

Weekly Media Updates **(16 – 22 July, 2018)**

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Africa

- **MEA: PM Modi to visit Rwanda, Uganda, S Africa¹**

The Ministry of External Affairs announced on 20 July 2018, Friday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa from July 23-27. S. Tirumurti, secretary (Economic Relations) in the MEA, told reporters at a briefing that the Prime Minister, who will attend the BRICS Summit in South Africa, will first stop in Rwanda for a two-day visit, the first by an Indian prime minister. India is expected to sign a defence cooperation agreement during the visit. Mr. Modi will then visit Uganda from July 24-25, where he will address the Ugandan Parliament apart from holding delegation-level talks. On the final leg of his trip, Mr. Modi will go to South Africa where he will attend the BRICS Summit during which a host of global issues, including those related to international peace and security will be discussed.

- **China's President in Africa for Trade, Defense Talks²**

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Africa for the first leg of a four-nation tour that will take in Senegal, Rwanda, South Africa, and the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius. Xi arrived in Senegal on July 21 for talks expected to focus on deepening economic and military ties. After stopping in Rwanda, Xi will travel to South Africa for a summit of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) that begins on July 25. China is Africa's largest trading partner. In 2017, Beijing opened a military base in Djibouti, on the horn of Africa. Earlier this month, China hosted dozens of African military officials for the first-ever China-Africa defense forum. During his Africa tour, Xi will also be promoting its massive Belt and Road project, which seeks to link China to the world through investments in ports, roads, railways, power plants, and economic zones.

- **First Light Rail Network in West Africa starts operation in Abuja³**

The Abuja Light Rail has begun operation, after undergoing 11 years of construction for 11 years, through four Presidents. The project amounted to a total of \$831 million and was first commissioned in 2007 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo. The construction of the rail started in 2009 but kept being halted due to funds. The Abuja light rail is the first light rail network in West Africa.

The 45 kilometer rail connects the city to the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, and links other parts of the city to ease transportation. The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) handled the project and was to have delivered the first phase of the project last year.

¹ The Hindu, 20 July 2018, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/modi-to-visit-rwanda-uganda-s-africa-next-week-mea/article24469769.ece>

² Radio Prada, 22 July 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/china-s-president-in-africa-for-trade-defense-talks/29381207.html>

³ This is Africa, 20 July 2018, <https://thisisafrika.me/abuja-first-light-rail-network-west-africa/>

- **Ethiopian Airlines makes historic flight to Eritrea⁴**

Ethiopian Airlines conducted the first direct passenger flights between Addis Ababa and Asmara, reconnecting Eritrea and Ethiopia after a 20-year military standoff. The carrier said flight ET0312 to Asmara departed Bole International Airport on Wednesday after a ceremony inaugurating the historic flight. The airline's chief executive Tewolde GebreMariam said at the ceremony that "this day marks a unique event in the history of Ethiopia and Eritrea." Overwhelming demand saw the African aviation giant operate two flights within 15 minutes of each other. 18th July (Wednesday's) development is the latest positive step taken by the neighbouring countries in the last two weeks.

- **South Africa's Trade with China Rockets⁵**

South Africa has become China's largest trading partner in Africa, while China has been the country's biggest trading partner for nine years, says China's President Xi Jinping. "Two-way trade totalled US\$39.17 billion (R525bn) in 2017 - more than 20 times what it was at the start of our diplomatic engagement," he said. "Preliminary statistics show that China's direct investment in South Africa has grown by more than 80 times and exceeded US\$10.2bn in cumulative terms, creating tens of thousands of jobs for local communities and boosting the South African economy." Xi was expected to arrive in Africa 21, 2018 first making stops in Senegal and Rwanda before jetting in for the 10th BRICS summit in Johannesburg starting on July 25, 2018.

- **ANC Rejects State Ownership of All South African Land, President Says⁶**

South Africa's ruling party "rejects the notion" that all the nation's land be owned by the state, President Cyril Ramaphosa said. While the concept of "willing buyer, willing seller" hasn't seen the majority of land being transferred to black citizens who were disenfranchised during white-minority rule under apartheid, the African National Congress wants all people to have similar rights to land, he said in an interview broadcast on Johannesburg-based eNCA on July 16, 2018. "Land is an asset that people want to have in their hands so that they can work this asset," he said.

- **Angola to Secure a US\$500M Afreximbank Loan for Development Projects⁷**

African Import-Export Bank (Afreximbank) will approve US\$500 million in financing to Angola, Samuel Loum head of the bank's credit and analysis division

⁴ Al Jazeera, 18 July 2018 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/direct-ethiopia-eritrea-flight-20-years-takes-180718073307105.html>,

⁵ IOL, July 22, 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/news/south-africas-trade-with-china-rockets-16177203>

⁶ Bloomberg, July 17, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-16/anc-rejects-notion-s-africa-land-be-state-owned-president-says>

⁷ Ecofin Agency, July 16, 2018, <https://www.ecofinagency.com/public-management/1607-38757-angola-to-secure-a-500m-afreximbank-loan-for-development-projects>

said. According to information relayed by *Macauhub*, the resource will mainly be used to develop civil aviation sectors and support the finance sector. Authorities hope the move will boost both sectors' takeoff in a context where the country is diversifying income sources of its oil-dependent economy. Let's note that this amount is the first tranche of a US\$2 billion credit line approved a few months ago and set to run until 2020. It is expected to be disbursed by the end of 2018. To date, the bank revealed, US\$1.9 billion have been granted to the country since 1995.

- **Angola Annuls US\$1.5 Billion Port Deal With Dos Santos-Linked Firm⁸**

A company with ties to Africa's richest woman, Isabel dos Santos, is threatening to seek compensation from the Angolan government after losing concession rights to build a US\$1.5 billion port near the capital, Luanda. The decision to withdraw the contract to build and operate the Barra do Dande port appears to be yet another step by President Joao Lourenco to ease the grip of his predecessor's family on the nation's economy. Lourenco dismissed 45-year-old Isabel dos Santos as chairwoman of state oil producer Sonangol on 2017 before firing her brother, Jose Filomeno, as head of Angola's US\$5 billion sovereign wealth fund. Atlantic Ventures SA obtained the contract a week before Isabel's father, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, stepped down as president in September after ruling for 38 years. The company said the project was to be funded entirely through private investors and would take 24 months to complete.

- **Burundi Boycotts Comesa Summit in Zambia⁹**

The Burundian government has boycotted the 20th summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) that kicked off on July 18, 2018 in the Zambian capital Lusaka, calling it "illegal", Burundian media reported. The Comesa summit was relocated to Lusaka from Burundian capital Bujumbura without sound reasons, Radio Isanganiro quoted Alain Diomedé Nzeyimana, deputy-spokesman of the Burundian president, as saying. "The relocation should have been decided by three presidents of Burundi, Ethiopia and Madagascar, members of the Bureau of the Comesa heads of state summit, but it had not been the case," he said. Nzeyimana underlined that participants in the two-day summit went to Lusaka for their "personal" interests as the Comesa gets over 50 per cent of its funding from the European Union (EU).

- **Chileshe Kapwepwe is New COMESA SG¹⁰**

Former Finance Deputy Minister Chileshe Kapwepwe has been appointed Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretary General. Kapwepwe takes over from long serving Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya who is

⁸ Bloomberg, July 17, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-17/angola-annuls-1-5-billion-port-deal-with-dos-santos-linked-firm>

⁹ The East African, July 19, 2018, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/Burundi-boycotts-Comesa-summit-in-Zambia/2560-4671296-opu7t0/index.html>

¹⁰ Zambia Reports, July 18, 2018, <https://zambiareports.com/2018/07/18/chileshe-kapwepwe-new-comesa-sg/>

Zimbabwean. She becomes the first Zimbabwean and also woman to occupy that position. Kapwepwe is the current chairperson of the ZRA and who served as IMF Alternate Director in Washington.

- **AU Delegation Visits Madagascar to Evaluate Internal Situation¹¹**

A delegation from the African Union (AU) is visiting Madagascar with a view to reinforcing bilateral ties and assessing the internal situation, Prensa Latina reported. The delegation is headed by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma, although other representatives of economic and social sub departments also participate, said the statement released by the AU.

- **Direct Flight to Link Wuhan, Mauritius¹²**

A new direct flight will be launched between Wuhan City in central China's Hubei Province and Mauritius, the provincial government said on July 20, 2018. The flight, run by an Airbus A340-300 aircraft and operated by Air Mauritius, will take off every Saturday. The direct flight will cut travel time between the two places to 11 hours. Passengers traveling to Mauritius from Wuhan previously had to transfer in Hong Kong or Shanghai.

- **Tanzanian President Says His Party will Remain in Power Forever¹³**

Tanzanian president John Magufuli has said that his party will remain “in power forever.” In a speech broadcast live on July 16, 2018 night on radio and television, the Tanzanian head of state said the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, (CCM), is the ruling party and will remain in power forever and those who go against it will have problems. The statement was made at the launch of a training center for party leaders, dedicated to the memory of Julius Nyerere, father of Tanzania’s independence and founder of the CCM.

- **Social Media Tax In Uganda to Stay In Spite of Protests¹⁴**

The Ugandan government on July 17, 2018 said that it would not scrap the recently introduced taxes on social media use and mobile money transfers in spite of public protest. Frank Tumwebaze, Uganda’s minister of information, told newsmen that Cabinet on July 16, 2018 decided that the daily rate of 200 shillings (0.05 U.S. dollars) charged on the usage of social media would stay. The tax will only apply on withdrawals made. The taxes triggered protests led by activists, media

¹¹ Devdiscourse, July 18, 2018, <https://www.devdiscourse.com/Article/72131-au-delegation-visits-madagascar-to-evaluate-internal-situation>

¹² Xinhua Net, July 20, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/20/c_137337992.htm

¹³ Africa News, July 18, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/18/tanzanian-president-says-his-party-will-remain-in-power-forever/>

¹⁴ Punch, July 17, 2018, <http://punchng.com/social-media-tax-in-uganda-to-stay-in-spite-of-protests-minister/>

practitioners and parliamentarians resulting in further consultations between parliament and the government.

- **Eritrea Reopens Embassy in Ethiopia Amid Thaw in Relations¹⁵**

Eritrea has reopened its embassy in Ethiopia in further evidence of a rapid thaw between the two countries that a week ago ended two decades of military stalemate over a border war in which tens of thousands died. In a brief ceremony on July 16, 2018, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki jointly raised the Eritrean flag inside a newly refurbished embassy as a military band played Eritrea's anthem. Ethiopia and Eritrea had expelled each others' envoys at the start of a 1998-2000 border war that killed around 80,000 people.

- **Djibouti Seeks UN to Help Resolve Border Dispute with Eritrea¹⁶**

Djibouti is seeking the assistance of the United Nations (UN) to resolve a border dispute with neighbouring Eritrea. The tiny Horn of Africa nation's ambassador to the UN Mohamed Siad Doualeh in a letter to the Security Council said they wanted help with international mediation with Eritrea. Portions of the letter said Djibouti needs UN intervention "with the aim of facilitating an agreement between them upon a mutually acceptable means of peaceful dispute settlement," stressing that they wanted international settlement or arbitration that would be legally binding. The disputed land in question is the Dumeira mountain and Dumeira island which Djibouti claims is being illegally occupied by Eritrea. "Eritrean forces continue to occupy Djiboutian territory, prisoners of war remain unaccounted for, threats of force continue to emanate from the Eritrean side and the risk of violent confrontation is once again high," Doualeh said stressing that the requested settlement will help avoid any escalation of the crisis.

