi district. "Today's launch of satellite TV project is a milestone of cultural and people-to-

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<sup>9</sup> IOL, June 26, 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/mozambique-president-confirms-arrests-after-jihadist-attacks-15690963>

<sup>10</sup> Bloomberg, June 28, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-28/mozambique-moves-a-few-steps-closer-to-being-a-global-lng-player>

<sup>11</sup> Xinhua, June 26, 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/26/c\\_137280373.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/26/c_137280373.htm)

people exchanges between China and Zambia, and symbolizes one more achievement of the Ten Cooperation Plans pledged in 2015 FOCAC summit," Ouyang Daobing, Economic and Commercial Counselor of the Chinese Embassy, said during the launch. Zambia, he said, was among the first batch of African countries to implement the project, adding the project will open a window for Zambians to see and understand the outside world, and promote local economic and social development. On his part, the Zambian leader said the project was a significant symbol of the friendship between the people of the two countries.

- **Madagascar to Hold Presidential Elections in November<sup>12</sup>**

Madagascar will hold the first round of presidential elections in November 2018 with the second round due in December same year, the prime minister of the country announced on June 29, after a court ordered the president to form a consensus government. President Hery Rajaonarimampianina named a new cabinet and promised free elections in June, responding to the order of the court, which had sought to resolve a political crisis. The first round will be held on 7 November with the second round on December 19, Prime Minister Christian Ntsay told reporters.

- **Mauritius Expanding Commodities Reach with Gold Trading<sup>13</sup>**

The Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius is projecting the ability to, within five years, annually trade US\$6.5 billion worth of gold through MINDEX, the Mauritius International Derivatives and Commodities Exchange. Plans toward achieving this goal include construction of a facility to store bullion and a refinery to process ore. MINDEX is already forecasting it will trade 31 tons (997,000 ounces) of gold during calendar year 2019, increasing to 156 tons by 2023, according to Hirandre Misra, chairman of Mauritius's Financial Services Commission. The MINDEX project includes a capital investment of \$35 million, to build the gold refinery and a secure vault, and launch an advanced technologically enabled spot exchange, derivatives exchange and clearing house.

- **India and Seychelles Agree on Naval Base at Assumption Island<sup>14</sup>**

Overcoming the recent controversy, India and Seychelles, in a major move on June 25, 2018, agreed to work together on the joint project at the Assumption Island keeping each other's concerns in mind as India ramped up its defence partnership with the Indian Ocean Region country by handing over a Dornier aircraft and US\$100 million defence-related Line of Credit to augment the island nation's defence capabilities. The two sides also signed six pacts including a cyber security

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<sup>12</sup> Eyewitness News, June 29, 2018, <http://ewn.co.za/2018/06/29/madagascar-to-hold-presidential-elections-in-november>

<sup>13</sup> Coin World, June 25, 2018, <https://www.coinworld.com/news/precious-metals/2018/06/mauritius-plans-commodity-exchange-to-include-gold.all.html>

<sup>14</sup> The Economic Times, June 26, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-and-seychelles-agree-on-naval-base-at-assumption-island/articleshow/64731817.cms>

arrangement and White Shipping agreement between the two navies after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Danny Faure here. “With this credit, Seychelles will be able to buy defence equipment to boost its maritime capacity,” Modi said in his joint media statement with Faure. On the project to develop a naval facility at the Assumption Island, which would give India a strategic advantage in the Indian Ocean Region, Modi said, “We have agreed to work together on the Assumption Island project based on each other’s rights.” Faure, in his remarks, said the Assumption Island project was discussed and the two countries were equally engaged to work together bearing each other’s interests in mind. This would indicate that India has been able to safeguard its strategic partnership with Seychelles that dates back to 1976 when the country gained independence.

- **Congo Completes Surveillance of Ebola Contacts, No New Cases<sup>15</sup>**

Democratic Republic of Congo moved closer to declaring its Ebola outbreak over on June 27, 2018 when the health ministry said it had completed surveillance of the last people who came into contact with patients and had not found any new cases. If no further cases of the deadly disease are confirmed after one more three-week incubation period, Congo will be able to officially declare an end to the outbreak, which is believed to have killed 29 people since April 2018.

- **DR Congo Approves Oil Drilling in Unesco World Heritage Sites that Home Endangered Gorillas<sup>16</sup>**

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo has decided to open up parts of two protected national parks, home to endangered species such as mountain gorillas, to oil drilling. The proposals to allow oil exploration in Virunga and Salonga were met with fierce opposition from environmental activists, who say drilling would place wildlife at risk. They also fear it will release huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Virunga sits on the forest-cloaked volcanoes of central Africa and is home to over half the global population of mountain gorillas. British company Soco International performed seismic testing at the site – which is Africa’s oldest national park – but let its licence lapse in 2015. The government has defended its right to authorise drilling anywhere in the country and said it was mindful of protecting animals and plants in the two Unesco World Heritage sites. The cabinet said it had approved the establishment of commissions charged with preparing plans to declassify sections of the parks, including 664 square miles, or 21.5 per cent, of eastern Congo’s Virunga.

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<sup>15</sup> Reuters, June 29, 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN1JP0SU-OZATP>

<sup>16</sup> The Independent, June 30, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/oil-drilling-congo-national-parks-kinshasa-unesco-world-heritage-sites-a8424266.html>

- **Congo's Katumbi Open to Opposition Coalition that Could Include Bemba**

Congolese opposition leader Moise Katumbi said on June 25, 2018 that he was in favour of a coalition that could include another opposition figure, Jean-Pierre Bemba, who is expected back in the country soon after his war crimes convictions were quashed on appeal. Katumbi, Bemba, and Felix Tshisekedi, leader of Democratic Republic of Congo's largest opposition party, are the main likely opposition contenders in a December 2018 presidential vote to choose a successor to President Joseph Kabila. Bemba, a popular former rebel leader and vice president, left Congo in 2007 and has spent the last 10 years in prison in The Hague. But he is expected back in Congo in July 2018 and could participate in the vote. Katumbi said he had visited Bemba several times during his 10-year detention to show support.

- **South Sudan's Latest Cease-fire is Violated Within Hours<sup>17</sup>**

South Sudan government troops violated the country's latest cease-fire just hours after it began at midnight, the armed opposition claimed on June 28, 2018, while a government spokesman accused the rebels of attacking instead. The competing claims indicated a shaky start to the latest attempt at ending a devastating five-year civil war that has killed tens of thousands and created Africa's largest refugee crisis since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Millions are near famine and aid delivery is often blocked in one of the world's most dangerous countries for humanitarian workers. President Salva Kiir and rival Riek Machar, Kiir's former deputy, had agreed on the "permanent" cease-fire earlier in the week in neighboring Sudan after their first face-to-face talks in nearly two years. They then ordered their supporters to observe it. Opposition spokesman Lam Paul Gabriel said government forces and Sudanese rebel militias launched a "heavy joint attack" in Mboro, Wau County in the northwest around 7 a.m. Saturday, June 28, 2018 arriving in armored personnel carriers, trucks and Land Cruisers.

- **Somaliland and Puntland Border Dispute Rages On<sup>18</sup>**

The duel between Somaliland and Puntland seems to be far from ending, with each asserting their ownership of the disputed Sool in the latest altercation. Somaliland Information minister Abdurahman Abdullahi Guri-Barwaaqo has reacted strongly to Puntland's claim to the disputed region. Briefing the Press in Hargeisa, about 1,600km northwest of the Somali capital Mogadishu, Mr Guri-Barwaaqo stated that Puntland's claim was a breach of Somaliland's sovereignty. The president of Puntland, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gas, on June 23, 2018 stated that Sool was part of his territory. Somaliland, which unilaterally declared independence from the rest of Somalia in 1991, claims the former British Somaliland Protectorate,

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<sup>17</sup> The Kansas City Star, June 30, 2018, <https://www.kansascity.com/news/nation-world/article214121604.html>

<sup>18</sup> The East Africa, June 25, 2018, <http://www.theeastafrikan.co.ke/news/ea/Somalis-border-dispute-rages-on/4552908-4630562-3shngpz/index.html>



which joined with the former Italian Somalia to form the Republic of Somalia on July 1, 1960.

- **US to Send FBI Experts to Investigate Ethiopia Bomb Blast<sup>19</sup>**

The United States will send experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Ethiopia to investigate a bomb blast that took place during a rally on Saturday, state-affiliated media said on June 25, 2018. Fana Broadcasting Corporation quoted Under Secretary of Commerce Gilbert Kaplan as making the remark during his talks with Ethiopia's minister of foreign affairs. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed survived the grenade attack on June 23 at a massive rally in support of his push for radical political and economic reforms, including a peace deal with regional arch-enemy Eritrea. The United States issued a statement on June 22 welcoming Ethiopia's decision to resolve a border dispute with Eritrea, saying it 'looks forward to a normalisation of relations' between the two countries.

## Central Asia

- **Kyrgyzstan President Addresses Parliament**

President of Kyrgyz Republic Sooronbay Jeenbekov addressed the parliamentarians and the people about his expectations in the year 2019.<sup>20</sup> He mentioned that radical reforms are needed in the country. He termed the next a 'turning point' the people's life and said that the judicial reform will lead the society to positive changes and a new, crucial stage in the life of society and the state will start.<sup>21</sup>

The President called for improvement in investments and added that the country needs to build roads and railways and develop communications. He also said to end 'groundless interference' of inspection agencies in business matters.<sup>22</sup>

- **Indian Company Bags Transmission Line Contract in Tajikistan**

The Kalpataru Power Transmission Limited (KPTL), which is based in Mumbai and works in the fields of engineering, procurement and construction in the power and infrastructure sector, has said in a press release that it has secured contracts in

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<sup>19</sup> Africa News, June 25, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/06/25/us-to-send-fbi-experts-to-investigate-ethiopia-bomb-blast/>

<sup>20</sup> Maria Levina, "Kyrgyzstan: President addresses the Parliament and nation," The Times of Central Asia, 28 June 2018, [https://timesca.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19933:kyrgyzstan-president-addresses-the-parliament-and-nation&catid=24:news&Itemid=407](https://timesca.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19933:kyrgyzstan-president-addresses-the-parliament-and-nation&catid=24:news&Itemid=407)

<sup>21</sup> Kabar, "2019 will be special for us, President Jeenbekov," 27 June 2018, <http://kabar.kg/eng/news/2019-will-be-special-for-us-president-jeenbekov/>

<sup>22</sup> Maria Levina, "Kyrgyzstan: President addresses the Parliament and nation," The Times of Central Asia, 28 June 2018, [https://timesca.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19933:kyrgyzstan-president-addresses-the-parliament-and-nation&catid=24:news&Itemid=407](https://timesca.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19933:kyrgyzstan-president-addresses-the-parliament-and-nation&catid=24:news&Itemid=407)

Tajikistan. The company release reads it has secured 'Orders for transmission line and substation in Tajikistan and India totalling Rs. 346 Crores'.<sup>23</sup>

It may be noted that in December 2017, a document was signed by representatives of Afghan National Power Company Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat and India's KEC International Limited and the KPTL to build Afghanistan's part of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade (Casa-1000) Project,<sup>24</sup> linking electric supply from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia.

- **Uzbekistan Constructs Transit Hub on Afghan Border to Increase Trade**

Uzbekistan has constructed a transit hub along its border with Afghanistan to enhance trade, transport and transit between the two countries, said President Ashraf Ghani's advisor on Central Asian Affairs Shakir Kargar on 1 July 2018.<sup>25</sup> He mentioned that the development project in the city of Termez of Uzbekistan city includes a railway line and station, besides a trading center for commercial goods as well as roads for the transportation of goods. He added that Uzbekistan is also interested in investing US\$ 500 million in construction of about 650 km long Mazar-e-Sharif – Heart rail line, which can link Uzbekistan to Iran via Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

## China

- **Xi underlines importance of CPC's political building**

President Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of the Party's political building. The CPC must regard political building as the Party's fundamental building so as to provide an important guarantee for the Party to march from victory to victory, Xi said on 29 June when presiding over a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

"If a Marxist political party loses its advanced nature in politics, there will be no purity and advanced nature of the party". Xi said.