Central Asia

- **Central Asian Foreign Ministers Emphasize Regional Cooperation**

Foreign Ministers Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan, Erlan Abdyldayev of Kyrgyz Republic, Sirojiddin Mukhriddin of Tajikistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov of Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Berdiniyaz Myatdiyev held meeting on 20-22 July 2018 in the Kyrgyz resort city of Cholpon-Ata and

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, July 16, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/eritrea-reopens-embassy-ethiopia-thaw-relations-180716065621148.html>

¹⁶ Africa New, July 20, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/20/djibouti-seeks-un-to-help-resolve-border-dispute-with-eritrea/>

confirmed their commitment to regional cooperation. They agreed to enhance cooperation to deal with international terrorism and extremism.¹⁷

The joint statement notes ‘the need for further development of cooperation in combating international terrorism and extremism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other challenges and threats to regional security, including within international and regional organizations.’¹⁸ The statement also seeks the promotion of ‘intra-regional investment cooperation’ for business among Central Asian countries. They advocated for the integrated use of water and energy resources in the region.¹⁹

The participants of the meeting welcomed the regional countries’ cooperation and role to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan.²⁰

The next meeting of regional Foreign Ministers will be held in Tajikistan.

China

- **China, UAE agree to lift ties to comprehensive strategic partnership**

China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 20 July decided to upgrade their bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

The decision was made as visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

By upgrading their ties, China and the UAE will strengthen their bilateral in-depth cooperation in various fields, and promote continuous development of bilateral ties on higher levels, in broader areas and at greater depths. Xi reached UAE for a state visit the first by a Chinese head of state in 29 years to the Arab state.²¹

¹⁷ The Times of Central Asia, “Central Asia states confirm commitment to regional cooperation,” 23 July 2018, <https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/20032-central-asia-states-confirm-commitment-to-regional-cooperation>

¹⁸ Central Asian FMs make joint statement, *UzDaily*, 23 July 2018, <https://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-44944.htm>

¹⁹ Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries, *Uzbekistan National News Agency*, 22 July 2018, <http://uza.uz/en/society/joint-statement-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-c-22-07-2018>

²⁰ Central Asian FMs discuss regional coop issues in Cholpon-Ata, *Kazinform*, 22 July 2018, https://www.inform.kz/en/central-asian-fms-discuss-regional-coop-issues-in-cholpon-ata_a3328599

²¹ <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/60772.htm>

- **Chinese president arrives in South Africa for state visit**

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in South Africa for state visit on July 23, 2018. Upon arrival, Xi said that in the past 20 years, China-South Africa relations have developed in an all-round and in-depth way, leaping from a partnership to a strategic partnership and then to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

The two countries have witnessed increasing political mutual trust, practical cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and strategic coordination, Xi said.

At present, China is South Africa's largest trading partner and South Africa is China's largest trading partner in Africa, according to Chinese official statistics.

“I look forward to having an in-depth exchange of views with President Ramaphosa on bilateral relations, the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, as well as international and regional issues of common concern, so as to jointly elevate China-South Africa relations to a new high in the new era and bring greater benefits to our two peoples,” he said. Xi is also scheduled to attend the 10th BRICS summit in Johannesburg on July 25-27.²²

- **Chinese President arrives in Rwanda for state visit**

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Rwanda on July 22 on a state visit, the first by a Chinese head of state to the African country. Xi Jinping expressed expectation to have deep discussions with Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who is also the rotating chairman of the African Union, on China-Rwanda ties, China-Africa cooperation and other regional and international issues of common concern.

Rwanda is the third stop of Xi's first overseas trip after being re-elected Chinese president in March, which has already taken him to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Senegal. Xi will also pay a state visit to South Africa where he is scheduled to attend the 10th BRICS summit, and visit Mauritius during a stopover.²³

- **Chinese, Senegalese presidents pledge to create better future for ties**

Xi Jinping and Senegalese President Macky Sall held talks on July 21 in Dakar, capital city of Senegal. The two sides vowed to create a better future for China-Senegal ties. Xi's visit marks the first state visit to Senegal by a Chinese head of state in nine years.

Xi appreciated Sall for viewing their ties from a strategic perspective, positively responding to the Belt and Road Initiative and strongly supporting China-Africa

²² http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1579703.shtml

²³ “Chinese president arrives in Rwanda for state visit”, *People's Daily*, July 23, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0723/c90000-9483536.html>

cooperation. Xi said that the two sides should carry out closer high-level exchanges and support each other on issues concerning their core interests and major concern.

Sall said the bilateral ties, based on solidarity, mutual trust, mutual respect, win-win and mutual benefit, are strong and satisfactory, said the Senegalese president. He noted that Senegal is ready to strengthen communication and coordination with China in multilateral affairs, and work with China to build a more balanced, just and inclusive global governance system, safeguard multilateralism and oppose protectionism. After their talks, the two leaders witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents, including the one on jointly building the Belt and Road.²⁴

- **First shipment of gas from Yamal LNG project arrives in China**

The first shipment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the Yamal LNG project in the Arctic arrived in Jiangsu Province in eastern China on July 19, 2018. Vladimir Rusanov, a 172,000-cubic-meter LNG carrier, travelled to China via a 10,700-kilometer-long northern sea route, which is about 13,400 kilometers shorter than the traditional eastern shipping route via the Suez Canal and the Strait of Malacca. The new route could cut more than 20 days from the voyage.²⁵

- **China issues white paper on ecological progress on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau**

China issued a white paper titled “Ecological Progress on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau” on July 18, 2018. According to the white paper, China is improving its ecology-related policies and regulations for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to form an increasingly complete system for ensuring ecological progress.²⁶

European Union

- **Europe to set up disembarkation platforms for refugees and migrants**

Talking forward the discussions at the Euro Summit concluded on 28-29 June 2018, the European interior ministers held talks on the setting up of disembarkation platform outside the continent to check the flow of people coming in Europe. The plan is to create disembarkation platforms in North Africa for the refugees and migrants being rescued at sea. “It is a difficult situation but also a great

²⁴ “Chinese, Senegalese presidents pledge to create better future for ties”, *People’s Daily*, July 23, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0723/c90000-9483523.html>

²⁵ “First shipment of gas from Yamal LNG project arrives in China”, *People’s Daily*, July 20, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0720/c90000-9482872.html>.

²⁶ “China issues white paper on ecological progress on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau”, *People’s Daily*, July 19, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0719/c90000-9482442.html>.

opportunity to make progress. One year ago that didn't seem to be possible"²⁷, said Mr Kickl, after a meeting of EU interior ministers in Innsbruck on Thursday. The idea of disembarkation centres was arrived at the June Meeting of the Heads of State of the EU member countries. The details regarding where to establish centres and how to operationalise them are being deliberated by the European interior ministers.

- **EU signs trade deal with Japan**

EU and Japan have signed a bilateral trade deal covering nearly a third of world's GDP and 600 million people. EU Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said the deal underlined the "win-win" solutions offered by free trade.²⁸ The deal will eliminate all tariffs on product traded between Japan and EU. The United States was in talks with Japan and other Asian countries for a wide ranging Trans Pacific Trade agreement but the United States withdrew from the negotiations with Donald Trump becoming the president. The "America First" policy introduced by President Trump has led to imposition on tariffs traded by Japan and EU on goods such as steel. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council said, "Let me say that today is a good day not only for all the Japanese and Europeans but for all reasonable people of this world who believe in mutual respect and cooperation ...We are putting in place the largest bilateral trade deal ever. This is an act of enormous strategic importance for the rules-based international order, at a time when some are questioning this order."²⁹

- **EU and Japan 'cement' relationship against Trump's protectionism**

The European Union and Japan signed a long-awaited commercial trade deal on Tuesday (17 July), in an emphatic statement meant to counter US President Donald Trump's attacks against free trade and the rules-based international order. The deal is the biggest trade deal ever signed by the EU and will remove almost all the €1 billion worth of duties paid every year by EU companies that export to Japan. "This is an act of enormous strategic importance for the rules-based international order, at a time when some are questioning this order," European Council President Donald Tusk told reporters after the deal was signed. In addition to the economic impact, the EU's top officials stressed the political relevance of the deal signed to "cement the Japanese-European friendship forever", Tusk said. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the deal "shows the world the unshaken political will of Japan and the EU to lead the world as the champions of free trade at a time when protectionism has spread." Besides the Economic Partnership Agreement to create the largest free trade area in the planet, covering 600 million people, both sides signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement. This new framework would bolster cooperation in global challenges such as cybercrime, disaster management, energy security, climate change, or to address

²⁷ Financial Times, 12 July 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/f5b23254-85e3-11e8-96dd-fa565ec55929>

²⁸ BBC News, 17 July 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44857317>

²⁹ The Guardian, 17 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/17/japan-eu-trade-deal-light-in-darkness-amid-trumps-protectionism>

the ageing of societies. In addition, both sides agreed to recognise each other's data protection systems as 'equivalent' (reciprocal adequacy).³⁰

- **EU-China summit boosts negotiations towards an investment agreement**

The European Union and China agreed to enhance market access and investment and to speed up negotiations over geographical indications during a leaders' summit in Beijing on Monday (16 July). But EU leaders indicated they wanted to see China's promises translated into action. China "will significantly raise its market access and reduce the tariffs rates for goods that are needed for Chinese companies and consumers," Li Keqiang, the premier of the State Council of China told the press after the one-day EU-China summit. Europe's investment in China is going down as investors worry about regulatory and administrative burden for foreign companies in the country. Monday's EU and China 20th summit aimed to move forward on how to lessen them. The EU and China are speeding up preparatory work for their bilateral summit in Beijing in mid-July. The two sides are trying to agree on a joint position despite differences on trade issues including subsidies and market access.³¹

- **Juncker pledges 'tit for tat' measures against US**

The EU will respond to any provocation coming from the US on trade or any other matter, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned on Wednesday (18 July) ahead of his trip to Washington to meet Donald Trump next week. EU-US relations have been deteriorating since Trump's arrival in the White House and do not seem likely to improve as the president named the EU among US "foes". Juncker will meet Trump on 25 July to try to ease tensions between the partners due to the ongoing trade dispute. In the meantime, the EU will stick with countermeasures adopted in response to US tariffs on European steel and aluminium. On Trump's attempts to break EU unity, Juncker insisted that "the EU single market is indivisible and the Commission is in charge of the articulation of the EU trade policy". Therefore, "any efforts to divide the Europeans are in vain", the President said. Trump has threatened to impose a 20% levy on European cars, which would significantly affect European industries, particularly in Germany. The EU has threatened the US with countermeasures worth \$294 billion if the Trump administration imposes further tariffs on European cars as a result of the ongoing investigation into whether they pose a possible threat to national security".³²

³⁰ Euractiv, 17 July 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/eu-and-japan-cement-relationship-against-trumps-protectionism/>

³¹ Euractiv, 16 July 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/eu-china-summit-boost-negotiations-towards-an-investment-agreement/>

³² Euractiv, 18 July 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/juncker-pledges-tit-for-tat-measures-against-us/>

United Kingdom

- **Barnier raises question over the UK's White Paper**

It has been a full week of negotiations in Brussels and Britain's new Brexit blueprint has not provided all the answers the EU was looking for. According to what the EU's chief negotiator on the UK's withdrawal from the bloc, Michel Barnier, told journalists after he briefed the EU-27 EU foreign affairs ministers, key questions about future economic ties with the EU remain. According to the bloc's negotiating chief and what he has taken from his first meeting with his new UK counterpart after, Dominic Raab, revealed that Britain shared the EU's desire for an ambitious trading relationship and a security partnership. Barnier, however, wondered whether the UK's proposals are workable and if they would create more red tape. Barnier also said he would ask the British government whether the blueprint met the EU's guidelines, including on the movement of goods, capital, people, and technology, and if the draft supported the integrity of the EU single market and the autonomy of European decision-making.³³