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<sup>23</sup> Kalpatru Power Transmission Limited, Press Release, "KPTL Received New Orders of Rs 1,235 Crores," 28 June 2018, <http://kalpatarupower.com/company-announcement/>

<sup>24</sup> Asia-Plus, "Indian companies to build Afghanistan's part of CASA 1000 Project," 21 December 2017, Read more: <https://www.news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/economic/20171221/indian-companies-to-build-afghanistans-part-of-casa-1000-project>

<sup>25</sup> Zabihullah Jahanmal, "Uzbekistan Builds Transit Hub At Afghan Border," Tolo news, 1 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/business/uzbekistan-builds-transit-hub-afghan-border>

<sup>26</sup> The Times of Central Asia, "Uzbekistan builds transit hub at border with Afghanistan," 2 July 2018, <https://timesca.com/index.php/news/19944-uzbekistan-builds-transit-hub-at-border-with-afghanistan>

The Political Bureau conducted the group study in order to deepen understanding of the Party's political building and become more conscious and firm in promoting it to celebrate the 97th anniversary of the founding of CPC, Xi said.<sup>27</sup>

- **China unveils new negative list for foreign investment in FTZs**

China on 30 June unveiled a new negative list for foreign investment in the country's pilot free trade zones (FTZs), with the number of items down to 45 from 95 in the previous version. The new list, jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Commerce, will be effective starting July 30 this year. The list applies to all FTZs in the country.

Compared with opening-up measures detailed in a nationwide list that was made public on 28 June, the list that applies to FTZs further removes or loosens foreign access restrictions in more fields including agriculture and mining, according to an NDRC statement.

Specifically, foreign investors will be allowed no more than a 66-percent stake in breeding new wheat and corn varieties and their seed production, compared with a cap of 49 percent in the previous list. Restrictions on joint ventures or foreign cooperation in exploration and exploitation of petroleum and natural gas will be removed. The list also eased restrictions in the cultural sector, as foreign investors will be allowed to own a majority stake in performing arts agencies.<sup>28</sup>

- **Xi meets with U.S. Secretary of Defense**

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis in Beijing on June 27. During the meeting, Xi said the world is undergoing major developments, transformation and adjustment. The trends of world multi-polarization and economic globalisation are developing in depth, and countries have become even more interdependent.

Xi said the Chinese people are building a great modern socialist country, but China will stay on the path of peaceful development adding that China will neither pursue the path of expansionism and colonialism, not cause chaos to the world. The Pacific Ocean is vast enough to accommodate China and the United States, as well as other countries.

Mattis said that the US is willing to strengthen strategic communication, expand mutually-beneficial cooperation, manage and control differences and risks, and

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/30/c\\_137292057.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/30/c_137292057.htm)

<sup>28</sup> <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/59083.htm>

prevent conflicts and confrontations, so as to enable military relations to be a constructive factor in promoting the development of bilateral ties.<sup>29</sup>

- **China, ASEAN to hold maritime drill**

China and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have scheduled a joint maritime exercise to take place later this year, said Wu Qian, spokesperson with the Ministry of National Defence. According to the report, the purpose of the joint drill is to enhance mutual trust, expand exchange and cooperation and safeguard regional peace and stability.<sup>30</sup>

- **Wang Yi Meets with Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe of Myanmar**

On June 28, 2018, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing with Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe of Myanmar. Wang expressed that under the strategic guidance of leaders of the two countries, China-Myanmar comprehensive strategic cooperation has enjoyed in-depth development. He expressed China's willingness to maintain high-level contacts, expand exchanges, deepen cooperation and promote the construction of China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Wang also noted that China support Myanmar in its domestic peace process and also supports Myanmar and Bangladesh in properly solving the Rakhine State issue through friendly negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

- **Bulgaria eyes more results from 16+1 cooperation between China, CEE countries**

On June 29, 2018, Bulgarian deputy foreign minister Georg Georgiev expressed hope for more fruits from the 16+1 cooperation mechanism at a conference held on the eve of a major meeting between China and the CEE countries. He said that Bulgaria wants to strengthen cooperation in agricultural sector, infrastructure, finance, information and technology, science and healthcare.<sup>32</sup>

## European Union

- **NATO unveils new joint air power strategy**

NATO air forces must be able to defend against peer competitors and anticipate the growing role of cyber and space-based assets, according to a new NATO joint

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<sup>29</sup> "Xi meets with U.S. Secretary of Defense", [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-06/28/content\\_8072555.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-06/28/content_8072555.htm).

<sup>30</sup> "China, ASEAN to hold maritime drill", [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-06/28/content\\_8074443.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-06/28/content_8074443.htm).

<sup>31</sup> "Wang Yi Meets with Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U kyaw Tint Swe of Myanmar", June 28, 2018, MOFA, PRC, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1573156.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1573156.shtml).

<sup>32</sup> "Bulgaria eyes more results from 16+1 cooperation between China, CEE countries", China Daily, June 29, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201806/29/WS5b361479a3103349141dfd31.html>.

airpower strategy released on Tuesday (26 June 2018). While air power has played a central role in NATO's collective defence and crisis management for decades, the strategy is the first of its kind since NATO was founded in 1949. The new strategy lays out the current and future security environment in which allied air forces are likely to operate in. Acknowledging that decades of uncontested air operations may be coming to a close, the strategy cautions that modern air defence systems, cyber and electronic warfare could impact NATO air operations. The document also makes the case for special forces, maritime and cyber units to better support of air power with intelligence, targeting support and post-strike assessments.<sup>33</sup>

- **Europe aims for greater 'strategic autonomy' from US on defence**

EU leaders pledged in Brussels on Thursday (28 June) to intensify efforts to strengthen military cooperation within the bloc and reduce its reliance on the United States, amid growing doubts over the continued US involvement in transatlantic security. The leaders, meeting for a two-day summit that mostly dealt with migration, stepped up preparations to increase the bloc's "strategic autonomy" from the US while also stressing the need to intensify EU-NATO cooperation. They pledged closer defence cooperation, focusing on increased spending and strengthening intra-European military cooperation. The conclusions on security and defence were relatively uncontroversial and were adopted unanimously. In line with previous texts, EU leaders agreed to take steps towards increased spending on joint defence research, capability development and operational readiness to deploy troops more quickly. The summit communiqué also backed the creation of an EU command centre for civilian crisis management missions and a new European Defence Fund.<sup>34</sup>

- **EU leaders postpone completion of banking union**

Despite previous promises to achieve results on eurozone reforms in June, EU leaders postponed until December an agreement on the backstop to wind down failing banks and did not include any date for starting discussions on a European deposit guarantee scheme. The conclusions agreed by the heads of state or government on Friday (29 June) confirmed the small progress made to deepen the economic and monetary union by completing the banking union and setting up a common fiscal cushion. An agreement on this common pot to orderly wind down banks was seen as the most achievable element of the eurozone agenda. However, member states disagree on the governance of the instrument. A group of countries led by Germany wants a strong political oversight, which would include the approval of the disbursements by their finance ministers and national parliaments.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> NATO Newsroom, 26 June 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_156372.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_156372.htm)

<sup>34</sup> Euractiv, 29 June 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/europe-aims-for-greater-strategic-autonomy-from-us-on-defence/>

<sup>35</sup> Euractiv, 1 July 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/banking-union/news/eu-leaders-postpone-completion-of-banking-union/>

- **EU leaders hail summit victory on migration but details scant**

European leaders have papered over the divisions on migration with a promise that some EU countries would take in migrants rescued from the Mediterranean sea, after marathon talks at an EU summit lasting nearly 10 hours. Announcing the end of tense summit talks, the head of the European council, Donald Tusk, tweeted that EU leaders had reached an agreement, including on migration. Leaders agreed EU countries should help migrants rescued in the Mediterranean to alleviate the burden on Italy and Greece, but the details remained unclear. The issue has risen to the fore, since Italy closed its ports to migrant rescue ships, leaving several boats adrift at sea, until other countries stepped in to help. In an effort to avoid a chaotic situation, leaders agreed there should be “a shared effort”, but “only on a voluntary basis”. Countries will take in rescued migrants and establish processing centres to assess asylum claims on their soil. Finding a more consensual note, EU leaders called for migrant processing centres in north African countries. They agreed to “swiftly explore the concept of regional platforms in close cooperation” with non-EU countries and the UN refugee agency and the International Organisation for Migration, also a UN-backed agency. The euro jumped 0.6% on news of the deal, while the French president, Emmanuel Macron, declared that European cooperation “has won the day”. Italy’s prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, said: “We are satisfied. It was a long negotiation but from today Italy is no longer alone.” But the bloc dodged an agreement on controversial refugee quotas, as a quartet of central European countries resisted language on EU-wide responsibility. The outcome is already being seen as a thin deal.<sup>36</sup>

- **In Less Than a Minute, E.U. Tells Britain to Get ‘Realistic’ on Brexit**

Divided over their other pressing problems, European Union leaders on Friday (29 June 2018) took less than a minute to unite over a warning to Britain’s prime minister, Theresa May, that she risks a disorderly and disruptive British exit from the bloc unless she breaks months of political deadlock in London and makes “realistic” proposals. With Britain planning to end more than four decades of European integration, crucial questions remain unresolved. Mrs. May’s divided cabinet is constraining her power to negotiate, and the thought is dawning in some capitals that Britain might end up, accidentally, leaving the bloc without any deal at all, which most experts say would be an unmitigated disaster. Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, said it was “the last call to lay the cards on the table.” Michel Barnier, the European Union’s chief Brexit negotiator, noted that “huge and serious divergences remain,” warned that time was short and appealed for Mrs. May to put forward “workable and realistic proposals” for the future. That was a reference to the next, crucial move in Brexit: Mrs. May’s attempt, scheduled for next week, to win support from her bitterly divided cabinet for a long-awaited

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<sup>36</sup> The Guardian, 29 June 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/29/eu-leaders-summit-migration-doubts>

white paper on future relations with the bloc. In the meantime, the 27 nations increased the pressure on her, urging member countries to step up preparations for “all outcomes” — code for no Brexit deal — and noting there had been “no substantial progress” over backstop plans to prevent the reintroduction of frontier controls between Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, and Ireland, which will remain in the European Union.<sup>37</sup>

- **E.U. Leader Warns of ‘Worst-Case Scenarios,’ Citing Trump**

Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, said on Wednesday (27 June 2018) that the policies of President Trump had put trans-Atlantic relations “under tremendous pressure” and that Europeans should prepare for darker times. As a trade war looms between the United States and the European Union, with retaliation for American tariffs on steel and aluminum and threats of further tariffs on imported cars, Mr. Tusk said in a letter to the heads of government of the European Union that “unfortunately the divisions go beyond trade.” Mr. Tusk, in his letter, took note of a rancorous meeting of the Group of 7 industrialized countries, when Mr. Trump mocked European leaders and criticized their trade policies and military spending. “It is my belief that, while hoping for the best, we must be ready to prepare our Union for worst-case scenarios,” Mr. Tusk said. Without calling out the American president by name, Mr. Tusk also criticized Mr. Trump and his immigration policies, using Twitter to denounce those who support “anti-European & anti-liberal” views.<sup>38</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **US Defense Secretary Mattis visits South Korea and Japan**

On June 28, 2018 US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis during his visit to South Korea said that the American diplomats will continue their work to achieve complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization (CVID), while keeping U.S. allies in “close consultation” about talks between Washington and Pyongyang. In his meeting with South Korea’s National Defense Minister Song Young-moo, Secretary Mattis highlighted the “ironclad” alliance between South Korea and the United States. He also added that American force levels on the Korean Peninsula would remain at the current level.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The New York Times, 29 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/29/world/europe/summit-eu-brexit-may.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2FEurope>

<sup>38</sup> The New York Times, 28 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/world/europe/donald-tusk-trump-eu.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2FEurope>

<sup>39</sup> "Mattis says CVID is still goal of Trump", JoongAng Daily, June 29, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3049976](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3049976)

On June 29, 2018, in his meeting with Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera, Secretary Mattis said that US is “in the midst of very unprecedented negotiations right now with North Korea. But in this dynamic time, the longstanding alliance between Japan and the United States stands firm. Secretary Mattis’s visit was to reassure Japan that Washington was mindful of its interests in talks with North Korea. Japan’s defence establishment was taken aback by the U.S. President Donald Trump’s recent decision to halt “expensive” military exercises with South Korea that have long been seen in Tokyo as a deterrent to North Korea’s threats. Seoul and Tokyo were Secretary Mattis’s second and third stop after Beijing in his three nation visit.”<sup>40</sup>

- **Prime Minister Abe restored public rating**

A survey reported on June 25, 2018, showed that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s support rate rose 10 points to outstrip his disapproval rating for the first time since February 2018. Abe’s ratings have been on a roller coaster since last year, when the public learned of the heavily discounted sale of state-owned land to a nationalist school operator with ties to his wife. Questions also arose over the government’s approval of a new veterinary school for another educational body run by his close friend. Abe’s support rate jumped to 52 percent in a June 22 to 24 survey by the Nikkei business daily, while his disapproval rating fell to 42 percent. Though majority of voters still don’t think the scandals have been resolved, but support his global view and the stability of his government. Prime Minister Abe is seeking another term as the President of Liberal Democratic Party in an election in September 2018.<sup>41</sup>

- **Japan will be ignored until it stops military drills: North Korea**

On June 25, 2018, North Korea said that it will continue to ignore Japan unless Tokyo halts hostilities, such as large-scale military drills and efforts to boost military readiness. According to North Korea’s official media KCNA, “if Japan does not correct its ambitions regarding peace and security, it should realize the end result where Japan is passed over will be inevitable.” “Japan should stop its large-scale military drills and the boosting of its military capacity aimed at attacking (Korea), scrap its hostile policy against us, break with the past and show its sincerity towards peace,” it added. Japan has been eyeing prospects for a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, at which Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes to tackle the issue of Japanese citizens abducted decades ago by the North Korea.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "U.S. Mattis reassures uneasy Japan over U.S.-North Korea talks", The Asahi Shimbun, June 29, 2018, [www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201806290019.html](http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201806290019.html)

<sup>41</sup> "Abe’s approval rating rebounds, raising chances of becoming Japan’s longest-serving prime minister", The Japan Times, June 25, 2018, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/06/25/national/politics-diplomacy/abes-support-rate-rises-raising-chances-shrugging-off-scandals-become-japans-longest-serving-prime-minister/#.WzmUEri\\_PIU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/06/25/national/politics-diplomacy/abes-support-rate-rises-raising-chances-shrugging-off-scandals-become-japans-longest-serving-prime-minister/#.WzmUEri_PIU)

<sup>42</sup> "North Korea says it will ignore Japan until Tokyo scraps military drills, other measures", The Japan Times, June 26, 2018, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/06/26/national/politics-diplomacy/north-korea-says-will-ignore-japan-tokyo-scraps-military-drills-measures/#.WzmUk7i\\_PIU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/06/26/national/politics-diplomacy/north-korea-says-will-ignore-japan-tokyo-scraps-military-drills-measures/#.WzmUk7i_PIU)



- **Japan seeks exemption on Iran sanction**

On June 27, 2018, Japanese government said that it is asking the United States to exempt Japan from restrictions on Iranian crude oil imports, following demands by Washington that countries cease such imports when the United States resumes sanctions. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that Japan is “carefully examining the impact of the U.S. measure [targeting Iran].” He added that Japan will “hold discussions with the United States and other relevant countries so that the move does not adversely affect Japanese companies.” In 2017, Japan imported about 10 million kiloliters of crude oil from Iran, which is the sixth-largest supplier for Japan. The figure accounted for about 5 percent of Japan’s crude oil imports.<sup>43</sup>

- **North Korea and South Korea restored maritime hotline**

On July 1, 2018, Seoul and Pyongyang restored a maritime communication channel for the first time in a decade. The restoration of hotline is another show of cooperation between the two countries after their leaders signed a landmark declaration in April committing to reconciliation. Both Koreas used to contact each other through the maritime hotline from 2004 to 2008 until the North suddenly stopped responding. The ministry said in a statement that the decision to reopen the line was part of efforts to implement the Panmunjom Declaration and agreements made during the last round of general-level military talks held on June 14.<sup>44</sup>

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

- **Malaysian Prime Minister criticises a 1962 Water Supply deal with Singapore**

In an interview to Bloomberg PM Mahathir criticised a 1962 water supply deal with Singapore as “too costly” and suggested that he may have to renegotiate a longstanding water supply agreement with Singapore. Water is among issues with Singapore “that we need to settle,” Mahathir said on June 22, “We will sit down and talk with them, like civilised people.” Singapore has relied on neighbouring Malaysia for nearly half of its water needs through water agreements, the first of which dates back to 1927. The remaining 1962 accord, which expires in 2061, gives Singapore 250 million gallons of raw water daily at 3 sen per 1,000 gallons, and Malaysia buys back a portion of that at 50 sen (S\$0.17 cents) per 1,000 gallons.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “Japan seeks exemption, imported 10 mil. kiloliters”, The Japan News, June 27, 2018 [the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004542814](https://www.the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004542814)

<sup>44</sup> “South, North reconnect military hotline at sea”, JoongAng Daily, July 1, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3050066](https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3050066)

<sup>45</sup> “Malaysian PM Mahathir revives Singapore water dispute, says supply deal ‘too costly’”, *The Strait Times*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysian-pm-mahathir-revives-singapore-water-dispute-says-supply-deal-too-costly>, accessed on June 25, 2018.

- **PM Chan-o-Cha talks of Reforms and Elections in France**

PM Prayut Chan-o-cha speaking in a seminar on “Transforming Thailand: Thailand-France Partnership”, hosted by the business association Mouvement des Entreprises de France on June 25, 2018, stated that his reforms would yield results before an election early next year. The PM promised leaders and business elites that the junta, which took power after a coup four years ago, would hold an election early next year. He said the Thai economy is continuing an upward trajectory, with 3.8 per cent GDP growth in 2017 and 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year. The Thailand 4.0 policy focused on science, technology and innovation would drive the country’s development goals for prosperity, he said. The PM also stressed that the government’s Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) would become a region of high economic growth as it connected neighbouring countries Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, as well as other ASEAN members States. With Thailand assuming the ASEAN chair next year, Thailand will have an open policy to welcome foreign investment. The PM also stated that an investment in Thailand could link to the combined 230 million population of the entire ASEAN market.<sup>46</sup>

- **Sixth Japan-Indonesia Strategic Dialogue**

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, met with his Indonesian counterpart Retno LP Marsudi during his first official visit to Jakarta on June 25, 2018, for the sixth Strategic Dialogue between Indonesia and Japan. According to the Indonesian Foreign Minister the sixth Strategic Dialogue is being held to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Indonesian- Japanese diplomatic relations. It was also stated that the intend of this dialogue is towards strengthening bilateral cooperation in the field of politics and security, economy, trade and investment, people to people contact, as well as the exploration of strategic cooperation potential. Both Foreign Ministers held discussions on developing Indonesia as a Japanese industrial hub. The ministers agreed to ensure a timely, balanced and mutually beneficial conclusion of the General Review of the Indonesia - Japan Economic Partnership Agreement [GR – IJEPA]. In addition, the ministries vowed to synergize Indonesia's Indo-Pacific concept with the Free and Japan’s Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIPS) through the strengthening of bilateral cooperation and constructive engagement through ASEAN, the East Asia Summit in the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean Rim Associations (IORA) in the Indian Ocean Rim. Both ministers expressed concern over the recent militarization in the South China Sea and further hope that the negotiation for an effective code of conduct can be concluded as soon as possible.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>“Come grow with us, Prayut tells French community”, *The Nation*, June 26, 2018, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/politics/30348603>, accessed on June 26, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Agnes Anya, “Japanese FM's visit highlights ASEAN's industrial hub, Indo-Pacific, and South China Sea”, *The Jakarta Post*, June 25, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/06/22/china-to-build-railway-into-nepal---china-daily.html>, accessed on June 27, 2018. 1

- **Vietnam to participate at its first ever RIM of the Pacific Exercise**

Vietnam's Defence Ministry has confirmed that at the invitation of the Commander of the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, eight Vietnamese naval officers would be sent to participate in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) being held from July 1-31 in Hawaii. This will be the first time that Vietnam has taken part in the RIMPAC after the country sent observers to the event in 2012 and 2016. According to the Defence Minister the participation will be an opportunity for Vietnam's naval forces to learn from other countries' experience and improve its disaster relief and search and rescue operations at sea. According to the US Navy, 26 nations, 47 surface ships, five submarines, 18 national land forces, and more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel will participate in this year's exercise.<sup>48</sup>

- **Malaysian PM Visit to Indonesia**

Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, during his two day visit to Indonesia on June 29, referred to Indonesia as Malaysia's closest neighbour. Malaysian PM after his talks with Indonesian President Joko Widodo at Istana Bogor in West Java stated that both sides have agreed to build on the already existing strong bilateral ties. Further, both sides pledged to resolve outstanding border issues, enhance protection and welfare for migrant workers and, also try to revive the old ASEAN car project. PM Mahathir added that both countries faced similar challenges, Indonesia and Malaysia are two of the world's largest producers and exporters of palm oil. The plan by the European Union to phase out the use of palm oil in transport fuels from 2030, based on their campaign that the palm oil is obtained from deforestation. According to Dr Mahathir "...this is not true at all..." and both nations should work together against this campaign. President Jokowi said he and Dr Mahathir were committed to the fight against corruption, and saw the importance of connectivity as well as solutions to issues concerning their shared land and sea borders. He said that they also discussed the ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea where Malaysia is a party to conflicting claims.<sup>49</sup>

## Oceania

- **Fifth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting**

On 30 June 2018 Steven Ciobo, Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment announced that he will be attending the Fifth Regional Comprehensive

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<sup>48</sup>“Vietnam to participate in US-hosted naval exercise for first time”, *Vietnam News*, June 26, 2018, <http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/450610/viet-nam-to-participate-in-us-hosted-naval-exercise-for-first-time.html>, accessed on June 27, 2018.

<sup>49</sup>“Malaysia and Indonesia pledge to build on strong bilateral ties”, *The Straits Times*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-and-indonesia-pledge-to-build-on-strong-bilateral-ties>, accessed on July 2, 2018.

Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo, on 1 July 2018. He said that, “Australia is working to secure the timely conclusion of a modern, comprehensive and high quality RCEP agreement which will provide improved access for Australian businesses into the world’s fastest growing region”. “Of the 16 Indo-Pacific countries in the negotiations, ten are among Australia’s top 15 trading partners and RCEP countries account for almost 60 per cent of Australia’s two-way trade, and over 30 per cent of global GDP”.<sup>50</sup>

The Ministers from the 16 RCEP Participating Countries attended the 5th RCEP Intersessional Ministerial Meeting held on 1 July 2018 in Tokyo, Japan. It included participants from Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Joint Media statement “recognised the importance of swiftly and successfully concluding the RCEP negotiations consistent with the Guiding Principles and Objectives for Negotiating the RCEP, particularly in view of the current global trade environment which faces serious risks from unilateral trade actions and reactions, as well as their debilitating implications on the multilateral trading system”.<sup>51</sup>

- **Chinese navy hospital ship's 11-nation tour including Vanuatu**

A Chinese navy hospital ship sailed on 28 June 2018, to visit 11 countries including Vanuatu, where Australia has warned Beijing against building a military base. During the tour the People's Liberation Army Navy ship, Peace Ark, will provide humanitarian assistance and free medical aid and conduct exchanges, including opening the ship for visits. The Peace Ark's humanitarian tours around the world have become a sign of China's outreach efforts and Beijing's ambitions of gradually expanding its military influence abroad. The ship has carried out such missions to many countries and regions since it was commissioned in 2008.<sup>52</sup>

- **Australia and Norway strengthening oceans cooperation**

On 27 June 2018 Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop announced the launch of the first bilateral dialogue on oceans between Australia and Norway. Both nations are committed to maintaining sustainable and thriving oceans. Our cooperation is recognised under the Antarctic Treaty and will be further enhanced by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, bringing Australian and Norwegian government and business together. The dialogue will further strengthen our collaboration in the governance of oceans through targeted initiatives to enhance collaboration on marine litter, microplastics, climate-driven changes, pollution, over-exploitation and habitat destruction. The High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy is an initiative by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna

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<sup>50</sup> [http://trademinister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/sc\\_mr\\_180630.aspx](http://trademinister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/sc_mr_180630.aspx)

<sup>51</sup> <http://asean.org/fifth-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership-rcep-intersessional-ministerial-meeting/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/business/article213977614.html>

Solberg. The Panel will meet for the first time in September in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.<sup>53</sup>

- **Prime Minister of Vanuatu’s Visit to Australia**

Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Charlot Salwai Tabimasmal, visited Australia from 23 to 29 June. The media release from the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s office mentioned that “Australia enjoys a close relationship with Vanuatu, sharing strong economic, security and people to people links. We are committed to stepping up our engagement in the Pacific in support of a stable and prosperous region. As Vanuatu’s largest bilateral aid donor, Australia will invest approximately \$62.3 million in development assistance in 2018-19”.<sup>54</sup> During the visit the two nations “agreed to commence negotiations on a Bilateral Security Treaty on common security interests, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response, maritime surveillance and border security, police and defence cooperation”. Highlighting Vanuatu as one of Australia’s key partners in the Pacific, Australia also agreed to enhance official police-to-police cooperation, continue to support for Vanuatu’s education sector with up to \$19.5 million of assistance and furthering our cyber security partnership with \$400,000 support to strengthen the capacity of Vanuatu’s Computer Emergency Response Team.<sup>55</sup>