- **No-deal Brexit would harm EU countries as well as UK, warns IMF**

Britain crashing out of the EU without a deal would inflict significant economic pain across Europe, leaving the region without any winners, the International Monetary Fund has warned. As the new Brexit secretary, Dominic Raab warned Europe to prepare for a no-deal exit, the IMF said such an outcome would hurt the UK most but would also have damaging economic consequences for Ireland and other EU nations. In its annual health check for the euro area, the Washington-based fund said economic growth across the 27 remaining EU states would fall by as much as 1.5% by 2030, if Britain falls back on World Trade Organisation rules for its trading relationship with the EU after leaving next year. While economic output for the UK would drop by more than twice that amount – wiping out almost 4% of GDP – Ireland would suffer by almost as much as a result of its strong ties to Britain and shared border. The IMF said the long-run impact from a hard Brexit would be spread across the EU as a result of the economic and financial ties spanning the region, which have grown closer by about 40% over the past quarter century. The UK ranks among the EU's three largest trading partners, accounting for 13% of trade in goods and services. There are also complex supply chain links between companies across the bloc. The Fund warned that the lack of progress between Brussels and Westminster in Brexit talks has raised the risk of a disruptive exit. It said: "The strength of euro area-UK integration implies that there would be no Brexit winners."³⁴

³³ New Europe, 20 July 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/barnier-raises-question-uks-white-paper/>

³⁴ The Guardian, 19 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jul/19/no-deal-brexit-would-harm-all-european-countries-warns-imf>

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Japan, EU sign the largest trade deal**

On July 17, Japan and the European Union signed a landmark deal that will eliminate nearly all tariffs on products they trade. The ambitious pact signed in Tokyo runs counter to U.S. President Donald Trump's moves to hike tariffs on imports from many U.S. trading partners. It covers a third of the global economy and markets of more than 600 million people."The EU and Japan showed an undeterred determination to lead the world as flag-bearers for free trade," Abe said at a joint news conference with European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. The deal eliminates about 99 percent of the tariffs on Japanese goods sold to the EU. About 94 percent of the tariffs on European exports to Japan will be lifted, rising to 99 percent in the future. The difference reflects exceptions on such products as rice, which enjoys strong political protection from imports in Japan.³⁵

- **Japanese Diet passes Upper House expansion bill**

On July 18, 2018, Japanese parliament, the Diet passed a bill sponsored by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling party, to increase the number of seats in the Upper House or House of Councillors for the first time in nearly five decades. The approval of the bill by a majority vote in the Lower House, which is controlled by the ruling coalition, will add six seats to the House of Councillors amid efforts to narrow what is known as the vote-value disparity. Opposition parties, however, have criticized the Liberal Democratic Party for prioritizing "partisan interests" above rectifying the gap in the weight of a single vote between urban and rural constituencies. Despite strong objections from opposition lawmakers, the bill cleared the House of Councillors last week and a Lower House panel on Tuesday. The passage of the bill will increase the number of seats in the Upper House by six from the current 242 in the run-up to the chamber's next election, set for the summer of 2019.³⁶

- **Three-way summit possible in September: South Korea FM**

On July 19, 2018, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha stated that South and North Korea and the U.S. could meet on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September."We cannot rule out the possibility," Kang said. There had been expectations that a declaration ending the war could be made among the Koreans and the U.S. at the UN General Assembly. However, the U.S. has

³⁵ "Japan, EU sign trade deal to eliminate nearly all tariffs", Asahi Shimbun, July 18, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201807180009.html

³⁶ "Diet passes controversial bill adding seats to Japan's Upper House for first time in nearly half a century", The Japan Times, July 18, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/18/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-passes-controversial-bill-adding-seats-japans-upper-house-first-time-nearly-half-century/#.W1VbF9IzaM9>

maintained that the war will not be ended unless North Korea takes concrete measures toward denuclearization Kang made the statement during a three-day visit to London to meet with her U.K. counterpart, and to preside over a meeting with Korean ambassadors to European countries. This was her first visit to the U.K. since she assumed her post in May last year.³⁷

- **‘No rush’ for North Korea talks: Says Trump**

On July 16, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump said he is in “no rush” for denuclearization negotiations with North Korea in an interview following his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. Trump told Fox News’ Sean Hannity following the summit in Helsinki that the Russian president “wants to be very helpful with North Korea.” “We’re doing well with North Korea, we have time,” added Trump on the ongoing talk with Pyongyang. “There’s no rush, it has been going on for many years. “I think a lot of good things are happening,” Trump said on progress following North Korea’s halting of nuclear and missile tests.³⁸

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines)

- **President Duterte meeting with PM Mahathir**

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte during his visit to Malaysia met with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on July 16, at the PM’s office in Perdana Putra. President Duterte, was accompanied by Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter S. Cayetano and Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia Charles C. Jose and National Security Adviser Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr. Also present were Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Malaysian Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu and Chief of Defence Forces, Gen Tan Sri Zulkifli Zainal Abidin. According to the Statement released by the PM’s Office, the meeting was held in a warm and constructive atmosphere symbolising the close ties shared by Malaysia and The Philippines. The statement said both Duterte and Dr Mahathir were pleased with the current state of bilateral relations between both countries which was described as at its best level. Both leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral cooperation particularly on defence and security, regional and global issues of common interest. Both leaders were also pleased with the commitment shown by both countries to curb the spread of extremism and terrorism in the region. Further, Malaysia has also expressed support towards peace and development in Mindanao in the southern Philippines.³⁹

³⁷ "Three-way summit possible in September: FM", The Korea Times, July 19, 2018, www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/07/356_252523.html

³⁸ "Trump is in ‘no rush’ for North Korea talks", Korea JoongAng Daily, July 18, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3050743

³⁹“Philippine President Duterte meets with Mahathir”, *Bernama.com*, July 16, 2018, <http://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=1480799>, accessed on July 17, 2018.

- **Thailand presents its Commitment to the agreements on peaceful use of Nuclear Energy**

Mr. Songsak Saicheua, Thailand's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), met with Mr. Yukiya Amano, IAEA Director General to present Thailand's instrument of accession and the instrument of ratification to the amendment to the following important international agreements on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. These include:

The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM);

Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM);

The Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS);

The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

According to a press release by Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 17, Thailand plans to continue on this trajectory and become party to other nuclear-related international agreements, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT). The press release also stated that Thailand, as a member of the international community, has always cooperated with other countries to establish standards of control for the peaceful use of nuclear energy that are transparent, effective, and truly ensure peaceful benefits.⁴⁰

- **US to Assist in Philippines Counterterrorism Efforts**

The United States government has vowed to provide \$26.5 million to assist the Philippines' counterterrorism efforts. According to the US Embassy the assistance will be given to Philippine law enforcement agencies over the next two years. The assistance will include training, equipment, and other support to build comprehensive law enforcement capacity within a rule of law framework to deny terrorist operations, funding, and movement. The aid from the US will also cover investigations and prosecutions on terrorism cases, as well as counter radicalization to violence and violent extremism. This would not be the first time that the US provided support to the Duterte administration's law enforcement efforts. In 2016 the US government shifted its assistance away from law

⁴⁰ "Press Release : Thailand Becomes Party to International Agreements on Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*, July 17, 2018, <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/91766-Thailand-Becomes-Party-to-International-Agreements.html>, accessed on July 18, 2018.

enforcement towards maritime security, following reports of extrajudicial killings in the conduct of the Duterte administration's crackdown against illegal drugs.⁴¹

Myanmar

- **Over 2000 Kachin villagers flee KIA-military battles**

More than 2000 local people have fled their homes amid fresh fighting between the Tatmadaw (military) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Hpakant and Tanai townships of Kachin State, according to a statement by Knut Ostby, the United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar. The statement said the UN agency has been particularly alarmed by reports of civilian casualties and the plight of communities affected by fighting in the two townships, while other areas have been gravely affected as well. This includes possibly up to 2000 people who reportedly have been displaced from Awng Lawt, Sut Ring Yang and Sut Ra villages in Tanai⁴².

- **Lack of knowledge about NVC card holding up repatriation: minister**

Refugees in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh want to return to Myanmar but cannot because they have not yet undergone the national verification process, according to Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Win Myat Aye. U Win Myat Aye, who led a delegation to Bangladesh to visit refugee camps last week and met with the district commissioner, said many of the refugees have not yet filled out forms with the personal details the government needs to verify their citizenship⁴³.

- **Family of whistleblowing Myanmar cop evicted after testimony**

The family of a Myanmar policeman who testified in court that two Reuters reporters had been set up was evicted from their police housing a day after his evidence, his wife said. Deputy police Major Moe Yan Naing, a prosecution witness, surprised the Yangon courtroom on Friday by describing how his colleagues were ordered by a senior officer to "get" reporter Wa Lone by handing him sensitive documents at a meeting. The 32-year-old Myanmar journalist and his colleague Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, have been detained since they were arrested in December and accused of possessing classified papers⁴⁴.

⁴¹“US pledges \$26.5M to Philippines for counterterrorism”, *Phil Star Global*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/07/19/1834905/us-pledges-265m-philippines-counterterrorism>, accessed on July 19, 2018.

⁴² Over 2000 Kachin villagers flee KIA-military battles, 23 April 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/over-2000-kachin-villagers-flee-kia-military-battles.html>

⁴³ Lack of knowledge about NVC card holding up repatriation: minister, 20 April 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/lack-knowledge-about-nvc-card-holding-repatriation-minister.html>

⁴⁴ Family of whistleblowing Myanmar cop evicted after testimony, 23 April 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/family-whistleblowing-myanmar-cop-evicted-after-testimony>

- **Government pardons nearly 8500 prisoners, including student activists' killer**

The Presidential Office announced on Tuesday that 8541 prisoners, including 51 foreigners, were released from prisons across the country. According to the AAPP (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners) only 36 of those freed were political prisoners. Only one female was among those released by decree of Myanmar President U Win Myint on Tuesday, to mark Myanmar New Year's Day. Most of the inmates released were those imprisoned under drug-related cases. They numbered over 6000⁴⁵.

- **Dozens of Rohingya come ashore in Indonesia**

About 80 Rohingya in a wooden boat arrived in Indonesia on 20th April, officials said, the latest batch of the vulnerable minority to come ashore in the world's biggest Muslim majority nation. The group landed in Aceh province on Sumatra island, just weeks after dozens of the persecuted Muslim minority from Myanmar came ashore in neighbouring Malaysia⁴⁶.

- **UN Security Council to Make a Two-Day Visit to Myanmar**

A team of 15 permanent representatives from the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council will visit Myanmar for two days early next month after being invited to examine the situation in Rakhine State by the Myanmar government⁴⁷.