## North America

### Canada

- **Canada begins imposing tariffs on US goods**

Canada began imposing tariffs on \$12.6 billion worth of American goods like ketchup, pizza and iron in a tit-for-tat retaliation for President Trump’s slapping fines on steel and aluminum imported into the United States, according to reports. Mr. Trump placed the 25 percent tax on steel and 10 percent on aluminum on June 1 against American allies Canada, Mexico and the European Union. In retaliation, Canada slapped 25 percent tariffs on steel and iron, while hitting 250 other US goods including maple syrup, dishwasher detergent, coffee beans and strawberry jam with a 10 percent penalty, the Associated Press reported. The Trump administration said Canada was a national security threat because of the imports even though the country is the US’ second-biggest trading partner behind China. Speaking on Canada Day, marking the country’s 151st birthday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mixed tariff talk with birthday wishes. Mexico and the EU have already imposed a number of tariffs on American goods, including on Kentucky

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<sup>53</sup> [https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/jb\\_mr\\_180627.aspx](https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/jb_mr_180627.aspx)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/visit-australia-prime-minister-vanuatu>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/strengthening-australias-partnership-vanuatu>

bourbon, Wisconsin-made Harley-Davidson motorcycles and Florida orange juice.<sup>56</sup>

- **Canada can't change Trump's 'one-track mind' on defence spending: former NATO official**

Canada's argument that NATO burden-sharing is about more than just defence spending probably won't change U.S. President Donald Trump's mind, says a former NATO deputy secretary general Alexander Vershbow. "It is a one-track mind when it comes to defence spending and I just hope someone can widen President Trump's horizons," added Vershbow, who also served as a U.S. ambassador to NATO, Russia and South Korea. On June 19, Trump sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claiming that there is "growing frustration" in the United States with North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies like Canada that have not increased defence spending as promised. NATO member countries agreed in 2014 to move toward an overall defence spending target of two per cent of GDP. In 2017, Canada's defence spending amounted to 1.29 per cent of GDP. The government's new defence policy pledges to increase the defence budget by \$32 billion per year by 2026-27, but that would still bring Canada's defence spending to just 1.4 per cent of GDP. National Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan told Power & Politics that when it comes to having an impact on NATO missions, money isn't everything.<sup>57</sup>

- **Armed with facts, Canada braces for another Trump tirade at NATO summit**

Canada is looking to Trump-proof its arguments on a range of defence issues ahead of next month's NATO summit — but some experts wonder whether the Trudeau government's position will even register with the mercurial U.S. president. Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan signalled the Liberal government is prepared to debate the orthodoxy of the western military alliance's non-binding spending targets at the upcoming NATO leaders summit in Brussels. NATO asks its 29 members to spend the equivalent of two per cent of their gross domestic product on defence. Canada has long been singled out as a laggard when it comes to meeting that target. Sajjan contends it's partly because the federal government is too bashful when it comes to what it describes as defence spending. The remarks are significant in light of a recent letter U.S. President Donald Trump sent to all NATO capitals demanding members meet the alliance's defence spending targets. Sajjan's comments come at a low point in Canada-U.S. relations. The working relationship between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Trump has turned frosty since the president started calling out Canada — and Trudeau himself — on social media and in highly emotive political rallies with supporters. The NATO summit is expected to be the first time the two leaders have met since the G7 in early June,

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<sup>56</sup> Mark Moore, "Canada begins imposing tariffs on US goods," <https://nypost.com/2018/07/01/canada-begins-imposing-tariffs-on-us-goods/>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Brennan MacDonald, Vassy Kapelos, "Canada can't change Trump's 'one-track mind' on defence spending: former NATO official," <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/vershbow-defence-spending-canada-nato-1.4725301>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

where the U.S. president backed out of supporting the final communique and launched blistering personal attacks on Trudeau in response to the prime minister telling the international media that Canada would not be "pushed around" by the United States on trade. The possibility of a repeat performance by Trump in Brussels has the Liberal government sharpening its previous arguments on defence spending.<sup>58</sup>

## The United States

- **Trump, ahead of NATO summit, repeats complaints on Germany, other Europeans**

Trump, ahead of NATO summit, repeats complaints on Germany, other Europeans, U.S. President Donald Trump, less than two weeks before a NATO summit in Brussels, repeated his complaint that Germany and other European nations need to spend more on the military alliance. NATO members have agreed to spend 2 percent of economic output on defense every year by 2024, but Germany and Spain are among the countries not expected to meet the target. France plans to increase defense spending by more than a third between 2017 and 2025, with the aim of reaching the NATO goal. "Germany has to spend more money. Spain, France. It's not fair what they've done to the United States," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit is scheduled for July 11 and 12 at its new headquarters. Last month, Trump complained that NATO members that did not contribute fully to the alliance would be "dealt with," and he singled out Germany as not doing enough.<sup>59</sup>

- **'Focus on Russia summit could have led US to postpone 2+2 Dialogue with India'**

Contentious trade issues between India and the US are unlikely to have led to the postponement of the first '2+2 Dialogue' between them and the Trump administration's focus on the July 16 summit with Russia and a possible meeting with North Korean officials could have prompted the deferment of the talks, according to leading India-US experts. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman were to travel to Washington to take part in the meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence James Mattis on July 6. However, Pompeo spoke over phone with Swaraj on June 27 and conveyed to her "his regret at the postponement" of the 2+2 Dialogue due to "unavoidable reasons". They agreed to reschedule the dialogue as "soon as possible". In a similar vein, Senior Adviser and Wadhvani Chair in US-India Policy Studies at Washington-based The Center for Strategic and

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<sup>58</sup> Murray Brewster, "Armed with facts, Canada braces for another Trump tirade at NATO summit," <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trump-trudeau-nato-spending-1.4723460>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Reuters, "Trump, ahead of NATO summit, repeats complaints on Germany, other Europeans," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-usa-trump/trump-ahead-of-nato-summit-repeats-complaints-on-germany-other-europeans-idUSKBN1JP369>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

International Studies Richard Rossow said the postponement was not due to the negative barrage of trade issues but instead could be because of the upcoming Russia summit and perhaps another meeting with North Korean officials. President Donald Trump will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, on July 16 for a closely watched summit meeting.<sup>60</sup>

- **Trump claims EU 'as bad as China' over US trade amid fight over tariffs**

Donald Trump has labelled the European Union “as bad as China” when it comes to trade, as he defended his America First policy. Asked during an interview with Fox News whether it would be better to team up with Washington’s European allies to try to change China’s trade practices, President Trump said: “No... they treat us badly, they treat us very unfairly....The EU is possibly as bad as China, just smaller. It is terrible what they do to us,” Mr Trump told Maria Bartiromo in an interview broadcast during her show Sunday Morning Futures. Mr Trump made dealing with “unfair” trade deals against the US a central policy during his presidential election campaign, and has particularly taken aim at China during his time in office. His words come after it was revealed that Mr Trump is said to have told French president Emmanuel Macron to pull out of the EU for a “better trade deal” with the US.<sup>61</sup>

- **Pompeo Outlines Plans for Global Challenges, Including Venezuela and Palestinian Refugees**

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo promised to impose additional sanctions on Venezuela, predicted that the United States would again fund schools for Palestinian refugees in Jordan and said that President Trump viewed Russia’s return to the Group of 7 as inevitable. Mr. Pompeo’s remarks came during a hearing in the Senate that was intended to discuss his department’s budget. But there was little said about the Trump administration’s plans to slash the State Department’s funding, and Mr. Pompeo did not try to defend proposals to cut spending on such things as the battle against H.I.V. and AIDS in Africa. The hearing, before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, yielded a more muted, and even respectful, discussion than what Mr. Pompeo had with lawmakers in May, a month after he took over the State Department.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> PTI, “‘Focus on Russia summit could have led US to postpone 2+2 Dialogue with India’,” <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/defence/focus-on-russia-summit-could-have-led-us-to-postpone-22-dialogue-with-india-experts/articleshow/64814124.cms>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Chris Stevenson, “Trump claims EU 'as bad as China' over US trade amid fight over tariffs,” <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-trade-war-tariffs-latest-eu-china-cars-germany-scotland-a8425721.html>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Gardiner Harris, “Pompeo Outlines Plans for Global Challenges, Including Venezuela and Palestinian Refugees,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/us/politics/pompeo-senate-state-department.html>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.



## Mexico

- **Mexico election: historic landslide victory for leftist Amlo**

A baseball-loving left-wing nationalist who has vowed to crack down on corruption, rein in Mexico's war on drugs and rule for the poor has been elected president of Latin America's second-largest economy. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a silver-haired 64-year-old who is best known as Amlo and counts Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn among his friends, was elected with at least 53% of the vote, according to a quick count by Mexico's electoral commission. López Obrador's closest rival, Ricardo Anaya from the National Action party (PAN), received around 22% while José Antonio Meade, a career civil servant running for the Institutional Revolutionary party, or PRI, which ruled Mexico for most of last century, came in third with around 16%. As an estimated 89 million voters descended on polling stations on Sunday it became clear that Mexicans – fed up with political sleaze, soaring violence and poverty – had overwhelmingly voted for change and to reject the only two parties to hold the presidency since the end of one-party rule in 2000.<sup>63</sup>

## Region: Latin America and Caribbean

### Colombia

- **Change and Continuity in Colombian Politics**

The election results were remarkable in several ways. For one, it was the first presidential election since the ratification of the peace accords between the government of Juan Manuel Santos and the country's largest and oldest guerrilla insurgency, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), signed in November 2016. The agreement marked a historic milestone, promising to end the decades-long civil war in which 250,000 people died and close to eight million were displaced. Yet few of its provisions have been implemented in the last year and a half, and under Duque, the accords will now be subject to dramatic revision. In some respects, the election marked a continuation of opposition to the peace accord, led by Uribe, which narrowly defeated the Yes campaign, led by Santos and supporters on the center-left, in the October 2016 referendum. In the second round, Uribe advanced, while Santos' candidate Germán Vargas Lleras, who picked up 7% of votes in the first round before rallying behind Duque in the second, didn't make a dent. But Gustavo Petro, a former M-19 guerrilla leader who demobilized in order to participate in the Constitutional Assembly that led to the drafting of the 1991 Constitution, is the first left-wing candidate in Colombian history to make it to the second round of a presidential election. Until the rise of Uribe, elections were disputed among the Liberal and Conservative parties and the

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<sup>63</sup> Tom Phillips and David Agren, "Mexico election: historic landslide victory for leftist Amlo," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/02/mexico-election-leftist-amlo-set-for-historic-landslide-victory>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

factions within them, who governed the country for 150 years beginning in the late 1840s.<sup>64</sup>

## Venezuela

- **EU imposes sanctions on more top Venezuelan officials**

The European Union imposed economic sanctions on 11 senior Venezuelan officials in protest at President Nicolas Maduro's re-election, which the bloc says was not free or fair, and over his government's alleged rights abuses. The new travel bans and asset freezes, discussed and reported by Reuters in May, follow EU moves against seven other senior officials in January. They do not target Maduro directly, as the EU seeks to pressure those around him first. Those blacklisted include Venezuela's industry minister and former vice president Tareck El Aissami, already sanctioned by the United States for drug trafficking. The European Union said he was "responsible for serious human rights violations ... including arbitrary detention, politically motivated investigations, inhumane and degrading treatment, and torture". The 28-nation bloc also targeted Delcy Rodriguez, who became vice president when Maduro reshuffled his cabinet after his widely-condemned re-election in May. Rodriguez was formerly president of the pro-government constituent assembly, which critics say Maduro set up last year to override an opposition-controlled national assembly. She has also been foreign minister. The bloc said she had undermined Venezuelan democracy. Others targeted include ministers and the Venezuelan Deputy Attorney General Katherine Harrington, a Maduro loyalist also blacklisted by the United States. Maduro's government denounced the new sanctions, which it said infringed international law by violating Venezuela's sovereignty, and accused the EU of "flagrant subordination" to the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.<sup>65</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia and Sanctions**

Italy's new government did nothing to stop the EU extending sanctions on Russia. Rome wanted better "dialogue" with Moscow and more opportunities for Russian people to visit Europe, Italy's prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, said in talks in the small hours of EU summit in Brussels on 29 June. But he did not play hardball on the issue, as he did on migration, where he threatened to veto EU decisions. "Italy said they would not object although they are for an open dialogue with Russia, also

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<sup>64</sup> Forrest Hylton, Aaron Tauss, "Change and Continuity in Colombian Politics," <https://therealnews.com/change-and-continuity-in-colombian-politics>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Robin Emmott, "EU imposes sanctions on more top Venezuelan officials," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-eu/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-more-top-venezuelan-officials-idUSKBN1JL0VO>, Accessed on 02 July 2018.3 MIN READ

they reminded the EU of its commitment to do more for people-to-people contacts and SMEs [small businesses]," one EU diplomat told EUobserver. Other Russia-friendly EU states, including Cyprus, Greece, and Hungary, kept quiet as France and Germany reported on the situation in Ukraine. There were "almost none" leaders who criticised extending the life of the economic sanctions for another six months, the source said. It later said it might lift them if Moscow fell in line with the so-called Minsk ceasefire deal, which says it must pull its forces out of east Ukraine, but France and Germany, who represent the EU in talks with Russia on the conflict, said there was no good news on that front. The EU leaders' informal decision will be enacted by officials in July, maintaining curbs on international finance for Russia's leading banks and energy and arms firms, among other measures.<sup>66</sup>

- **Russia and Human Rights**

As the negotiations over the United Nations peacekeeping budget enter their final hours, the US and other influential countries should join forces to prevent Russia and China from drastically curtailing the ability of UN missions to monitor human rights in the world's trouble spots. Russia and China have targeted hundreds of human rights posts spread across numerous UN peacekeeping and political missions. There are two particularly worrying developments as the July 1 deadline for a peacekeeping budget deal approaches: the massive scale of the proposed cuts, and Russia and China's assumption that the Trump administration's obsession with UN cutbacks creates an opening to eradicate human rights posts. Fears that human rights at the UN are taking a back seat have only increased since the US announced its withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>67</sup>

- **Russia and Wheat Export**

Russia has so much wheat that it can't export it all via the usual methods, so shippers are increasingly turning to a once-rare technique to get more grain on boats. Most Russian wheat is loaded on ships in the deep waters of the Black Sea, but those ports have reached their limit. So as a work-around, traders are putting more grain on small ships in the nearby Sea of Azov, the world's shallowest sea, and sending them to deeper water to transfer the cargo to larger vessels. About 20 percent of Russia's grain exports were exported via ship-to-ship transfers last year, up from just 2 percent in 2013. The strategy -- often used to move oil and gas -- is becoming more common for Russian grain as the country deals with ever-bigger harvests and growing demand from far-away markets like Indonesia. It also shows how the grain industry is straining Russia's infrastructure and reshaping shipping routes. "This has become a leading channel of exports," said Dmitry Rylko, director general at the Institute for Agriculture Market Studies, or IKAR. "Cargoes out of

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<sup>66</sup>Andrew Rettman, "Lone Italy fails to stop Russia sanctions", *EU Observer*, June 29, 2018. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/142236> Accessed on 2 July 2018.

<sup>67</sup>Louis Charbonneau, "Oppose Russia and China's Assault on Human Rights at UN", *Human Rights Watch*, June 29, 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/29/oppose-russia-and-chinas-assault-human-rights-un> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

the Sea of Azov in recent years, especially during the current season, have brought about colossal volumes of ship-to-ship transfers.” Wheat accounts for the bulk of Russia’s grain exports, which have surged in recent years as production boomed and relatively cheap supplies helped the country grab a bigger share of the global market. While local companies are investing in boosting port capacity, for now terminals are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with this season’s record pace.<sup>68</sup>

- **Russia and India**

Despite a significant cooling of ties between traditional strategic partners Russia and India, New Delhi can still count itself as one of the top five “friends” of Moscow. And for all the talk about Russia moving towards Pakistan, an annual opinion poll by one of Moscow’s most respected think tanks shows Islamabad does not yet cross Russian consciousness. The Levada Center, the only non-governmental pollster in Russia and labelled a “foreign agent” by Kremlin in 2016, is distinguished by the comprehensive Russian opinion polls it publishes. In the 2017 poll, which was out this year, Russians identified Belarus as their country’s top ally, followed by China, Kazakhstan, Syria and India. Identifying the top enemies of Russia, the poll picks on the US, specifically President Donald Trump for the top spot, with Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Germany occupying the big ‘foes’ spaces. Afghanistan remains a designated enemy, though the Russian system is now reputed to be working closely with the Taliban. Interestingly, the average Russian identified radical Islamism and Islamic extremism as an important threat/enemy. They consider Trump, Ukraine, Europe, Islamic State terror group and radical Islam and corruption to be the greatest threats to Russia. Fewer Russians identify themselves as European, but want Russia to effect some sort of rapprochement with the West. Russian foreign policy priorities, according to the poll, should first concentrate on Russia’s own security, followed by a desire shared by almost half of those polled for Russia to regain its former influence in the world.<sup>69</sup>

India on 28 June voted against UK at the Special Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in Hague in what can be viewed as support for Russian position. It was convened by UK to propose that Organisation for Prohibition for Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should be empowered not just to investigate whether chemical weapons have been used in an incident but also to identify the group or government responsible for it. India voted against UK proposal along with 23 other countries. As many as 82 OPCW member states of OPCW voted in favour of UK proposal. The proposal needed support of 71 member states. 106 members were present. India called for consensus over move to create new mechanism rather than unilateral proposal. Russia, already at loggerheads

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<sup>68</sup>“Record Wheat Exports, Russia Relies on Smaller Ports”, *AG Web*, June 28, 2018. <https://www.agweb.com/article/record-wheat-exports-russia-relies-on-smaller-ports/> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

<sup>69</sup>Indrani Bagchi, “Russia pollster finds India among top friends but perception about China better”, *Economic Times*, June 28, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russia-pollster-finds-india-among-top-friends-but-perception-about-china-better/articleshow/64774385.cms> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

with the UK over the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury, fiercely resisted the move, saying it will politicise the OPCW. Earlier in an oblique criticism of UK's move for unilateral proposal, India even as it opposed use of chemical weapons, called for constructive engagement, dialogue and unity of purpose at the Convention.<sup>70</sup>

- **Russia and Europe**

On 25 June, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) has published a new assessment of the implementation by Russia of its recommendations on incriminations and transparency of party funding. Twelve recommendations (as compared to 11 during the previous assessment) out of 21 have been implemented satisfactorily, GRECO says. The Council of Europe anti-corruption experts are disappointed with the decision to split the previous anti-bribery single draft legal act into two, "which may cast doubts over the robustness of the legal framework". GRECO urged the authorities to swiftly address the outstanding recommendations, preferably through a single draft legal act. On substance, the proposed amendments to the bribery-related provisions of the Russian Penal Code do not fully conform to the Council of Europe standards.<sup>71</sup>

- **Russia and Tatarstan**

On 25 June, the special status that Russia's Tatarstan republic has enjoyed since the collapse of the Soviet Union ended, when its agreement with the federal government expired. The republic had once been among 46 Russian regions that negotiated a degree of self-rule with the Kremlin after the Soviet Union's collapse. But by July 24 this year, only Tatarstan had retained a semblance of that autonomy. In the months leading up to the agreement's expiration, the Kremlin gave little indication it intended to renew the deal. Under President Vladimir Putin, power has been returned to the capital.<sup>72</sup>

- **Russia and Communication Law**

Controversial anti-terror legislation requiring Russian telecom companies to store users' communications entered into force on 1 July, leaving providers scrambling to implement the government's demands. The new data storage law forces mobile and internet companies to log the text messages, phone conversations and chat activity of customers for six months and to provide them to security services in the case of a court order. It is part of a package of reforms known as the "Yarovaya laws," co-authored by conservative United Russia lawmaker Irina Yarovaya. Signed by President Vladimir Putin in July 2016, the legislation has been widely criticized

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<sup>70</sup>Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India supports Russia at chemical weapons meet", *Economic Times*, June 28, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-supports-russia-at-chemical-weapons-meet/articleshow/64772335.cms> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

<sup>71</sup>"Is Russia making any progress in criminalising bribery and ensuring transparency of party funding? – GRECO's assessment", *Council of Europe*, June 25, 2018. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/is-russia-making-any-progress-in-criminalizing-bribery-and-ensuring-transparency-of-party-funding-greco-s-assessment> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

<sup>72</sup>"Tatarstan, the Last Region to Lose Its Special Status Under Putin", *The Moscow Times*, June 25, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/tatarstan-special-status-expires-58483> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

by activists, who called it "Russia's 'Big Brother' Law." The Agora human rights group warned that the measure would seriously affect Russia's civil society and give law enforcement more scope for silencing political activists. According to Artyom Kozlyuk, the director of the Roskomsvoboda internet rights group, the legislation is unconstitutional and opens the door for mass data leaks.<sup>73</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **UK To Send In 440 More Troops To Afghanistan**

The political editor of BBC Laura Kuenssberg said that the government of UK would send 440 more troops to Afghanistan. According to BBC report, the National Security Council of UK was seriously considering increasing the number of British troops to Afghanistan and with this step, UK would become the third largest contributor to promote peace in Afghanistan. Earlier on 25 June 2018, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Boris Johnson met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul and discussed various issues such as counter-terrorism activities, rise of Afghanistan's importance in regional connectivity and cooperation in Central Asia and peace talks with the Taliban<sup>74</sup>. Appreciating Afghan government's commitment for ceasefire during Eid, UK Foreign Secretary held that UK would provide necessary assistance for peace, prosperity and economic development in Afghanistan. President Ashraf Ghani also recognised the significance of UK in culminating threats of international terrorism. During this visit, the UK's Foreign Secretary engaged discussion with General Nicholson, the Commander of Resolute Support, NATO's training and assistance mission in Afghanistan and spoke on the subject of how British troops would mentor the Afghan National Security and Defense Forces.<sup>75</sup>

- **Work on Uzbek Transmission Line to Afghanistan Begins**

As per the agreement between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, Humayun Qayumi, Advisor on Economic Affairs and Infrastructure to Afghan President in an interview said that the government of Uzbekistan had already begun the construction of a new power transmission line between Surkhan and Pul-e-

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<sup>73</sup>"Russia's 'Big Brother' Law Enters Into Force", *The Moscow Times*, July 1, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russias-big-brother-law-enters-into-force-62066> Accessed on July 2, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> "President Ghani, UK Foreign Secretary Discuss Ceasefire", *Tolo News*, 25 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/president%C2%A0ghani-uk-foreign-secretary-discuss-ceasefire>

<sup>75</sup> "UK To Send In 440 More Troops To Afghanistan", *Tolo News*, 6 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/uk-send-440-more-troops-afghanistan>

Khumri. The initial agreement for this project which would be around \$150 million was signed when President Ashraf Ghani visited Uzbekistan in December 2017. With the financial assistance from Asian Development Bank and the government of Uzbekistan, the project would provide much needed energy to Afghanistan<sup>76</sup>.

- **Pakistan Urges Afghan Parties to Seize Critical Opening for Peace in Afghanistan**

The ceasefire between Afghan government and the Taliban during Eid has provided a new impetus for all regional and international partners, intensely involved in their efforts to bring back peace in Afghanistan. Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, permanent representative to the UN, told the UN Security Council on 26 June 2018, during a debate on the situation of Afghanistan, “The comprehensive observance of the ceasefire by the Taliban also demonstrated that its leadership has control of the movement and is cohesive enough to negotiate a political settlement. The opportunity that has opened up by recent developments must now be seized and translated into serious and sustained efforts to promote a political settlement and durable peace and stability in Afghanistan”. As far as Pakistan is concerned, Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi mentioned that Afghanistan’s immediate neighbour would continue to provide full support for durable peace in Afghanistan. The Ambassador also added that Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) consisting of Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and the US would be useful to contain rising activities of Daesh.<sup>77</sup>

- **Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister in Azerbaijan For ICG Meeting**

On 28 June 2018, Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Hekmat Khalil Karzai along with a delegation went to Baku, Azerbaijan to attend the meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Afghanistan. Hikmet Hajiyev, spokesman of Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said that the event was successfully attended by 90 representatives of ICG member countries and international organizations including delegates from non-government organizations. The International Contact Group (ICG) was founded in the year 2009 to provide assistance for the development of Afghanistan in the central Asian region<sup>78</sup>. Araz Azimov, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan acknowledged the role of International Contact Group (ICG) in contributing peace in Afghanistan.<sup>79</sup> This year Azerbaijan organising this meeting demonstrated its significance in bringing peace in the Afghan region.

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<sup>76</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 7 June 2018, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=21213](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21213).

<sup>77</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 28 June 2018, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=21220](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21220).

<sup>78</sup> Tolo News, 28 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghan-deputy-foreign-minister-azerbaijan-icg-meeting>.

<sup>79</sup> ICG Meeting on Afghanistan Held in Baku, CBC, 28 June 08, <http://cbc.az/en/en/news/icg-meeting-on-afghanistan-held-in-baku1530197386>

- **Badakhshan Officials Hold Talks With Taliban**

A new kind of positive development emerged in Afghanistan with the recent ceasefire between Afghan government and the Taliban. The police chief of Baharak district located in Badakhshan province, Abdul Wadood Rasikh announced that a large number of Taliban members showed their interest in joining the peace process. He mentioned, “No doubt, they (Taliban) are from this country and take an interest in their families and in the country. You witnessed this during the three-day ceasefire. Many of them are in contact with us. This shows that they are interested in talks”.<sup>80</sup> The common people in the province asked the Taliban to discuss peace process with tribal elders, civil society members, religious scholars, local commanders, influential figures, and local officials. Meanwhile, the President of Afghanistan addressed the nation ending the unilateral ceasefire on 29 June 2018. President Ghani once again called upon the Taliban leaders to join the peace process. However, the Taliban continued their ongoing battle against the government forces in Faryab, Kunduz and Maidan Wardak<sup>81</sup>.