North America

Canada

- **Canada's Biggest Public Pension Fund To Step Up Investment In India**

Canada's biggest public pension scheme sees India as its main focus for investment in Asia as the country pours money into infrastructure development. Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, which manages Canada's national pension fund, has invested nearly C\$7 billion (\$5.30 billion) in India since entering the market a decade ago and is looking for opportunities to invest in Indian infrastructure, power and real estate projects. PM Modi's government plans to boost the economy and create more jobs by tripling public spending on infrastructure to 5.97 trillion rupees (\$87 billion) in the financial year ending next March, from levels seen in

⁴⁵ Government pardons nearly 8500 prisoners, including student activists' killer, 19 April 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-pardons-nearly-8500-prisoners-including-student-activists-killer.html>

⁴⁶ Dozens of Rohingya come ashore in Indonesia, 21 April 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/dozens-rohingya-come-ashore-indonesia>

⁴⁷ UN Security Council to Make a Two-Day Visit to Myanmar, 23 April 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/un-security-council-make-two-day-visit-myanmar.html>

2014/15, as India heads towards elections by next May (2019). Some of CPPIB's recent deals have been with private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank and real estate developer Phoenix Mills Ltd. The fund would also be interested in the consumer sector, she said, but did not specify further. CPPIB currently owns shares in some leading fast moving consumer goods companies like ITC Ltd, Hindustan Unilever Ltd and Britannia Industries Ltd. The fund also expects more deals with logistics platform IndoSpace Core, its joint venture with Indian property developer IndoSpace.⁴⁸

- **Politicians from India's Punjab state reportedly detained at Ottawa airport, deported**

Kultar Singh Sandhwan and Amarjit Singh Sandoa, both MLAs with the Aam Admi Party (AAP) in Punjab, were detained and questioned by immigration officials upon arrival at Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport, according to Kamal Garg, a B.C.-based spokesperson for the AAP. The MLAs were in Ottawa for a family event, but were unable to satisfy Canadian authorities as to the purpose of their visit. One of the MLAs may have mentioned to Canadian immigration officials that he was in the country for political meetings, the Indian Express reported, citing a senior AAP leader. AAP leaders in Punjab have previously been accused of sympathizing with the Khalistan (Sikh separatist) movement. The party's top MLA in Punjab caused a stir last month when he expressed support for a referendum on the creation of Khalistan. The Khalistan issue was a major flashpoint of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's troubled trip to India in February, with some Indian leaders alleging that members of the Liberal Party were cozying up to Sikh separatist elements. The AAP's Vancouver-based spokesperson denied that the deportation was politically motivated, saying neither MLA has spoken out on Khalistan.⁴⁹

- **Canada and Mexico optimistic about NAFTA talks despite trade tensions at G20**

The finance ministers for Mexico and Canada said they were optimistic about NAFTA talks with the United States, even as trade tensions spurred by U.S. tariffs dominated the G20 meeting of world economic leaders in Argentina. Mexico Finance Minister Jose Antonio Gonzalez Anaya said there were still several chapters of NAFTA that had not yet been closed, but that the renegotiation could be completed before incoming President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador takes office on Dec. 1 after his landslide victory in the election. The long-running renegotiation, launched by U.S. President Donald Trump last year, (2017) has taken on a renewed sense of urgency since Lopez Obrador's victory. The leftist former mayor of Mexico City has said he plans to maintain NAFTA, and his allies have said the transition team will take part in talks. Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum

⁴⁸ Reuters, "Canada's Biggest Public Pension Fund To Step Up Investment In India," <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/canadas-biggest-public-pension-fund-to-step-up-investment-in-india-1886365>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁴⁹ Rahul Kalvapalle, "Politicians from India's Punjab state reportedly detained at Ottawa airport, deported," <https://globalnews.ca/news/4346291/punjab-aap-mlas-detained-ottawa-airport/> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

imports were still casting a shadow on NAFTA talks, Morneau said. Ire over the measures from the European Union, Japan and others have isolated U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin at the G20 meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors. Morneau said that he sensed “optimism” from Mnuchin about moving forward on NAFTA, and that Mnuchin had assured him that the administration was committed to a trilateral deal despite Trump’s suggestion that the United States could move forward with separate bilateral deals.⁵⁰

The United States

- **India-US 2+2 dialogue to be held in Delhi on September 6**

The inaugural ‘two-plus-two’ dialogue between India and the US will take place here on September 6, the external affairs ministry said on Friday. The strategic top-level talks, agreed upon by US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June last year, were put off by the US twice this year. The US statement said Pompeo and Mattis “look forward to meeting with their Indian counterparts to discuss strengthening strategic, security and defence cooperation”, as the US and India jointly address challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Since June last year, the two countries have tried to schedule the dialogue several times. From the last quarter of 2017, it was pushed to April 18-19, 2018 (in Washington), but it had to be postponed as Pompeo was not yet confirmed Secretary of State. It was then rescheduled for July 6, but was put off again as Pompeo had to travel to North Korea. The bilateral ties have been under stress this year for a number of reasons— from Iranian oil imports and Russian defence supplies to visa issues and trade protectionism.⁵¹

- **U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis seeks sanction waiver for some countries**

U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis has sought waivers from sanctions on some countries making a transition from their military dependence on Russia, asserting that it will allow them to build closer security ties with America and strengthen U.S.’ allies in key regions. Mr. Mattis’ statement did not mention India, but for all practical purposes he has been seeking waivers for India from the punitive Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions ACT or CAATSA, under which sanctions kick off on countries that purchase significant military equipment from Russia. Though the act targets Russia, it is having its unintended consequences on India, which is planning to buy five S-400 Triumf air defence

⁵⁰ Luc Cohen And David Lawder, “Canada and Mexico optimistic about NAFTA talks despite trade tensions at G20,” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-canada-and-mexico-optimistic-about-nafta-talks-despite-trade-tensions/>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁵¹ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “India-US 2+2 dialogue to be held in Delhi on September 6,” <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-us-22-dialogue-to-be-held-in-delhi-on-september-6/articleshow/65077454.cms>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

systems for around \$ 4.5 billion from Russia which U.S. officials say could be considered as a significant military purchase. Mr. Mattis, who recently wrote a letter on the matter to chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Senator John McCain, demanded that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo be empowered with the authority of issuing waivers to certain countries when it comes to the U.S. sanctions on Russia under CAATSA.⁵²

- **US, Russia diplomats discuss Helsinki meeting, ties**

The US Department of State has said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov to discuss Helsinki meeting fruits and issues over bilateral and regional concerns. According to a statement issued by State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert on Sunday, the phone conversation took place on Saturday when the two foreign ministers discussed a broad range of issues, "some of which were following up from the meeting between President Trump and President Putin" in Finland on July 16. The two also discussed how to implement ideas on counterterrorism process coordination and the mutual goal of establishing business-to-business dialogue between private, non-governmentally controlled entities in the two countries, another deliverable of the Trump-Putin meeting. Pompeo and Lavrov also discussed "the need for Russia to provide equal diplomatic access to the US, at a level that is fair and reciprocal". US White House spokesperson Sarah Sanders said that Putin will be invited to Washington in the autumn, and "those discussions are already underway". Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov said response that that his country is open to a new meeting between the two presidents. Trump has been widely attacked after his meeting with Putin on July 16, due to his reconciliatory remarks that many saw as a sign to side with Moscow against US intelligence community's conclusion that Russia meddled in the 2016 US elections.⁵³

- **Pompeo: US Unafraid to Attack Iranian Regime an the 'Highest Level'**

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says the government in Iran has become a nightmare for the Iranian people. He added that United States is not afraid to attack the Iranian regime at its highest level as he urged all U.S. allies to join in financially suppressing the government. He said the Trump administration will not stay silent against what he calls the numerous crimes and abuses of the Iranian government. This includes kleptocracy, with Pompeo saying those at the top have squandered the people's wealth on terrorism and theft and a zeal to spread the Islamic revolution to other nations. He said the goal of the United States is to see

⁵² PTI, "U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis seeks sanction waiver for some countries," <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-defence-secretary-jim-mattis-seeks-sanction-waiver-for-some-countries/article24488867.ece>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁵³ IANS, "US, Russia diplomats discuss Helsinki meeting, ties," https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/us-russia-diplomats-discuss-helsinki-meeting-ties-118072300049_1.html, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

Iranians inside their own country live the same kind of life Iranians in the United States enjoy.⁵⁴

Mexico

- **In Letter to Trump, Mexico's President-Elect Seeks 'Common Path'**

In a conciliatory letter to President Donald Trump, Mexico's president-elect, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said he is ready to start a new stage in U.S.-Mexico relations and seek a "common path" on trade, migration, economic development and security. The communication was made public just days before the U.S., Mexico and Canada are set to restart talks to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. A representative of Mr. López Obrador will join the Mexican party in Washington, D.C. Mr. López Obrador told Mr. Trump "it is worth making an effort to conclude the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement." Prolonging uncertainty could slow down investment in the medium and long term, which could hinder Mr. López Obrador's plan to spur economic growth through more infrastructure projects. The letter, which includes a detailed description of the incoming Mexican administration's platform, also proposes creating a development plan that includes Central American countries, in an effort to stem the flow of migrants heading north. Mr. López Obrador proposed that 75% of available economic resources for the plan be used to create jobs in Mexico and Central America, and 25% to strengthen border security.⁵⁵

- **Mexico's next government to weigh legalizing drugs**

Mexican President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has given his future interior minister "carte blanche" to explore the possibility of legalizing drugs in a bid to curb violent crime. Olga Sanchez Cordero, a former Supreme Court judge tapped to lead the interior ministry, drew applause when she made the comment at a university seminar on addressing brutal violence fuelled by Mexico's drug cartels, the biggest suppliers to US consumers of cocaine, heroin and other narcotics. It was one of her first public events since Lopez Obrador, a leftist widely known as "AMLO", won a landslide victory in Mexico's July 1 election with a promise of sweeping change in a country fed up with crime and corruption. The future interior minister said she also plans to propose a bill in Congress -- where Lopez Obrador's coalition won a majority in both houses -- for a "transitional justice system" It would include reduced sentences for criminals who help shed light on unsolved crimes, such as the tens of thousands of missing persons cases in

⁵⁴ VOA, "Pompeo: US Unafraid to Attack Iranian Regime on the 'Highest Level'," <https://www.voanews.com/a/pompeo-to-urge-iranians-abroad-to-support-anti-regime-protests/4493506.html>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁵⁵ Juan Montes, "In Letter to Trump, Mexico's President-Elect Seeks 'Common Path'," <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-letter-to-trump-mexicos-president-elect-seeks-common-path-1532285296> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

Mexico; truth commissions similar to those used in post-conflict situations; special investigative commissions; and a reparations program for victims.⁵⁶

- **Mexico president-elect's party fined over campaign finance**

Mexico's electoral authority has fined the party of President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador \$10m (£7.7m) for breaking campaign finance laws. The National Electoral Institute (INE) imposed the fine on the Morena party over a trust it had created for victims of September's devastating earthquake. INE said it had found "profound irregularities" in the way the trust was set up and the money handled. Morena said it would appeal against the fine, the highest imposed on any party. The party won a majority in Mexico's Congress and its candidate, Mr López Obrador, widely known by his initials as Amlo, won the presidency in the general election on 1 July.

Morena and Amlo swept to power on a promise to battle Mexico's high levels of corruption. The investigation came after a rival party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) accused Morena of using the trust to channel public funds to its electoral campaign. INE dismissed that accusation but found that the fund was "opaque" and broke electoral rules which ban parties from giving money directly to members of the public.⁵⁷

Latin America and Caribbean

Argentina

- **Argentina economy: Protest over unpopular IMF loan**

Thousands have taken to the streets in Argentina to make their voices heard during a visit by Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who is in Buenos Aires attending a meeting of G20 finance ministers. They are protesting austerity measures by the government of President Mauricio Macri. They fear the economic situation will deteriorate further as the government tries to fulfil the terms of the \$50bn loan it took from the IMF.⁵⁸

- **G-20 finance ministers meet in Argentina, cite growing trade tension**

Delegates at the Group of 20 meeting of finance ministers and central bank chiefs on Friday afternoon began the delicate task of addressing growing trade tensions

⁵⁶ AFP, "Mexico's next government to weigh legalizing drugs," <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/mexicos-next-government-to-weigh-legalizing-drugs/articleshow/65034213.cms>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁵⁷ BBC News, "Mexico president-elect's party fined over campaign finance," <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-44884993>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁵⁸ Teresa Bo, Argentina economy: Protest over unpopular IMF loan," <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/argentina-economy-protest-unpopular-imf-loan-180722110042951.html>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

without upsetting US President Donald Trump. Finance ministers and central bankers in the Argentine capital are trying their best to seek common ground after the US withdrew from the final statement at the Group of Seven summit in Canada last month. Talks are on track to produce a consensus document, the person said, cautioning that last-minute roadblocks can always appear.⁵⁹

Brazil

- **High-polling rightist candidate joins Brazil president race**

Far-right congressman Jair Bolsonaro formally announced his candidacy for Brazil's presidential election Sunday, joining a race in which he is currently polling second after jailed ex-President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, who will likely be barred from running. Thousands of supporters wearing Bolsonaro shirts showed up at the rally cheering, honking air horns, waving flags. Many mimicked guns with their fingers - a hand sign that the former military officer has made popular. Bolsonaro told the crowd he would change the status quo if he won the election. He spoke about helping police to crack down on crime, filling his Cabinet with military officers and taking Brazil out of the Paris climate accord. The candidate has not nominated a vice president to run with him yet.⁶⁰

Chile

- **Argentina and Chile reaffirm their binational energy integration**

A fruitful meeting was held in Santiago between the energy ministers of Chile and Argentina, Susana Jiménez and Javier Iguacel, respectively, who reaffirmed the political priority of both governments with energy integration. The focus of the meeting was on measures to implement the Agreement Protocol for the export, import, commercialization and transportation of electricity and natural gas signed last April by Presidents Sebastián Piñera and Mauricio Macri. The agreement establishes that these operations can be carried out provided they do not compromise the internal supply, do not affect the safety of the operation, nor the quality and reliability of the transportation and distribution services of natural gas and electricity of each country. The first of this protocol is that it will allow international operations of electric power and natural gas, without the need to make a compensation or return of the energy resource.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Bloomberg, "G-20 finance ministers meet in Argentina, cite growing trade tension," https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/g-20-finance-ministers-meet-in-argentina-cite-growing-trade-tension-118072100731_1.html, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁶⁰ The Associate Press, "High-polling rightist candidate joins Brazil president race," <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/high-polling-rightist-candidate-joins-brazil-president-race-56746578> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁶¹ ---, "Argentina and Chile reaffirm their binational energy integration," <https://www.bnamericas.com/en/news/electricpower/argentina-and-chile-reaffirm-their-binational-energy-integration> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

Colombia

- **FARC members join Colombia's Congress**

Ten former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia have officially become legislators in Colombia's Congress-- as part of the peace deal between the Colombian government and the disbanded guerrilla group, five former members took seats in the Senate and another five joined the House of Representatives. The group's Spanish acronym, FARC, now applies to the name of the political party: the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force. The 10 members say they'll do everything possible to comply with the peace deal signed in Havana, Cuba, in 2016. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize later that year for pursuing the agreement. Santos, whose term ends in two weeks, urged political leaders to defend peace. FARC's presence in Congress has created a divide among many Colombian lawmakers and citizens. As part of the peace deal, FARC members agreed to lay down their arms, leave their jungle camps and re-enter Colombian society. The government agreed to give them 10 seats in Congress until 2026. As long as the new Congress does not make changes to the conditions of the agreement, the new legislators will be able to debate policy proposals but will not have the right to vote.⁶²

Nicaragua

- **Unrest grips Nicaragua: Protesters demand president's ouster as he denounces 'armed conspiracy'**

After security forces moved against demonstrators following months of anti-government protests, President Daniel Ortega publicly declared victory against an opposition determined to end his more than decade-long tenure as leader of this Central American nation. About 300 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in Nicaragua since large-scale protests erupted in April, according to human rights groups and opposition leaders. Ortega, in turn, accused the opposition of killing dozens of police officers and government supporters. Ortega blamed an "armed conspiracy" financed by "outside forces" — a reference to Washington — as being behind the demonstrations. Activists and the State Department have rejected the accusation and condemned government violence against protesters. The imposing presence of heavily armed, plainclothes security men — known as "paramilitaries" and often donning ski masks — has not stopped the opposition from taking to the streets.⁶³

⁶² Maria Cartaya, "FARC members join Colombia's Congress," <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/21/americas/farc-members-join-colombias-congress/index.html> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁶³ Patrick J. McDonnell, "Unrest grips Nicaragua: Protesters demand president's ouster as he denounces 'armed conspiracy'," <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-nicaragua-unrest-20180722-story.html>, Accessed on 23 July 2018.

Russia

- **Russia and India**

On 20 July, Russian Ambassador to India Nikolay Kudashev said that US sanctions against Russian companies have no major impact on the Russian-Indian defense industry cooperation, including negotiations on the supply of Russia's S-400 Triumf air defense systems to the South Asian country. He said that "[Russia and India] remain the closest partners, and all our defense industry agreements are being implemented. It concerns the purchase of S-400s and the joint production of Ka-226 helicopters, and many other projects. Do the sanctions create difficulties? Yes, they do, of a certain kind. But, frankly speaking, these difficulties are surmountable."⁶⁴

Atomenergomash, a machine-building division of Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation manufactured has shipped out key set of equipment for the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP). The equipment includes Moisture Separator Reheaters and High Pressure Heaters for KKNPP Unit 3 as well as spare parts for the scheduled maintenance of Reactor Coolant Pumps at KKNPP Units 1&2. Moisture Separator Reheaters, manufactured by ZiO-Podolsk, a subsidiary of Atomenergomash, are designed to remove water condensed from the process steam to maximize thermal efficiency and reliability of the low pressure turbine.⁶⁵

- **Inside Russia**

On 19 July, Russian President Vladimir Putin took part in a meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives of Russia at international organisations and associations, where he outlined the main goals of Russian diplomacy such as in world order, Syria, Iran, Korean Peninsula, Ukraine etc.⁶⁶

The European Court of Human Rights ruled on 17 July that Russia failed to properly investigate the murder of investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, whose stories exposed the corruption and brutality of security forces in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "US sanctions have no major impact on Indo-Russian defense ties: Envoy", *Economic Times*, July 20, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-sanctions-have-no-major-impact-on-indo-russian-defense-ties-envoy/articleshow/65069545.cms> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

⁶⁵Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Russia ships key equipment for Kudankulam Nuclear plant", *Economic Times*, July 20, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/russia-ships-key-equipment-for-kudankulam-nuclear-plant/articleshow/65068594.cms> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

⁶⁶"Meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives of Russia", *President of Russia*, July 19, 2018. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58037> Accessed on 23 July 2018.

⁶⁷Anatoly Kurmanaev, "Russia Criticized for Handling of Anna Politkovskaya Probe", *The Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-criticized-for-handling-of-anna-politkovskaya-probe-1531828270> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

- **Russia and the US**

On 19 July, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein called Russian interference in the 2016 US election "one tree in a growing forest" of malign cyber activity when he unveiled the Justice Department's Cyber-Digital Task Force report in his speech at the Aspen Security Forum. He warned of a continued threat and the report highlighted five types of operations the government must counter: cyberattacks on election infrastructure such as voter registration databases and voting machines; targeted attacks on political organizations, campaigns and public officials; covert operations to help or hurt campaigns; the spread of disinformation on social media; and the use of lobbyists, foreign media and other organizations to influence lawmakers and the public. "Russia's intelligence services conducted cyber operations against both major US political parties in 2016, and the recent indictment of Russian intelligence officers alleges a systematic effort to leak stolen campaign information," Rosenstein said.⁶⁸

Russian intelligence operatives attempted to hack into the online accounts of staffers on three congressional campaigns in the upcoming midterm elections, a Microsoft executive said on 19 July, marking the first public acknowledgment of a Russian attack on a 2018 race.⁶⁹

The FBI on 21 July released documents related to the surveillance of former Trump presidential campaign adviser Carter Page as part of a probe into whether he conspired with the Russian government to undermine the 2016 U.S. election. "The FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian Government," the surveillance application filed in October 2016 said. The documents released include applications and renewal warrants filed in 2017 after Trump took office. Page has denied being an agent of the Russian government and has not been charged with any crime.⁷⁰

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Afghan government rejection of direct talks between US And Taliban**

On 17 July 2018, Afghan officials clearly refuted any idea of direct peace talks between the US and the Taliban. Stressing on Afghan owned and Afghan led peace

⁶⁸Mark Morales, "Rosenstein: Russian attack on 2016 election 'one tree in a growing forest' of cyber activity", *CNN*, July 19, 2018. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/19/politics/rosenstein-cyber-activity-russia/index.html> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

⁶⁹David Shortell, "Russians attempted to infiltrate three 2018 campaigns, Microsoft says", *CNN*, July 21, 2018. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/20/politics/russia-2018-campaign-hack-microsoft/index.html> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

⁷⁰"The FBI Believed Trump Adviser Carter Page was Recruited by Russia", *Newsweek*, July 22, 2018. <https://www.newsweek.com/fbi-believed-trump-adviser-carter-page-was-recruited-russia-1036211> Accessed on July 23, 2018.

talks Omid Maisam, deputy spokesman of CEO Abdullah Abdullah called for a facilitator role of US in this regard. The growing rift between leaders in National Unity Government is one of the reasons behind US recent policy shift towards Taliban as reported by many political analysts.⁷¹ Meanwhile, the Commander General John Nicholson, NATO-led Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan on 17 July 2018 said that his comments with regard to US's willingness to hold direct peace talks with the Taliban were misrepresented. He particularly emphasized that US and other international partners would play the role of facilitators in achieving Afghan led peace process.⁷²

- **Pakistan, Iran Committed to Promote Peace in Afghanistan**

Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain had discussions with Chief of General Staff of Armed Forces of Iran Major General Muhammad Bagheri on 16 July 2018 and together they emphasized on promoting peace and stability of Afghanistan. While reviewing various facets of Iran Pakistan relation, both leaders underscored the importance Gwadar Port project increasing connectivity between both nations. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) highlighted Afghan owned, Afghan led peace and reconciliation process and held that military cooperation between Iran and Pakistan should be enhanced.⁷³

- **Holding of Anti-Taliban Drills near Afghan Border by Russia and Tajikistan**

Amidst of increasing drug dealers on borders, both Russia and Tajikistan on 17 July 2018 commenced joint military exercises on Tajik-Afghan borders. With the aim of thwarting Taliban influence from the region, nearly 10,000 troops initiated drills near an area bordering Afghan province of Badakhshan. It has been observed that since 2014 on account of US partial withdrawal of troops from Afghan region, Russia and Tajikistan deepened their military exercises.⁷⁴

- **Discussion of Peace Process between UK Ambassador and Afghan National Security Advisor**

On 20 July 2018, the British ambassador Sir Nicholas Kay met with Afghan National Security Advisor (NSA) Mohammad Hanif Atmar. Both leaders discussed Afghan led peace process. During the meeting, recalling Britain as Afghanistan's strategic partner, the National Security Advisor appreciated cooperation and commitment

⁷¹ Tolo News, 17 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/govt-rejects-possibility-talks-between-us-and-taliban>

⁷² "U.S. General Says Remarks on Afghan Peace Talks 'Mischaracterized'", Daily Outlook Afghanistan, Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 18 July 2018, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21381

⁷³ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 18 July 2018, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21379

⁷⁴ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 19 July 2018, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21388

of British troops for strengthening Afghan forces. British ambassador Sir Nicholas Kay praised recent move of Afghan government of holding ceasefire during Eid and promised UK's full commitment towards Afghan process.⁷⁵

- **Pakistan's Foreign Secretary arrive in Kabul for APAPPS Inaugural Session**

A Pakistani delegation consisting of 28 officials led by the Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua visited Kabul on 22 July 2018. The delegation would participate the inaugural function of Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) that would positively enhance bilateral relations between both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Tehmina Janjua also said that with the assistance from US, Pakistan would provide all possible assistance to achieve long term political settlement in Afghanistan.⁷⁶

नेपाल

नेपाल सरकार ने उप्रेती का नाम भारत के राजदूत के लिए प्रस्तुत किया:

नेपाल सरकार ने भूतपूर्व चुनाव आयुक्त नीलकांत उप्रेती का नाम भारत के राजदूत के लिए प्रस्तुत किया है राजनयिक में भारत .नियुक्ति काफी महत्वपूर्ण मानी जाती है और संसदीय चुनावों के समय दीप कुमार उपाध्याय के इस्तीफे के बाद यह पद रिक्त चल रहा है लेकिन . (8) 245 अनुच्छेद के संविधानके अनुसार यदि कोई व्यक्ति एक बार चुनाव आयुक्त के पद पर आसीन हो चुका हो तब वह अन्य किसी सरकारी पद पर आसीन नहीं हो सकता.⁷⁷

नेपाली कांग्रेस का देश व्यापी प्रदर्शन:

प्रमुख विपक्षी दल नेपाली कांग्रेस ने सरकार के निरंकुश वादी तरीके के विरुद्ध देश भर में विरोध प्रदर्शन करने की घोषणा की है के सरकार कि कहा ने निधि बिम्लेंद्र उपाध्यक्ष के पार्टी . सर्वाधिकारवादीचरित्र के चलते हमारा दल .करेगा प्रदर्शन व्यापी देश से जुलाई 19⁷⁸

अब प्रधानमन्त्री खुद डॉ के सी के साथ बात करेंगे:

२४ दिनों से आमरण अनशन पर रहे डा खूद ओली केपीशर्मा प्रधानमन्त्री साथ के केसी गोविन्द . वार्ता करने के लिए तैयार हुए हैं. लेकिन इसके लिए प्रधानमन्त्री ओली की तरफ से एक शर्त को

⁷⁵ Tolo News, 21 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/atmar-visits-uk-ambassador-discusses-peace-process>

⁷⁶ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 22 July 2018, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21411

⁷⁷ "Upreti named envoy to India", The Kathmandu Post, 17 July 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-07-17>

⁷⁸ "Congress announces nationwide protest", The Kathmandu Post, 18 July 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-07-18>

आगे बढ़ाया गया है। वह है- तत्काल के लिए अनशन स्थगित करके स्वास्थ्य लाभ प्राप्त करना होगा, उसके बाद प्रधानमंत्री ओली खूद डासा के केसी थ वार्ता करने के लिए तैयार हैं। यह समाचार आज प्रकाशित नागरिक दैनिक में हैं। प्रधानमंत्री ओली को कहना है कि हर वक्त वार्ता टोली के सदस्य परिवर्तन हो जाते हैं, आधिकारिक वार्ता टोली कौन हैं, सरकार को पता नहीं है। इसीलिए प्रधानमंत्री खूद डा कर वार्ता साथ के केसी समस्या समाधान करना चाहते हैं। प्रधानमंत्री की ओर से उक्त सन्देश डा.है गया पहुँचाया तक केसी। लेकिन अभी तक डा ने केसी बार इसके में कोई भी जवाफ नहीं दिए हैं। स्मरणीय है, इससे पहले सरकार ने शिक्षा सचिव खगराज बराल के नेतृत्व में वार्ता टोली गठन किया था, लेकिन केसी ने अस्वीकार किया और कहा कि वार्ता में मन्त्री स्तरीय प्रतिनिधि होना चाहिए.⁷⁹

Pakistan

- **Pakistan and Iran**

Pakistan and Iran on July 16th pledged to further deepen their military cooperation during Iranian Chief of General Staff Maj Gen Mohammad Bagheri's three day visit to Pakistan. Gen Bajwa underscored the need for intensification of military-to-military cooperation and noted that such cooperation would have a "positive impact on peace and security in the region".⁸⁰

- **The Case of Kulbhushan Yadav**

Pakistan on July 17th filed its second counter-memorial in the Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague. Dr Fareha Bugti, a Foreign Ministry official serving on the India desk, submitted the dossier at the ICJ. She was accompanied by Hague-based Pakistani diplomat Waseem Shahzad.⁸¹

- **PMSS Ship Commissioned**

The first 1,500-tonne Pakistan Maritime Security Ship 'Kashmir' — which is the fourth in a series of six multipurpose patrol vessels (MPVs) — was commissioned in the Chinese city of Guangzhou on July 20th. The 94-metre MPV, PMSS Kashmir displaces 1,550 tonnes of water and is equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry, communication and navigational equipment. The ship is propelled by two advanced diesel engines to achieve a maximum speed of 26 knots and has an endurance of 3,500 nautical miles. It is capable of undertaking multifarious

⁷⁹ "अब प्रधानमन्त्री खुद डॉ के सी के साथ बात करेंगे," हिमालिनी 23, जुलाई, 2018

<http://www.himalini.com> .

⁸⁰ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan, Iran vow to improve military ties", *Dawn*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1420539> as accessed on July 23, 2018

⁸¹ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan files counter-memorial in Jadhav case in ICJ", *Dawn*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1420782> as accessed on July 23, 2018

missions such as surveillance, policing, anti-smuggling and anti-poaching operations, security and law-enforcement patrolling in maritime zones, pollution monitoring and control and search and rescue operations while operating independently or as part of a task force in a multi-threat environment for extended duration at sea due to having that capability of replenishment and shipboard helicopter operations. The vessel was built in Huangpu Wenchong Shipyard, Guangzhou under a contract for the construction of 6 x maritime patrol vessels with M/s CSTC of China in June 2015. As per the contract, 4 x MPVs were to be constructed in China — three at the Xijaing Shipyard, Liuzhou, and one at the Huangpu Wenchong Shipyard, Guangzhou.⁸²

- **Pakistan Elections, Militants and US**

The United States showed its concern about the participation of Lashkar-e-Taiba-affiliated (LeT) individuals in the July 25 elections and has conveyed its concern to Islamabad as well, says the US State Department on July 21st. However, the department has noted with satisfaction that the Pakistan Election Commission had rejected the registration of Milli Muslim League (MML) in June, citing its linkages to LeT, an internationally-sanctioned terrorist organisation.⁸³ However, the department noted with satisfaction that the Pakistan Election Commission had rejected the registration of Milli Muslim League (MML) in June, “citing its linkages to LeT, an internationally-sanctioned terrorist organisation”.⁸⁴

- **Challenges to CPEC**

A number of road projects related to the \$52 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are said to be in doldrums as the National Highway Authority (NHA) faces financial crisis. Contractors have stopped work on several CPEC projects after their cheques worth over Rs5 billion had bounced a couple of days ago. The projects which have been hit by the situation include Hakla-Dera Ismail Khan, Western Route of CPEC and all sections of Karachi-Lahore Motorway (KLM).⁸⁵

⁸² “PMSS ship ‘Kashmir’ commissioned in China”, *Dawn*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1421534> as accessed on July 23, 2018

⁸³ Anwar Iqbal, “US voices concern about LeT affiliates contesting elections”, *Dawn*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1421529> as accessed on July 23, 2018

⁸⁴ Anwar Iqbal, “US voices concern about LeT affiliates contesting elections”, *Dawn*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1421529> as accessed on July 23, 2018

⁸⁵ Syed Irfan Raza, “Many CPEC projects in doldrums as NHA faces financial crisis”, *Dawn*, July 23, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1421877/many-cpec-projects-in-doldrums-as-nha-faces-financial-crisis> as accessed on July 23, 2018

Indian Ocean/ India's Maritime Affairs

- **The fourth round of India- Japan Maritime Affairs Dialogue held in New Delhi**

The fourth round of India- Japan Maritime Affairs Dialogue was held in New Delhi on July 19, 2018. During the dialogue both of the countries discussed issue related to Indo- Pacific region and issues related to maritime security.⁸⁶ The Indian delegation was led by Sri Pankaj Sharma, Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, while the Japanese side was led by Ambassador Kansuke Nagaoka, Policy Planning and International Security Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan.⁸⁷

"The two sides exchanged views on various topics of mutual interest including the Indo-Pacific region, maritime security, cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Search and Rescue (SAR) and discussed ways and means of further strengthening the bilateral cooperation in these areas,"⁸⁸ Times of India quoted the MEA statement.

- **India reaffirmed its commitment to promote the blue economy**

India reaffirmed its commitment to promote the blue economy. Addressing the second Asean-India Blue Economy Workshop on July 18, 2018 in New Delhi, Preeti Saran, secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, said, "ASEAN-India cooperation in the field of blue economy has tremendous scope."⁸⁹ "Through the efficient harnessing of blue resources, including through use of new and emerging technologies, the issues of poverty, food insecurity, unemployment and ecological imbalance can be effectively tackled,"⁹⁰ she said. "Research and innovations in marine biotechnology, higher access to seabed resources, investment in marine ICT and proper integration of coastal tourism and other services can play a crucial role in injecting stimulus to create additional economic activities for both ASEAN and India,"⁹¹ further she added.

- **India ASEAN to strengthen Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation**

⁸⁶ India, Japan hold Maritime Affairs Dialogue, July 19, 2018, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/65060598.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=txt&utm_campaign=cppst (Accessed on 22 July 2018)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ India reaffirms commitment to promoting blue economy, July 19, 2018, <https://www.cnbcv18.com/economy/india-reaffirms-commitment-to-promoting-blue-economy-337441.htm> (Accessed on 22 July 2018)

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

India urged ASEAN member countries to boost regional maritime cooperation during Delhi Dialogue which held on 19-20 July, 2018 in New Delhi.⁹² External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj, speaking at the 10th edition of Delhi Dialogue, said, "The Summit recognized that India and ASEAN, as maritime partners and neighbours, must work together to ensure security and sustainability of oceans, seas and waterways."⁹³ "India's interests in the Indo-Pacific are vast and our engagement is deep. Our vision, in one word, is SAGAR which stands for – Security and Growth for All in the Region. We have a comprehensive agenda of regional cooperation with both IORA and ASEAN,"⁹⁴ further she said. Arguing the importance of rule based maritime order, she said, "The Indo-Pacific must be a free, open and an inclusive region. We must follow a common, rules-based order, that takes into account the equality of all, irrespective of size and strength. It should allow use of common spaces on sea and in the air."⁹⁵

Sri Lanka

- **India assists in sanitation sector project**

India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 19th July on a sanitation sector project under which 3400 toilets would be constructed in Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka. The objective of the project is to enhance public health and hygiene in Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka, and it will be executed through a grant of SLR 300 million from the Government of India. This project is part of Government of India's continued efforts to assist and cooperate with Government of Sri Lanka in people-oriented development projects. India's overall commitment of development assistance to Sri Lanka stands at a total of around US\$ 2.9 billion, out of which US\$ 545 million is pure grant assistance.⁹⁶

- **Sri Lankan refugees return from Tamil Nadu**

A group of Sri Lankan refugees who had been residing in Tamil Nadu for over 25 years returned to the country on 18th July. The group is to be resettled in their original lands. The groups consist of 34 refugees which include 20 women. According to reports, the group returned to Sri Lanka on their own accord. The refugees had been repatriated through the joint efforts of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the ministry of rehabilitation and

⁹² India urges ASEAN to strengthen Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation, July 20, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Location/South-Asia/India/India-urges-ASEAN-to-strengthen-Indo-Pacific-maritime-cooperation> (Accessed on July 23, 2018)

⁹³ Remarks by External Affairs Minister at Delhi Dialogue X (July 19, 2018), http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/30138/Remarks_by_External_Affairs_Minister_at_Delhi_Dialogue_X_July_19_2018 (Accessed on July 23, 2018)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "India assists in sanitation sector project", News.lk, 19 July 2018, <https://news.lk/news/business/item/21460-india-assists-in-sanitation-sector-project>.

resettlement. The group is believed to have fled the country on fishing vessels through Mannar.⁹⁷

- **SL-Japan to boost military ties to ensure maritime safety**

Sri Lanka and Japan had agreed to enhance collaboration between the Japan Maritime Self Defence Forces and the Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Air Force and Sri Lanka Coast Guard, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said on 20th July. The delegations of the two nations discussed about military ties and maritime safety at the 3rd Sri Lanka –Japan Dialogue on Maritime Security, Safety and Oceanic Issues which was held on July 19 at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Colombo.⁹⁸

- **Modi seeks closer ties with Sri Lanka after launching ambulance service**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 21st July sought closer ties with Sri Lanka after launching an ambulance service in Jaffna. Modi joined Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe through a live video conferencing from New Delhi for the launch of the island-wide expansion of the 1990 Suwaseriya Emergency Ambulance Service in Jaffna.⁹⁹

- **Giving Mattala Airport to India dangerous: JVP**

Transferring the Mattala International Airport to India was a threat to the national security and the sovereignty of the country as airports played an important part in domestic and international wars, Chief Opposition Whip and JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake said. He told Parliament that transferring of the ownership of the airport just because it was a loss-making venture should be thoroughly considered.¹⁰⁰

- **Death penalty: EU writes to President raising concerns**

The delegation of the European Union in Sri Lanka as well as the diplomatic missions of Canada and Norway have written to President Maithripala Sirisena to verify the worrying information in the public domain about the intention of the Sri Lankan government to resume implementing the death penalty after a moratorium of more than 40 years.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ "Sri Lankan refugees return from Tamil Nadu, News.lk, 19 July 2018", <https://news.lk/news/political-current-affairs/item/21457-sri-lankan-refugees-return-from-tamil-nadu>.