## Bangladesh

- **China pledges help in Rohingya return**

China yesterday (June 29) assured Bangladesh of full support for expediting the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar after Dhaka sought Beijing's help to this end. The assurance came during bilateral talks between Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing where Mahmood briefed the Chinese side on the status of the 1.1 million Rohingyas, who have taken shelter in Bangladesh. Wang Yi pledged China's full support for early repatriation of the refugees to Rakhine and improve environment there for their resettlement by lending help to construct houses and create economic opportunities.<sup>82</sup>

- **BNP threatens to launch movement through national unity**

BNP senior leader Moudud Ahmed has said their party will launch a strong out-government movement by forging national unity. "A process of forging national unity is under way. We must unite all the parties, except Awami League and those

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<sup>80</sup> “Badakhshan Officials Hold Talks with Taliban”, *Tolo News*, 30 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/badakhshan-officials-hold-talks-taliban>

<sup>81</sup> “Govt’s Ceasefire Ends Amid Heavy Clashes”, *Tolo News*, 29 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/govt%E2%80%99s%C2%A0unilateral-ceasefire%C2%A0ends%C2%A0amid-heavy-clashes>.

<sup>82</sup> “China pledges help in Rohingya return,” *Daily Star*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/china-pledges-help-rohingya-return-1597576>, accessed on June 30, 2018.



in the 14-party alliance. We think national unity will be instrumental to ensure the current regime's fall," he said at a discussion on Saturday. "Once the national unity is forged, we will come up with effective programs at a suitable time to oust the government," said the party's standing committee member.<sup>83</sup>

- **WB announces \$480m grants for Rohingya**

The World Bank has announced \$480 million grant-based support to help Bangladesh address the needs of Rohingya refugees in health, education, water and sanitation, disaster risk management, and social protection. WB Board of Directors approved a \$50 million additional grant to an existing Health Sector Support Project, the first in a series that could total as much as \$480 million, said a WB statement.<sup>84</sup>

- **SC upholds stay on Khaleda's bail in Cumilla murder case**

The Appellate Division of Supreme Court on Monday (July 2) upheld its previous order staying the High Court order that had granted bail to BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia in a murder case filed over the arson attack in Cumilla on 3 Feb, 2015, reports UNB. A four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by chief justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order disposing of the leave-to-appeal petition filed by the state.<sup>85</sup>

- **BNP fears losing ties with Islamic parties**

With BNP out of power for more than a decade, Islamic parties are now showing less interest in forming alliances with the party. Since BNP's arch political rival, Awami League, has been in power for about 10 years, most Islamic parties are trying to build good relations with the ruling party, which is worrying the BNP.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "BNP threatens to launch movement through national unity," *Dhaka Tribune*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2018/06/30/bnp-threatens-to-launch-movement-through-national-unity>, accessed on June 30, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> "WB announces \$480m grants for Rohingya," *Daily Star*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/wb-announces-480m-grants-rohingya-1597543>, accessed on June 30, 2018.

<sup>85</sup> "SC upholds stay on Khaleda's bail in Cumilla murder case," *Prothom Alo*, July 2, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/178914/SC-upholds-stay-on-Khaleda's-bail-in-Cumilla>, accessed on July 2, 2018.

<sup>86</sup> "BNP fears losing ties with Islamic parties," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/07/02/bnp-fears-losing-ties-with-islamic-parties>, accessed on July 2, 2018.

## नेपाल

### प्रधानमंत्री ओली की चीन यात्रा

नेपाल के प्रधानमन्त्री के पी शर्मा ओली रविवार को को चीन की .दिन की यात्रा करके वापस लौटे है 6 ओली पिछले दो सालों में चीन दूसरी बार गये है और नेपाल के लोगों को चीन यात्रा से काफी उम्मीदें हस्ताक्षर हु लेकिन उम्मीदों के नाम पर दर्जनों ज्ञापन पत्रों पर .भी थीए और केवल रेल कनेक्टिविटी के मुद्दे पर संभाव्य अध्ययन की बात हुईत्रिभुवन हवाईअड्डे पर पहुँचते ही प्रधानमंत्री ओली ने रेल . लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि समय सीमा .कनेक्टिविटी पर ज्ञापन समझौते की बात की प्रशंसा की स्पष्ट बात और अनुदान देने के तरीकों पर कोईनहीं हुई जिससे लगता है कि निकट भविष्य में इसमें कोई प्रगति नहीं होने वाली.<sup>87</sup>

### परिवहन प्रोटोकॉल चीन के साथ जुलाई में होगाओली

नेपाल के प्रधानमन्त्री के पी शर्मा ओली ने कहा कि पारगमन और परिवहन के प्रोटोकॉल समझौते पर अभी हाल ही में हुई चीन यात्रा के दौरान हस्ताक्षर नहीं हो पाएउस पर अगले माह जुलाई में कार्य , के बाद बनी दोनों सरकारों पर आरोप लगाये कि जिस समझौते को वे 2016 इसके लिए उन्होंने .होगा .दो साल पहले चीन करके आये थे उस पर कोई कदम नहीं उठाया गया<sup>88</sup>

### ई पी जी की अवधि :जुलाई को खत्म होगी 4

भारत नेपाल के रिश्तों की (प्रबुद्ध व्यक्तियों का समूह) की संधि की समीक्षा कर रही ई पी जी 1950 अभी बात चल रही है कि दोनों देशों के लिए अलग अलग रिपोर्ट .जुलाई की समाप्त हो रही है अवधि क्ष भेखइस बात पर ई पी जी के नेपाल की तरफ से अध्य .बनेगी या एक संयुक्त रिपोर्ट बनेगीबहादुर थापा ने कहा कि हम मंशा बना रहे कि एक संयुक्त रिपोर्ट ही बनायीं जाये.<sup>89</sup>

## Indian Ocean Region

- **Six Agreements Signed Between India and Seychelles**

Besides agreement to work together on a project to develop a naval base at the Assumption Island, six agreements were signed between India and Seychelles after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Danny Faure in New

<sup>87</sup> Koshraj Koirala, "More optics, less substance", My Republica, 25 June 2018, <http://e.myrepublica.com/epaper/src/epaper.php?id=2928>

<sup>88</sup> "Transit protocol with China in July: PM", The Kathmandu Post, 27 June 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost>

<sup>89</sup> "Joint Report, Term on Kathmandu Meet Agenda", The Kathmandu Post, 26 June 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-06-26>

Delhi on June 25, 2018.<sup>90</sup> The six agreements signed between India and Seychelles on 25 June 2018 are following<sup>91</sup>:

- MOU Signed regarding Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of Small Development Projects through Local Bodies, Educational and Vocational Institutions.
- Twinning Agreement on the Establishment of Friendship and Cooperation between the Corporation of the City of Panaji (Municipal Corporation) and the City of Victoria of the Republic of Seychelles signed between India and Seychelles.
- MOU signed between the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Republic of India and the Department of Information Communications Technology of the Republic of Seychelles on Cooperation in the area of Cyber Security.
- Cultural Exchange Programme between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Seychelles for the years 2018-2022.
- Technical Agreement on Sharing White Shipping Information between the Indian Navy and the National Information Sharing and Coordination Center of the Republic of Seychelles.
- MOU between the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India and the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Seychelles.
- **Sri Lanka is moving Navy's Southern Command at Hambantota Port**

On June 30, 2018, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister office said that the Sri Lankan navy is moving its Southern Command to Hambantota- a port at Sri Lanka's southern coast which is leased to Chinese state run firm.<sup>92</sup> According to a statement issued by Prime Minister office over a media report regarding Prime Minister's speech made at the Dr. Saman Kelegama memorial conference held on June 29 in Colombo, Sri Lankan President said that he negotiated with Chinese Prime Minister and President and "came up with a proposal which was beneficial for both parties."<sup>93</sup> "Sri Lanka also informed the Chinese that Hambantota cannot be used for military purposes. The Sri Lanka Navy is moving its Southern Command to Hambantota. There is no need to be frightened as security of the port will be under the control of Sri Lanka Navy"<sup>94</sup>, the statement said.

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<sup>90</sup> Seychelles president in India: Danny Faure holds 'frank' talks with Narendra Modi, agrees to work on Assumption Island deal, June 26, 2018, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/seychelles-president-in-india-danny-faure-holds-frank-talks-with-narendra-modi-agrees-to-work-on-assumption-island-deal-4597261.html> (Accessed on 01 July, 2018)

<sup>91</sup> List of MoUs signed between India and Seychelles during the State Visit of President of Seychelles to India, June 25, 2018, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/30014/List+of+MoUs+signed+between+India+and+Seychelles+during+the+State+Visit+of+President+of+Seychelles+to+India> (Accessed on 01 July, 2018)

<sup>92</sup> SL Navy's Southern Command moving to Hambantota – PM office, June 30, 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/SL-Navy-s-Southern-Command-moving-to-Hambantota-PM-office-152049.html> (Accessed on 01 July, 2018)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

- **Naval exercise RIMPAC 2018**

The 26th edition of the world's largest international naval exercise- Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) began on June 29, 2018, near the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.<sup>95</sup> According to a media report, "twenty-five nations, more than 45 surface ships and submarines, 17 national land forces, and more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel are taking part in a training opportunity designed to foster and sustain cooperative relationships."<sup>96</sup> The RIMPAC exercise was first commenced in 1971. As reported by media, "from India, INS Sahyadri, Indian Navy's indigenously built guided missile stealth frigate, is taking part in the maritime exercise, which is happening in the Western Pacific Ocean."<sup>97</sup>

## Pakistan

- **Pakistan in FATF**

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on June 29<sup>th</sup> formally placed Pakistan on the grey list due to 'strategic deficiencies' in its anti-money laundering and terrorism financing regime. The decision came despite Islamabad showing progress in the majority of areas identified as threat the international terror financing watchdog. Pakistan will come out of the grey list only when it will implement the Action Plan. As per the plan approved by the FATF, nine targets have to be met in January 2019, about 13 by May 2019 and the remaining in September 2019.<sup>98</sup> Former chairman of the Senate and PPP leader Mian Raza Rabbani said on June 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 that Pakistan's placement on the grey list by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the world's terrorism financing watchdog, was unfortunate and it would serve as a disincentive for the country's fight against terrorism.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> RIMPAC 2018 Begins, But Without China, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/rimpac-2018-begins-but-without-china#gs.dNkFrt8> ( Accessed on 01 July, 2018)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Naval exercise RIMPAC 2018 begins, Nirmala Sitharaman to miss the event, June 30, 2018 <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2018/06/30/Naval-exercise-RIMPAC-2018-begins-Nirmala-Sitharaman-to-miss-the-event.html> ( Accessed on 01 July, 2018)

<sup>98</sup> Shahbaz Rana, "Pakistan formally placed on FATF grey list", *The Express Tribune*, June 30, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1746079/1-pakistan-formally-placed-fatf-grey-list/> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>99</sup> "FATF decision to put Pakistan on grey list criticised", *Dawn*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1416790> as accessed on July 2, 2018

## West Asia

### Iraq and GCC

- **Iraq announces full control of border with Syria after installing fence, thermal cameras<sup>100</sup>**

According to a statement released on Saturday (June 30) by the commander of the Iraqi border guards, Major General Hamid Abdullah Ibrahim, border forces have completed the erecting of a barbed-wire fence along the Iraq-Syria border and are preparing to install thermal cameras to prevent the infiltration of IS militants. “We are now concerned about the Syrian border. We have put forward a program based on Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi’s request...and are doing strategic work to protect the border,” Ibrahim said in a press statement. “Neither infiltrators nor smugglers nor terrorists will penetrate our borders in the future,” the Maj. Gen. continued, adding the border guards’ work will expand following the strengthening of the Syrian-Jordanian-Iraqi border triangle. Since declaring victory against IS last December, Prime Minister Abadi vowed to target the extremist group in areas of Syria along Iraq’s western border.

- **Iraq hangs 12 extremists to avenge civilian killings<sup>101</sup>**

Iraq hanged 13 convicted extremists on Friday (June 29) after Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi vowed a forceful response to calm public anger over the murder of abducted civilians by ISIS. While Iraqis have grown accustomed to the atrocities committed by ISIS, the killing of the eight civilians shocked the nation and doused hopes the extremists had been defeated. For the first time, the authorities released photographs of the hangings, which came after Mr Al Abadi on Thursday ordered the “immediate” executions of hundreds of convicted extremists on death row. The justice ministry said the 13 convicts put to death at a prison in southern Iraq “had participated in armed operations with terrorist groups, in kidnappings, bombings and murders of civilians.” Abadi's office had earlier announced the execution of 12 convicts whose appeals were exhausted.