⁹⁸ "SL-Japan to boost military ties to ensure maritime safety", Daily Mirror, 21 July 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/-SL-Japan-to-boost-military-ties-to-ensure-maritime-safety-153010.html>.

⁹⁹ "Modi seeks closer ties with Sri Lanka after launching ambulance service", Colombo Gazette, 21 July 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/07/21/modi-seeks-closer-ties-with-sri-lanka-after-launching-ambulance-service/>.

¹⁰⁰ "Giving Mattala Airport to India dangerous: JVP", Daily Mirror, 19 July 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Giving-Mattala-Airport-to-India-dangerous-JVP-152942.html>.

¹⁰¹ "Death penalty: EU writes to President raising concerns", Daily Mirror, 16 July 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Death-penalty-EU-writes-to-President-raising-concerns-152761.html>.

Maldives

- **Details emerge of EU sanctions on Maldives**

The European Union has urged the Maldives to allow the “normal function” of parliament and the judiciary, as details emerged of the sanctions to be imposed over the worsening political and rights situation. An EU framework adopted on 16th July says member countries can freeze funds and impose travel bans on individuals and entities that undermine the rule of law or obstruct an inclusive political solution in the Maldives. There will also be sanctions on those involved in planning, directing or committing serious human rights violations abuses.¹⁰²

- **EU sanctions will not affect me: Pres Yameen**

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has stated that the presidency would not face any snags if the European Union (EU) implements sanctions against the Maldives. In a speech delivered at Haa Alif Kela during an official visit to inaugurate the island's sewerage system, President Yameen stated that EU sanctions will majorly affect business by halting all Maldivian businesses operated outside of the country. “They [EU] will not come to arrest the president, therefore, personally or rank wise, I will not be affected [by the sanctions]” stated President Yameen.¹⁰³

- **No conducive environment to hold talks with govt: opposition candidate**

The current environment is not conducive to hold government-opposition talks, declared the joint opposition's presidential candidate, Hinnavaru MP Ibrahim "Ibu" Mohamed Solih. Speaking to the press after his re-registration for the upcoming election at Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP)'s main hub in capital Male, MP Ibu confirmed that he has been invited to represent the opposition in talks with the government, but refuted rumours that the coalition had accepted the invitation. “The circumstances are still the same. All our political leaders are behind bars, and thus we cannot place trust in what the government has to say,” he said.¹⁰⁴

- **17000 people has been obstructed from voting - voting right cannot be ensured without changing the commission : Opposition coalition**

Opposition coalition have stated that the Elections Commission has obstructed the voting right of 17000 people and that the right to vote cannot be ensured without changing the commission. Speaking to the press today the opposition coalition stated that the commission should guarantee that they can work impartially before

¹⁰² “Details emerge of EU sanctions on Maldives”, Maldives Independent, 19 July 2018, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/details-emerge-of-eu-sanctions-on-maldives-139429>.

¹⁰³ “U sanctions will not affect me: Pres Yameen”, Mihaaru Online, 19 July 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6559>.

¹⁰⁴ “No conducive environment to hold talks with govt: opposition candidate”, Mihaaru Online, 18 July 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6550>.

talking about international best practices. They said that the commission seems to be working to elect a certain candidate.¹⁰⁵

- **If cooperating with the investigation is confessing to a crime that I did not commit, then it cannot be done – Maumoon**

Lawyer of former President Maumoon Hameed, responded to President Yameen after he said that President Maumoon would be at home if he handed over his mobile phone to the police as requested. Maumoon Hameed said that the Defence Minister Adam Shareef Umar met President Maumoon as an envoy of the president and requested to cooperating with the investigation team. However he said that Maumoon told him that if cooperating with the investigation team is confessing to a crime that he did not commit, he would not do it.¹⁰⁶

West Asia

Iraq and GCC

- **Iraqi election-winner Sairoon suspend negotiations over formation of new government¹⁰⁷**

The leader of Sairoon and influential Shia cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, has suspended his coalition's talks over the formation of a new Iraqi government. Mohammed Rashk, a senior member of Sairoon, told *Baghdad Today News* that it is not possible to begin political talks and assign posts while Iraqis have legitimate demands that the government must fulfill. They would only resume talks on the formation of the new government when the people's demands, including the provision of job opportunities and better services, are met.

For three weeks, people have taken to the streets in several provinces in southern Iraq to demand better public services and an end to unemployment. In response, the Iraqi government imposed strict measures, including blocking access to the internet and social media and deploying the army and counter-terrorism units into provinces where people are protesting.

- **Kuwait Provides fuel to Iraq to overcome electricity crisis**

Kuwait has decided to provide the Iraqi government with fuel to operate the suspended power plants in southern Iraq as protests continue across the country.

¹⁰⁵ "17000 people has been obstructed from voting - voting right cannot be ensured without changing the commission : Opposition coalition", Maidhu, 18 July 2018, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10599>.

¹⁰⁶ "f cooperating with the investigation is confessing to a crime that I did not commit, then it cannot be done – Maumoon", Maidhu, 19 July 2018, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10605>.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/ba997475-5a49-4f55-806e-9cca0409dd96>

The Ministry of Oil announced that “a tanker loaded with 30,000 cubic liters would arrive at port Basra in southern Iraq,” noting that more shipments would arrive in the coming days. On Friday, Iraq’s Ministry of Electricity announced that Kuwait would supply it with gasoline to operate the stalled power plants. In a statement on its website on Thursday, the Electricity Ministry said it was able to increase provision of electricity to 20 hours per day in Baghdad and 12 hours per day in other provinces. Last week, the Ministry of Electricity revealed that Iran cut electricity supplies to Iraq due to unpaid bills. The Iranian move has exacerbated the country’s power crisis creating widespread anger and demonstrations across several provinces in southern Iraq.

Turkey

- **Turkey lifts two-year-old state of emergency**

Turkey lifted its two-year-old state of emergency as of 19 July 2018 1 a.m. local time. The government declared a state of emergency for the first time on July 20, 2016 following a deadly coup attempt orchestrated by the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) and its U.S.-based leader Fetullah Gulen which left 251 people martyred and nearly 2,200 injured.¹⁰⁸

- **EU reaction mixed as Turkey lifts state of emergency**

Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) on Sunday defended President Trump's actions at the NATO summit in Brussels last week, saying that the gatherings have always been prone to "drama." Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press," Sullivan said that the summit resulted in clear progress for the alliance, including reaffirmed commitments by member states to increase their defense spending to at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁰⁹

- **Turkey and the Netherlands resume full diplomatic ties**

Turkey and the Netherlands have agreed to restore relations strained after a diplomatic row last year. In a joint statement on 20 July 2018, the two countries stated their "readiness for normalisation" and that the countries are resuming full diplomatic ties. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Dutch counterpart Stef Blok met on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Brussels last week.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Turkey lifts two-year-old state of emergency, *Anadolu Agency*, 19 July 2018

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-lifts-two-year-old-state-of-emergency/1208011>

¹⁰⁹ EU reaction mixed as Turkey lifts state of emergency, *Hurriyat Daily News*, 19 July 2018

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-reaction-mixed-as-turkey-lifts-state-of-emergency-134751>

¹¹⁰ Turkey and the Netherlands resume full diplomatic ties, *Aljazeera*, 20 July 2018.

- **Manbij Military Council allegedly shuns Turkey for Syrian gov't**

City authorities and the military council of Syria's Manbij would like to transfer it under the control of the Syrian government army after Kurdish militants' withdrawal, Al Watan newspaper reported on 21 July 2018 citing its sources. "The military council and the majority of residents consider Turkey an occupying country that wants to oust the Kurds from their territory, as it was done in Afrin, so they want the return of the Syrian authorities in the city," the source said.¹¹¹

- **Germany drops economic sanctions against Turkey**

Germany has lifted economic sanctions on Turkey and relaxed its travel advice to the country, German officials said, after Ankara ended its two-year state of emergency. A 1.5 billion-euro (\$1.7bn) limit on export guarantees to Turkey would not be renewed this 2018, Germany's economy ministry told the AFP news agency, confirming an earlier report by the newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.¹¹²

Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Arabia, Kuwait sign minutes to establish coordination council**

Minister of Foreign Affairs Adel Bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir and Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah signed the minutes for establishing a coordination council between the Kingdom and Kuwait, Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

During the meeting on 18 July 2018, they reviewed the historical relations between the two friendly countries, discussed regional and international issues as well as subjects of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officials.¹¹³

- **Saudi Arabia signs deal for 5 Spanish-built warships**

Saudi Arabian Military Industries says it has signed a deal with Spanish state-owned shipbuilder Navantia to establish a joint venture to supply five warships. The announcement 19 July 2018 formalizes a plan reached in April when the crown

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/turkey-netherlands-resume-full-diplomatic-ties-180720142759987.html>

¹¹¹ Manbij Military Council allegedly shuns Turkey for Syrian gov't, *AMN*, 21 July 2018.

<https://www.alsadarnews.com/article/manbij-military-council-allegedly-shuns-turkey-for-syrian-govt/>

¹¹² Germany drops economic sanctions against Turkey, *Aljazeera*, 23 July 2018.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/germany-drops-economic-sanctions-turkey-180722082521419.html>

¹¹³ Saudi Arabia, Kuwait sign minutes to establish coordination council, *Saudi Gazette*, 18 July 2018.

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/539335/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Arabia-Kuwait-sign-minutes-to-establish-coordination-council>

prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, visited Spain and met with then-Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and Defense Minister Maria Dolores de Cospedal. At that time the agreement was valued at 2 billion euros (\$2.3 billion).¹¹⁴

- **Saudi Arabia pushes for haj season void of politics**

With Saudi Arabia already welcoming the first pilgrims ahead of the estimated August 19 official start, this year's haj season has begun. Coordinating a religious gathering in which millions of Muslims from around the world assemble in Mecca to perform one of the five pillars of Islam is a daunting task with year-round preparations to ensure that infrastructure, organisation and safety requirements are in place.¹¹⁵

- **Prince Khalid: Iran backs global terror**

Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States Prince Khalid Bin Salman lambasted Iran's support of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, and said that Riyadh was and will always be focused on countering terrorism. In a series of tweets on 21 July 2018, Prince Khalid said Iran's relationship with Al-Qaeda was nothing recent, but dated back to the 1990's.¹¹⁶

- **Saudi Arabia Faces Problems Selling Extra Oil after Deal with US: Reports**

US President Donald Trump has persuaded Saudi Arabia's king to increase oil production to make up for a shortfall from Iran, Venezuela and Libya. Quick to ramp up oil output under pressure from the US, Saudi Arabia has discovered that global markets might not need it, at least for now, *The Independent* wrote, citing financial experts. In May, Riyadh's crude oil production spiked to a three-year high in response to Washington's demand that the oil-rich kingdom help keep gasoline prices in check and fill the supply gap when US sanctions on Iran enter into effect in November. However, the Saudis are now hard put selling their extra oil, privately admitting that they may have been too quick in jacking up oil output.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Saudi Arabia signs deal for 5 Spanish-built warships, *Tampa Bay Times*, 19 July 2018. https://www.tampabay.com/saudi-arabia-signs-deal-for--spanish-built-warships-ap_world51ac8175f5a648309ee6ee04cc1bca88

¹¹⁵ Saudi Arabia pushes for haj season void of politics, *The Arab Weekly*, 22 July 2018. <https://theArabweekly.com/saudi-arabia-pushes-haj-season-void-politics>

¹¹⁶ Prince Khalid: Iran backs global terror *Saudi Gazette*, 23 July 2018

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/539585/SAUDI-ARABIA/Prince-Khalid-Iran-backs-global-terror>

¹¹⁷ Saudi Arabia Faces Problems Selling Extra Oil After Deal with US: Reports, *Al Manar*, 23 July 2018

<https://english.almanar.com.lb/545426>

Israel

- **Trump Putin Summit**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on July 16th in Helsinki, said he and US President Donald Trump agreed on securing Israel's border with Syria, in accordance with the 1974 disengagement of forces deal following the Yom Kippur War. Putin stated that this would “restore quiet to the Golan Height, and restore the ceasefire.” Trump placed a special emphasis on maintaining Israel's security. Trump noted that “President Putin also is helping Israel.”¹¹⁸ However, as per Israeli military sources, in the area of Daraa, which is 30kms from the Israeli Syria border, cooperation between the Russians army, Syrian forces, Hezbollah, and pro-Iranian militias has been witnessed.¹¹⁹

- **Hamas and Israel**

Hamas on July 16th warned Israel of “dangerous consequences” over its fresh restrictions at a commercial crossing with the Gaza Strip, as the administrators of the Rafah passage linking Egypt to the Palestinian enclave announced its crossing would also be shuttered in both directions on July 17th. No reason was given for the closure of the crossing into Egypt, which has been open since late May.¹²⁰ It may be noted here that Israel's political leadership has reportedly instructed the army on July 17th to prepare for a military offensive in the Gaza Strip, to be initiated if the launching of incendiary devices from the Hamas-run coastal enclave into Israeli territory continues. It has chosen July 20th as a deadline for the flaming kite and balloon launches to cease. If this does not happen, Israel may decide it has no choice but to embark on a military campaign in the Strip.¹²¹ However, as per Palestinian media reports, published on July 18th, Hamas intends to gradually decrease the launching of incendiary kites from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel.¹²²

¹¹⁸ “Putin says he and Trump agreed on securing Israel's border with Syria”, *The Times of Israel*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/putin-says-he-and-trump-agreed-on-securing-israels-border-with-syria/> as accessed on July 17, 2018

¹¹⁹ Avi Issacharoff, Israel says Russia working with pro-Iranian militias near Syria-Israel border, *The Times of Israel*, July 16, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-russia-working-with-pro-iranian-militias-near-syria-israel-border/> as accessed on July 18, 2018

¹²⁰ Adam Rasgon, Hamas warns Israel of ‘dangerous consequences’ over Gaza crossing closure, *The Times of Israel*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-warns-israel-of-dangerous-consequences-over-gaza-crossing-closure/> as accessed on July 17, 2018

¹²¹ Army told to prepare for large-scale military operation in Gaza — report, *The Times of Israel*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/army-told-to-prepare-for-large-scale-military-operation-in-gaza-report/> as accessed on July 18, 2018

¹²² Adam Rasgon, Hamas said to agree to gradually decrease flaming kite attacks on Israel, *Times of Israel*, July 18, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-said-to-agree-to-halt-flaming-kite-attacks-on-israel/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=3154853928-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_07_18_12_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-3154853928-55556173 as accessed on July 20, 2018

- **Israel EU war on Crime**

Israel on July 18th signed an agreement with the European Union's law enforcement agency to strengthen cooperation in the joint fight against terrorism and organized crime. The agreement will enable the Investigations and Intelligence Division of the Israel National Police to advance its capabilities to deal in the best way possible with new threats in the field of organized crime, cybercrime exploited by international criminal and terrorist elements, fighting terrorism in its various forms, and crime that crosses borders in the field of social economies.¹²³

- **Visit of PM Hungary to Israel**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban made a two day official visit to Israel (July 19 and 20). While meeting Prime Minister Netanyahu, he stated that in Hungary who declares himself a Jew can feel safe in Hungary. He added that Hungary has zero tolerance for anti-Semitic statements.¹²⁴ He expressed his concern on rising neo-fascism while meeting President Reuven Rivlin on July 19th. Rivlin said that because Israel is far away from many Jewish communities it appreciates the positive attitudes of foreign governments. In this context he was particularly appreciative of the attitude of the Hungarian government and Orban as its leader.¹²⁵

- **Nation State Law and the Arab World**

The Knesset on 18th 19th July passed into law the nation-state bill that for the first time enshrines Israel as "the national home of the Jewish people" in its quasi-constitutional Basic Laws.¹²⁶ Saudi Arabia stated the Israeli law as "perpetuating racial discrimination" against Palestinians by defining the country as the nation state of the Jewish people.¹²⁷ Syria's foreign ministry also called the "racist" and stated that it "enshrines the racism of this entity (Israel) through an apartheid system that goes beyond the former apartheid system in South Africa." Adoption of the law "reflected the regime of racism and discrimination against the Palestinian people," GCC secretary general Abdullatif al-Zayani was quoted. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on July 19th called on the international community to intervene against Israel over the new law, calling the legislation

¹²³Raphael Ahren, Israel and EU ink agreement on fighting organized crime, cybercrime, terrorism, *The Times of Israel*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-and-eu-ink-agreement-on-fighting-organized-crime/> as accessed on July 18, 2018

¹²⁴Noa Landau, Orban to Netanyahu: All Jews Can Feel Safe in Hungary, *Haaretz*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-orban-to-netanyahu-all-jews-can-feel-safe-in-hungary-1.6291523> as accessed on July 20, 2018

¹²⁵Greer Fay Cashman, Rivlin to Orban: Neo-fascism is a danger not only to the Jewish people, *The Jerusalem Post*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Rivlin-to-Orban-Neo-fascism-is-a-danger-not-only-to-the-Jewish-people-562950> as accessed on July 20, 2018

¹²⁶Raoul Wootliff, Israel passes Jewish state law, enshrining 'national home of the Jewish people', *The Times of Israel*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-votes-contentious-jewish-nation-state-bill-into-law/> as accessed on July 21, 2018

¹²⁷Arab nations slam Israel's 'racist, discriminatory' Jewish nation-state law, *The Times of Israel*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arab-nations-slam-racist-discriminatory-jewish-nation-state-law/> as accessed on July 21, 2018

“racist”. Egypt on July 21st denounced Israel for sanctioning “racial segregation” against Palestinians by passing the controversial nation-state legislation.¹²⁸

- **Israel and Syria**

Israeli jets reportedly carried out a strike July 22nd on a missile production facility in northwest Syria that observers say was supervised by Iranians. In the past, the site was allegedly used to produce and store chemical weapons.¹²⁹ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke by phone on July 20th with Russian President Vladimir Putin as Israel continues to press its demands that there be no Iranian military presence in Syria as Assad forces prepare to take control of Golan Heights border area with Israel.¹³⁰

International Economic Issues

- **EU, Japan seal free trade in signal to Trump**

On July 17, 2018, the European Union (EU) and Japan signed one of the world's biggest free trade deals, covering nearly a third of the world's GDP and 600 million people. The move contrasts sharply with actions by the US Trump administration, which has introduced steep import tariffs. EU Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said the deal underlined the “win-win” solutions offered by free trade. Mr Juncker said: “[The] impact of today’s agreement goes far beyond our shores. Together we are a making, by signing this agreement, a statement about the future of free and fair trade. We are showing that we are stronger and better off when we work together. And we are leading by example, showing that trade is about more than tariffs and barriers. It is about values, principles and finding win-win solutions for all those concerned.” Japan’s Minister for Economic Revitalisation, Toshimitsu Motegi, said: “At a time when protectionist measures are gaining steam globally, the signing of the Japan-EU deal today will show the world once again our unwavering political will to promote free trade.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ Egypt rejects Israeli nation-state law as ‘racial segregation, *The Times of Israel*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-rejects-israeli-nation-state-law-as-racial-segregation/> as accessed on July 22, 2018

¹²⁹ Israeli jets said to strike Iranian-run missile production facility in Syria, *The Times of Israeli*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-jets-said-to-strike-chemical-weapons-site-in-syria/> as accessed on July 23, 2018

¹³⁰ As Syria troops near border, PM tells Putin he won’t tolerate Iranian presence, *The Times of Israel*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-syria-troops-near-border-pm-tells-putin-he-wont-tolerate-iranian-presence/> as accessed on July 23, 2018

¹³¹ “EU, Japan seal free trade in signal to Trump”, *BBC News*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-44857317> (accessed on July 18, 2018)

- **US launches five WTO challenges to retaliatory tariff**

The US launched five separate World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute actions on July 16, 2018. The actions challenge retaliatory tariffs imposed by China, the European Union, Canada, Mexico, and Turkey following US duties on steel and aluminium. The retaliatory tariffs on up to a combined \$28.5 billion worth of US exports are illegal under WTO rules, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement. Mexico said it would defend its retaliatory measures, saying the imposition of US tariffs was “unjustified.” “The purchases the United States makes of steel and aluminum from Mexico do not represent a threat to the national security,” Mexico’s Economy Ministry said in a statement. “On the contrary, the solid trade relationship between Mexico and the US has created an integrated regional market where steel and aluminum products contribute to the competitiveness of the region in various strategic sectors, such as automotive, aerospace, electrical and electronic”.¹³²

- **G-20 Finance Ministers, Failing to Halt Trump’s Trade War, Warn of Its Global Risks**

At the G20 Summit Meeting of Finance Ministers on July 22, 2018, negotiations to ease an escalating trade war between the United States and the rest of the world sputtered to a close with no breakthroughs. The Group of 20 gathering in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires, appeared only to raise the odds that the friction will intensify as Mr. Trump threatens more tariffs and other countries vow to retaliate and warned that the predicament over President Trump’s tariffs was casting a pall over the global economy. In their closing statement, or Communiqué, officials at the G-20 pointed to trade tensions as a new risk factor that could depress global growth. The Communiqué said, “Growth has been less synchronized recently and downside risks over the short- and medium-term have increased”. “These include rising financial vulnerabilities, heightened trade and geopolitical tensions, global imbalances, inequality and structurally weak growth, particularly in some advanced economies.”¹³³

- **TPP countries to start accession talks for new members in 2019**

Chief negotiators from the 11 signatories to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreed on July 19, 2018, to start accession talks with potential newcomers in 2019, when the free trade pact takes effect. During a two-day meeting from 18-19 July 2018 in Hakone near Tokyo, the negotiators checked members’ progress toward completing domestic procedures to ratify the trade accord and discussed the future expansion of the TPP framework, which covers around 13 percent of the world’s economy. Thailand, Indonesia, Columbia, South Korea and Taiwan are

¹³² “US launches five WTO challenges to retaliatory tariff”, *CNBC News*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/17/us-launches-five-wto-challenges-to-retaliatory-tariffs.html> (accessed on July 17, 2018)

¹³³ Alan Rappeport, “G-20 Finance Ministers, Failing to Halt Trump’s Trade War, Warn of Its Global Risks”, *The New York Times*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/22/us/politics/g-20-summit-tariffs-trade-war.html> (accessed on July 23, 2018)

seen as willing to join the revised TPP, which was signed in March and is now formally known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Faced with growing concerns about the rise of protectionism and fears of a trade war, the TPP members are seeking solidarity in creating a wider free trade zone in the Asia-Pacific despite the abrupt US pullout from the framework.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, Singapore on July 19 ratified the CPTPP, becoming the third nation to do so after Mexico and Japan.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ “TPP countries to start accession talks for new members in 2019”, *The Japan Times*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/19/business/tpp-countries-start-accession-talks-new-members-2019/#.W1VYC2AzbIV> (accessed on July 23, 2018)

¹³⁵ “Singapore ratifies new Trans-Pacific Trade Deal”, *Channel NewsAsia*, July, 19, 2018, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/singapore-cptpp-trade-tpp-10543674> (accessed on July 23, 2018) and; Kentaro Iwamoto, “Singapore ratifies TPP-11 as US-China trade war escalates”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, July 19, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Singapore-ratifies-TPP-11-as-US-China-trade-war-escalates> (accessed on July 23, 2018)