- **UAE announces pause in Hudaida offensive for UN peace efforts<sup>102</sup>**

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Shiite rebels in Yemen has “paused” its campaign to retake the rebel-held port city of Hodeida in support of U.N. peace efforts, an Emirati official said Sunday. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash acknowledged the week-old pause after Yemen’s warring parties agreed to restart talks with U.N. special envoy Martin Griffiths. “The Coalition has paused the advance on the city & port on June 23 for a week to allow the UN envoy to secure an unconditional withdrawal from Hodeida,” Gargash tweeted. The coalition launched the Hodeida offensive in June, in a bid to break a three-year stalemate in

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<sup>100</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/d3900379-9d35-4d14-9f7b-acafb76b0b4d>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-hangs-13-extremists-to-avenge-civilian-killings-1.745394>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/uae-announces-pause-hudaida-offensive-180701110217244.html>

its war against the Iran-aligned rebels, known as Houthis. The fighting has largely been confined to the city's outskirts. Griffiths has been talking to both sides to try and prevent an all-out assault.

- **UAE responds to Qatar's UN court case with another<sup>103</sup>**

On Wednesday (June 27) Qatar filed a case and alleged that the tough measures implemented against Qatari residents in the Saudi-led blockade amounts to human rights violations. "Historically the people of Qatar and its neighbours have been close. For decades Qataris and Emiratis have worked together, prayed together and married into each other's families," said Mohammed al-Khulaifi, Qatar's lawyer. "Despite these close ties" the UAE implemented a "series of broad discriminatory measures against my country and its people on the basis of their Qatari nationality", he told a 16-judge bench at the tribunal.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia in turn announced Wednesday that they will file a separate complaint at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, accusing Qatar of violating their airspace. No date has yet been set for that hearing. But ICJ judges will over the next three days hear arguments from Doha's lawyers, with the UAE to respond on Thursday. Both will talk on Friday.

## Turkey

- **U.S. Says It Will Sanction NATO Ally Turkey for Russian Defense System**

The U.S. will take the unprecedented step of imposing sanctions on a NATO ally when Turkey receives a Russian missile defense system, according to a State Department official testifying before Congress. The delivery of the S-400s will impair military cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey and will damage relations between the countries more generally, Wess Mitchell, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, said on 26 June in testimony to the Senate.<sup>104</sup>

- **Turkey sends new files to US as evidence for Gülen's extradition**

Turkey has sent a new file to the U.S. to beef up its evidences demanding the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, the Pennsylvania-based leader of the Gülenist movement, which is widely believed to have orchestrated the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported on June 30. According to unspecified sources cited by Anadolu Agency, the new files include evidence of a

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<sup>103</sup> <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/6/27/uae-responds-to-qatars-un-court-case-with-another>

<sup>104</sup> "U.S. Says It Will Sanction NATO Ally Turkey for Russian Defense System", Bloomberg, 27 June 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-27/u-s-says-it-will-sanction-nato-ally-turkey-for-russian-missiles>

phone conversation between Gülen and Hakan Çiçek, a businessman accused of being an intermediary between Gülenist leaders and staff officers in the army.<sup>105</sup>

- **State of emergency decrees are law: Turkey's top court**

Turkey's Constitutional Court officially recognized the state of emergency decrees in its ruling on June 30 as law, rejecting the request of the main opposition for their annulment. The Republican's People Party (CHP) had brought the state of emergency decrees numbered 7076 and 7077 to the Constitutional Court after they were adopted by the parliament as law.<sup>106</sup>

- **Turkey bolsters patrols on Syrian border**

Turkey has strengthened its military presence on the border of Syria's northern province of Manbij with a seventh military patrol in the area on Sunday. Ankara acted independently but in coordination with its treaty ally the US, according to press reports. The patrols are part of a roadmap Turkey and the US endorsed in early June following intense negotiations between the two nations.<sup>107</sup>

- **Trump considering 'highly qualified individual' as envoy to Turkey, US diplomat says**

United States President Donald Trump is considering appointing a highly qualified individual as an envoy to Turkey, U.S. Charge d'Affaires Philip Kosnett said. Speaking to a group of journalists on 02 July, the U.S. diplomat stressed that Trump has been taking his time to appoint "a highly qualified individual" as the ambassador to Turkey.<sup>108</sup>

## **Saudi Arabia**

- **Malaysia to withdraw troops stationed in Saudi Arabia**

Malaysia's defence minister has said that his country's new government will withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia. In a statement made to local media,

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<sup>105</sup> "Turkey sends new files to US as evidence for Gülen's extradition", Hurriyat Daily News, 30 June 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-sends-new-files-to-us-as-evidence-for-gulens-extradition-133997>

<sup>106</sup> "State of emergency decrees are law: Turkey's top court", Hurriyat Daily News, 30 June 2018, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/state-of-emergency-decrees-are-law-turkeys-top-court-134012>

<sup>107</sup> "Turkey bolsters patrols on Syrian border", Arab News, 01 July 2018. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1331461/middle-east>

<sup>108</sup> "Trump considering 'highly qualified individual' as envoy to Turkey, US diplomat says", Daily Sabah Diplomacy, 02 July 2018. <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/07/02/trump-considering-highly-qualified-individual-as-envoy-to-turkey-us-diplomat-says>

Mohammed Sabu said on Wednesday that maintaining a military presence in the kingdom risked dragging Malaysia into a regional conflict.<sup>109</sup>

- **'Jordan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia warn Israel against Turkey'**

Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Palestine have warned Israel on separate occasions about Turkey's creeping influence in occupied East Jerusalem, according to a report by Israeli newspaper Haaretz. The report notes that senior officials from the three Arab countries told Israel that Turkey was "extending its influence in Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem" which they said was "part of an attempt by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to "claim ownership over the Jerusalem issue".<sup>110</sup>

- **Saudi Arabian car companies see boost in demand for female drivers**

Car dealerships, agencies and companies in Saudi Arabia have witnessed a remarkable turnout after the decree allowing women to drive was implemented on June 24, Saudi Press Agency reported. As a result, some agencies have established an advisory board, and conducted research surveys to take advantage of this vital and strategic decision by collecting information and build plans to deal with this qualitative shift in the Saudi society.<sup>111</sup>

- **Saudi Arabia, Argentina Upgraded To 'Emerging Markets'**

Investing in the effervescent emerging markets space is about to become even more exciting. MSCI (Morgan Stanley Capital International), a leading provider of global equity indexes with \$14 trillion in investors' assets, is about to grant an upgrade to Saudi Arabi and Argentina by adding them to the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> **"Malaysia to withdraw troops stationed in Saudi Arabia"**, Aljazeera, 28 June 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/malaysia-withdraw-troops-stationed-saudi-arabia-180628115443070.html>

<sup>110</sup> **"Jordan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia warn Israel against Turkey"**, Aljazeera, 29 June 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/palestine-saudi-arabia-warn-israel-turkey-180628195454983.html>

<sup>111</sup> **"Saudi Arabian car companies see boost in demand for female drivers"**, Arab News, 29 June 2018. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1330086/saudi-arabia>

<sup>112</sup> **"Saudi Arabia, Argentina Upgraded To 'Emerging Markets'"**, OilPrice.com, 30 June 2018. <https://oilprice.com/Finance/the-Markets/Saudi-Arabia-Argentina-Upgraded-To-Emerging-Markets.html>



- **President Trump Pushing Saudi Arabia To Produce More Oil**

President Donald Trump says he's pushing Saudi Arabia to ramp up its oil production and that the country has agreed. In a tweet Saturday, Trump said he spoke to King Salman and asked him to try to put out more oil. He says the increased production is necessary due to "dysfunction in Iran and Venezuela."<sup>113</sup>

## Israel

- **Prince William in Israel**

Prince William visited Israel from 26 to 28 June 2018, the first member of the British royal family to pay an official visit to Israel. He visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, saw a soccer game with Arab and Jewish players run by the Peres Peace Center and was introduced to Tel Aviv's vibrant start-up scene. He also met President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.<sup>114</sup> However Prince William declined to meet the Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat in Jerusalem. The Mayor was requested by the British Embassy to meet the Prince in Ramat Gan instead of Jerusalem. Apparently a meeting by the prince with the mayor in Jerusalem, however, would have implied an unacceptable degree of British recognition of Israeli rights in the city. The Mayor declined to meet the Prince.<sup>115</sup> While meeting President Abbas at Ramallah, Prince William expressed his sentiment for a lasting peace in the region.<sup>116</sup>

- **Israel Increases Deployment on Golan Heights**

The Israeli army has reinforced troops on the Golan Heights near the border with Syria in light of a situational assessment by the Northern Command, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit announced on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. While the IDF does not expect the offensive to lead to direct clashes between Israel and the Syrian army, but it will send a message to Syrian President Bashar Assad as his forces draw closer to the Israeli border.<sup>117</sup> It was stated by IDF that they took in six Syrians, including four

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<sup>113</sup> "President Trump Pushing Saudi Arabia To Produce More Oil", WPTV, 01 July 2018.

<https://www.wptv.com/newsy/president-trump-pushing-saudi-arabia-to-produce-more-oil>

<sup>114</sup> Aron Heller, "Prince William visits Israel's Holocaust memorial", *The North Platte Telegraph*, June 26, 2018, [https://www.nptelegraph.com/news/world\\_news/prince-william-visits-israel-s-holocaust-memorial/article\\_823e88d9-4eab-5af6-a7e2-6a74518a5620.html](https://www.nptelegraph.com/news/world_news/prince-william-visits-israel-s-holocaust-memorial/article_823e88d9-4eab-5af6-a7e2-6a74518a5620.html) as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>115</sup> "Prince William said to refuse to meet with Mayor Barkat in Jerusalem", *Times of Israel*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/prince-william-said-to-refuse-to-meet-with-mayor-barkat-in-jerusalem/> as accessed on July 2, 2018; "Prince William says goodbye after 'getting a real feel' for Israel", *Times of Israel*, June 28, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/prince-william-says-goodbye-after-getting-a-real-feel-for-israel/> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>116</sup> Khaled Abu Toameh, "Abbas to Prince William: Palestinians are serious about peace", *The Times of Israel*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Abbas-to-Prince-William-Palestinians-are-serious-about-peace-560984> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>117</sup> Anna Ahronheim & Herb Keinon, "IDF beefs up troops on Golan Heights near Syria", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-beefs-up-troops-on-Golan-Heights-near-Syria-561258> as accessed on July 2, 2018; "IDF reinforcements seen as a message to Assad: Don't enter demilitarized zone", *The Times of Israel*, July 1, 2018,

young children, over the weekend for emergency medical treatment after their families were killed. It has supplied 300 tents and about 60 tons of food, clothing, humanitarian aid and medicine to thousands of internally displaced Syrians who fled heavy bombardment by Syrian government forces.<sup>118</sup>

- **US Israel Investment**

The Israel-US Binational Research and Development (Bird) Foundation announced last week that it will invest \$6.3 million in seven new joint projects between Israeli and American companies in the fields of medical devices, sports tech, and drone security systems. The projects will also have access to private sector funding, which will bring the total amount of all projects to approximately \$19 million. The projects will be reviewed by evaluators from the Israel Innovation Authority and the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).<sup>119</sup>

- **Israel and China**

The 4th China-Israel Investment Summit will be held at the Zhuhai International Convention and Exhibition Center from July 2nd to 3rd. This summit is guided by National Development and Reform Commission of China, Ministry of Regional Cooperation of Israel, Ministry for Social Equality of Israel, and the People's Government of Guangdong Province. It will conduct precise peer-to-peer invitations and dockings, hold Sino-Israeli B2B "one-on-one" docking exchanges, promote the economic and trade cooperation as well as the introduction of investment projects between China and Israel, and propel the healthy and rapid development of emerging industries in Zhuhai.<sup>120</sup>

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 27	Sindh	Police's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested Dr Abdul Rehman, who works at Karachi's Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital, over charges of	Arrest	

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/analyst-idf-reinforcements-a-message-to-assad-dont-enter-demilitarized-zone/> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>118</sup>118<sup>118</sup> Israel reinforces troops, steps up humanitarian aid to Syria", *Beloit Daily News*, July 1, 2018,

<http://www.beloitdailynews.com/article/20180701/AP/307019984> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>119</sup>119 "US-Israel Foundation To Invest Over \$6M In 7 New Joint Projects", *No Camels: Israeli Innovation News*, June 28, 2018,

<http://nocamels.com/2018/06/bird-us-israel-projects/> as accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>120</sup>120 "The 4th China-Israel Investment Summit will begin on July 2<sup>nd</sup>", *Business Insider*, July 1, 2018,

<http://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/the-4th-china-israel-investment-summit-will-begin-on-july-2nd-1027333086> as accessed on July 2, 2018

			“facilitating and treating” militants linked with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Four other suspects were also arrested. CTD Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Junaid Ahmed Shaikh confirmed the arrests. <sup>121</sup>		
2	June 28	Sindh	A ninth-class student, who was in the list of missing persons maintained by the home department of Sindh and for whose recovery the family had filed a petition before the Sindh High Court, was kidnapped and killed by suspects linked with Lyari gangsters in 2016 in a Malir Town of provincial capital Karachi. <sup>122</sup>	1	0
3	June 30	Kabul	United States envoy Alice Wells during a visit to Kabul called on Pakistan to exert more pressure on the militants and bring them to the negotiating table. She said, “Pakistan has an important role to play... but we have not yet seen that sustained and decisive action on the part of Islamabad. It’s going to be very hard for us to achieve our objectives...if Pakistan isn’t working with us.” <sup>123</sup>	Pakistan to “do more”	

## Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 26	US	The head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Tadamichi Yamamoto, called on the Taliban to hold direct talks direct talks with the Afghan government. “The Afghans must talk	UNAMA calls Taliban to directly talk with Afghan government	

<sup>121</sup> Imtiaz Ali, Civil Hospital Karachi doctor held over alleged links with TTP: CTD, *Dawn*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1416448/civil-hospital-karachi-doctor-held-over-alleged-links-with-ttp-ctd>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>122</sup> ‘Missing’ schoolboy was murdered by Lyari gangsters, Rangers claim, *Dawn*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1416673/missing-schoolboy-was-murdered-by-lyari-gangsters-rangers-claim>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>123</sup> US criticises Taliban, Pakistan over peace talks, *Dawn*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1417350/us-criticises-taliban-pakistan-over-peace-talks>, accessed on July 2, 2018

			among themselves to end the conflict and to decide on the future. This clearly requires the Taliban to have direct talks with the Afghan government. We believe that the issue of international forces will inevitably be taken up in the comprehensive context of peace talks, which will determine the future political order for all Afghans,” he said at the UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan in New York. <sup>124</sup>		
2	June 28	Paktika	Azizullah Karwan, Commander of 01 Unit of Special Police Force in Paktika province, was assassinated in an attack by unidentified militants in Makrorayan city of Kabul. Karwan had survived several assassination attempts earlier. <sup>125</sup>	1	0
3	June 30	Nangarhar	ISIS-K militants beheaded at least three people working as attendants at Malikyar High School in Khogyani district. The library of the school was also set on fire. <sup>126</sup>		
4	July 1	Nangarhar	At least 19 people, including 17 Sikhs, were killed and 21 others, including seven Sikhs, were injured in a suicide bombing in Jalalabad city. At the time of the explosion, the Sikhs were on their way to meet Afghan President Ashraf Ghani who is on a provincial tour. <sup>127</sup>	20	20

<sup>124</sup> UNAMA Chief Calls On Taliban To Hold Direct Talks With Kabul, Tolo News, June 26, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/unama-chief-calls-taliban-hold-direct-talks-kabul>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>125</sup> Special Police Commander Assassinated In Kabul, Tolo News, June 28, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/special-police-commander-assassinated-kabul>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>126</sup> ISIS-K militants behead 3 attendants of a school in Nangarhar province, Khaama Press, July 1, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/isis-k-militants-behead-3-attendants-of-a-school-in-nangarhar-province-05472/>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>127</sup> Yousaf Zarifi, Sikhs among 19 killed in Jalalabad suicide attack, Pajhwok Afghan News, July 1, 2018, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/07/01/sikhs-among-19-killed-jalalabad-suicide-attack>, accessed on July 2, 2018

## Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 28	Iraq	The office of Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi announced carrying out death sentences against 12 ISIS convicts over charges of terrorism. A brief statement by Abadi's office said "death sentences were carried out against 12 convicts of terrorism, on Thursday." <sup>128</sup>	6 ISIS convicts get death sentence	
2	July 1	Kirkuk	A suicide bomber targeted a storage site containing ballot boxes from the May parliamentary elections, wounding at least 19 people in Kirkuk. The attacks come days before the recount. The building was damaged by the blast but the ballot boxes were unaffected, Kirkuk Governor Rakan al-Juburi said. <sup>129</sup>	0	19
3	July 1	Baghdad	A total of 76 people were killed and 129 others were injured due to acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflicts during the month of June, casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). <sup>130</sup>	UNAMI Report	
4	July 2	Baghdad	Iraq has begun the construction of a security fence along its border with Syria to stop ISIS militants from crossing into the country. "Ten days ago we started to set up a barbed wire security fence with surveillance towers along the border with Syria," said Anwar Hamid Nayef, border guard spokesman in Anbar province. <sup>131</sup>	Iraq-Syria border fence under construction	

<sup>128</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Death sentences against 12 Islamic State members carried out over terrorism charges: Abadi's office, *Iraqi News*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/death-sentences-against-12-islamic-state-members-carried-out-over-terrorism-charges-abadis-office/>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>129</sup> Suicide Bombing Strikes Ballot Warehouse In Iraq, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/suicide-bombing-strikes-ballot-warehouse-in-iraq/29330277.html>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>130</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Over 200 Iraqis killed, injured due to violence, terrorism during June: UNAMI, *Iraqi News*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/over-200-iraqis-killed-injured-due-to-violence-terrorism-during-june-unami/>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>131</sup> Iraq builds fence along Syria border to block ISIL fighters, *Al Jazeera*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/iraq-builds-fence-syria-border-block-isil-fighters-180701194456186.html>, accessed on July 2, 2018

## Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 30	Derra	More than 160,000 people have fled their homes during a Syrian government assault in Derra as negotiations for rebel capitulation in the region and to avoid clashes that could embroil Jordan and Israel broke down. <sup>132</sup>	160,000 displaced	people
2	July 1	Iraq-Syria border	US-backed Kurdish fighters clash with ISIS militants in eastern Syria in a bid to secure the entire border with Iraq, with support by American and French forces under a campaign named <i>Operation Jazeera Storm</i> . Having captured ISIS stronghold of Dashisha some two weeks ago, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are now launching the 2nd phase of the military operation aiming at ousting the extremist jihadists from the areas they control in the southern countryside of Hasakah. <sup>133</sup>	Kurdish-ISIS clash	
3	July 2	Hmaymim	Russia has accused Turkestani and Uzbek jihadists in northwestern Syria of carrying out the drone attack on the Hmaymim Military Airbase recently.  According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Turkestani and Uzbek members of a jihadist group in the southwestern Idlib city of Jisr Al-Shughour were responsible for carrying out this drone attack on the Hmaymim Airport. <sup>134</sup>	Russian Airbase attack	
4	July 1	Daraa	A string of rebel-held locations in southern Syria passed into regime		

<sup>132</sup> Nabih Bulos, More than 160,000 displaced as violence in southern Syria continues, *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-syria-deraa-20180630-story.html>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>133</sup> Zen Adra, Kurdish forces, ISIS clash in eastern Syria, *Al Masdar News*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/video-kurdish-forces-isis-clash-in-eastern-syria/>, accessed on July 2, 2017

<sup>134</sup> Leith Aboufadel, Russia accuses Turkestani, Uzbek jihadists of attacking Hmaymim Airbase, *Al Masdar News*, July 2, 2016, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/russia-accuses-turkestani-uzbek-jihadists-of-attacking-hmaymim-airbase/>, accessed on July 2, 2018

			<p>control as Bashar al Assad’s forces regained more ground under Russian-brokered deals.</p> <p>Talks involving rebels, local officials and regime ally Russia saw agreements struck for four villages and a strategic town near the border with Jordan, extending regime control to some 60 percent of the southern Daraa province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.<sup>135</sup></p>	Regime reclaims more ground in south Syria
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### International Economic Issues

- **Modi wants AIIB to expand financing by 10 times in next two years**

While addressing the opening ceremony of the third annual meeting of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Mumbai on June 26, 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on AIIB to expand financing by 10 times in next two years. The Prime Minister noted that this would require simpler processing, and faster approval as well as high quality projects and robust project proposals. Speaking on similar lines, AIIB President Jin Liqun said, “A key feature of developing Asia’s success to date is aggressive infrastructure investment. The economy cannot grow and people cannot reach their potential without necessary economic infrastructure.” According to Jin, between 2018 and 2030 Asia’s investment in infrastructure would almost triple to \$2 trillion a year. For this purpose, he added, the required financing would have to come from multiple sources, including domestic and international, public and private sources of capital and hence the partnership between international finance agencies is important to make these investments happen.<sup>136</sup> In this direction, for the first time, AIIB and the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB Group) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a framework for strategic cooperation, including actively seeking to co- finance projects in common areas of operations during the meeting.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Regime reclaims more ground in south Syria: monitor, *TRT World*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.trtworld.com/mea/regime-reclaims-more-ground-in-south-syria-monitor-18599>, accessed on July 2, 2018

<sup>136</sup> “Modi wants AIIB to expand financing by 10 times in next two years”, *BusinessLine*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/aiib-can-play-a-crucial-role-in-raising-resources-modi/article24260361.ece> (accessed on June 27, 2018)

<sup>137</sup> AIIB, “AIIB and IsDB Group Join Forces to Grow Sustainable Infrastructure”, June 26, 2018, [https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2018/20180625\\_002.html](https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2018/20180625_002.html) (accessed on June 26, 2018)

- **RCEP ministerial meeting kicks off in Tokyo, leaders express hope for major progress**

A ministerial meeting to push the 16-nation ASEAN-led trade pact, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), was held on July 1, 2018, as leaders sought to realise their goal of reaching a deal by the end of this year. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told ministers at the start of the meeting, “As a torchbearer of free trade, Japan has been making lots of effort to spread the free, fair and rules-based economic sphere throughout the world. And next in waiting is RCEP.” The RCEP Ministerial gathering - the first to be held outside ASEAN - was co-chaired by Singapore’s Minister of Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and his Japanese counterpart Hiroshige Seko. Both leaders urged the ministers to seize the momentum and called for strong political will to move forward on the agreement to fight the headwinds of protectionism.<sup>138</sup>

- **TPP negotiators to gather next month to discuss expansion**

The 11-member Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact, which does not include the U.S., will prepare for its next stage of expansion when chief negotiators meet in Japan in mid-July to discuss how to usher new members in. From July 17 to 19, TPP-11’s chief negotiators are scheduled to meet in Japan’s picturesque town of Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture, to discuss the process for adding more countries to the agreement after it goes into effect. Thailand, Indonesia and the U.K. are some of the nations that have expressed an interest in joining.<sup>139</sup>

Meanwhile, Japan’s parliament on June 29, 2018, enacted legislation necessary to complete domestic procedures before the ratification of the revised TPP. The passage of the bill through the House of Councillors set the stage for Japan to finalise its domestic arrangements in early July as it still needs to revise relevant government ordinances. The Diet has already agreed to ratify the TPP, which the Cabinet Office says will potentially give Japan’s real gross domestic product a 1.5 percent boost.<sup>140</sup> This makes Japan the second member after Mexico to finalise domestic procedures. The Asia free trade bloc now needs four more member states to complete similar procedures to kick the process into the next stage. TPP-11 takes effect 60 days after six of its 11 members ratify the pact. Of the current members, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have taken steps toward ratification. Singapore and Chile aim to approve the deal by the end of the year. Japan is pressing its

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<sup>138</sup> “RCEP ministerial meeting kicks off in Tokyo, leaders express hope for major progress”, *The Strait Times*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/rcep-ministerial-meeting-kicks-off-in-tokyo-leaders-express-hope-for-major-progress> (accessed on July 2, 2018)

<sup>139</sup> Yasuo Takeuchi, Rintaro Tobita And Yuta Koga “TPP negotiators to gather next month to discuss expansion”, *The Nikkei Asian Review*, June 30, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/TPP-negotiators-to-gather-next-month-to-discuss-expansion2> (accessed on July 2, 2018)

<sup>140</sup> “Japan parliament enacts bill to complete TPP domestic arrangements”. *The Mainichi*, June 29, 2018, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180629/p2g/00m/0dm/055000c> (accessed on July 2, 2018)



fellow signatories - a group that also includes Peru, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia - to bring the pact into effect this year.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Yasuo Takeuchi, Rintaro Tobita And Yuta Koga, “TPP negotiators to gather next month to discuss expansion”, *The Nikkei Asian Review*, June 30, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/TPP-negotiators-to-gather-next-month-to-discuss-expansion2> (accessed on July 2, 2018)