

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

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### **Contents**

#### **Regions and Themes covered this Week**

- **Africa**
- **Central Asia**
- **China**
- **Latin America and Caribbean**
- **North America**
- **Russia**
- **South Asia**
- **Indian Ocean**
- **West Asia**
- **Terrorism and Counter Terrorism**

## Africa

- **Eritrea President Isaias Afwerki in Ethiopia for landmark visit<sup>1</sup>**

Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki arrived in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa on 14 July 2018, Saturday, for a three-day state visit, as part of an unprecedented softening of tensions between the neighbouring countries. Saturday's visit by Isaias, his first in 20 years, comes a week after Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made a landmark visit to Eritrea's capital, Asmara. He was greeted upon landing in the capital Addis Ababa by reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who himself made a historic visit last weekend to Eritrea.

Chief of staff to Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Fitsum Arega, thanked Isaias "for honoring us with a visit" in a statement. The 72-year-old Afwerki last visited Ethiopia in 1996, after Eritrea gained independence from its southern neighbor in 1993. That trip was followed by a 1998-2000 war over the disputed border that killed some 80,000 people. Ethiopia's government spokesman said Isaias and his delegation would visit an industrial park in the southern Ethiopian town of Hawassa . Eritrea and Ethiopia have so far agreed to open embassies, develop ports and restart flights.

- **Kenya Ranked Third Most Innovative Country in Africa<sup>2</sup>**

Kenya has been ranked the third most innovative country in Sub Saharan Africa according to the Global Innovative Index (GII) 2018. Kenya follows South Africa and Mauritius who are ranked first and second respectively. According to the index, Kenya's strengths include access to credit especially microfinance loans, innovation linkages and exports of creative services, workforce efficiency, printing and other media.

The report states "Kenya achieves high levels of innovation relative to its level of development, a continuous performance since 2011." Kenya is ranked 78th most innovative country globally, while South Africa is placed 58<sup>th</sup>.

The Index states that South Africa shows strengths in its sophisticated market and business sector. Other strong indicators are: access to credit, market capitalization, university and industry research collaborations, cluster development and intellectual property payments. The report reads "South Africa is improving in the quality of its science papers and its universities, especially for the University of Cape Town, the University of Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University." Mauritius has a strong political, business and credit environment

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<sup>1</sup> Aljazeera, 14 July 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/eritrea-president-isaias-afwerki-ethiopia-historic-visit-180714072020602.html>

<sup>2</sup> Capital FM ,11 July 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201807110600.html>

- **Djibouti launches Africa's largest free trade zone<sup>3</sup>**

China has taken another major step to secure its position as a global trade leader by helping to launch the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone (DIFTZ). The pilot zone, which spans 240 hectares of the envisaged 4 800 hectares, consists of four industrial clusters. These will focus on trade and logistics, export processing, business and financial support services, manufacturing and duty-free merchandise retail. According to Quartz Africa, Djibouti hopes the international trade zone will boost its position as a trade and logistics hub, create employment for its youth and provide a strategic base for global businesses hoping to access the rapidly growing African market.

The zone will be a joint operation run by Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority and China Merchants Holdings Company. The country sits on two of the world's busiest maritime routes, so the zone's location is strategic as Djibouti, with its population of 876 000, already hosts Chinese, US and French naval bases while handling roughly 95 percent of the goods imported by Ethiopia. It aims to become a gateway to South Sudan, Somalia and the Great Lakes region.

- **Ramaphosa: Violence against Nigerians Just Criminal Acts, not Targeted Attack<sup>4</sup>**

President Cyril Ramaphosa has dismissed suggestions that Nigerians living in South Africa are specifically being targeted for attacks, while answering questions on how his government will curb "persistent attacks against Nigerians" living in South Africa in Abuja. The questions have come from journalists and investors. Ramaphosa was in the Nigerian city meeting with his counterpart, President Muhammadu Buhari, as part of a charm offensive to improve the tense relations. Ramaphosa said he had wanted Buhari to be his first guest after taking office in February but when it did not happen, he planned his first foreign bilateral meeting outside of the Southern African Development Community to be with Buhari. The two held a two-hour meeting where the safety and security of Nigerians and improving trade relations were discussed

- **8th Ministerial Meeting of Chinese-Arab States Co-Operation Forum Closes in Beijing<sup>5</sup>**

Works of the 8th Ministerial meeting of the Chinese-Arab States Co-operation Forum were crowned by the adoption of the "Beijing Declaration" and the "2018-2020 Action Plan" that includes several co-operation fields as part of the "Belt and Road" initiative. Speaking in Beijing, Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui stressed that the "Belt and Road" initiative will certainly contribute to reviving Chinese-

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<sup>3</sup> This is Africa, 12 July 2018, <https://thisisafrika.me/djibouti-africas-largest-free-trade-zone/>

<sup>4</sup> News 24 Wire, 11 July 2018,

[https://allafrica.com/stories/201807120002.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta](https://allafrica.com/stories/201807120002.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta)

<sup>5</sup> Tunis Afrique Press, 10 July 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201807100782.html>

Arab co-operation and adding a new momentum to the strategic partnership, notably between Tunisia and China. He noted "Tunisia's accession to the Belt and Road initiative will have positive impacts on plans to improve the infrastructure and develop foreign investments." Jhinaoui further hailed the qualitative leap recorded at the level of the Chinese-Arab relations since the launch of the forum in 2004, reaffirming Tunisia's support to the "Belt and Road" initiative.

The Belt and Road initiative currently places China as the Arab countries' second most powerful trade partners and first trade partner for ten of them. In this respect, Jhinaoui highlighted Tunisia's keenness to develop co-operation relations with China notably in the tourism, investment, technical co-operation and technology fields. He further stressed on the importance of the Chinese-Arab BeiDou satellites that opened its doors on April 2018 in Tunis. This centre is a pilot project between China and the Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organisation (AICTO) that aims to promote exchange and international co-operation.

- **South Africa Ex-President Jacob Zuma's Son Charged with Corruption<sup>6</sup>**

The son of South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma has been charged with corruption in a court in the commercial city of Johannesburg. Duduzane Zuma is alleged to have been part of attempts to bribe a former deputy finance minister to agree to a top role in government. The allegation is related to the activities of the controversial Gupta family who are accused of exerting undue influence over President Zuma. All parties deny any wrongdoing. In 2015, former Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas claimed he had been offered the position of finance minister and a bribe of 600m rand (\$44m; £36m) during a meeting with Duduzane Zuma, businessman Fana Hlongwane and Ajay Gupta. The allegation is that had he agreed, Mr Jonas would have used his position as finance minister to advance the Guptas' extensive business interests - an example of what became known in South Africa as state capture.

- **Saudi Arabia Pledges to Invest US\$10 Billion in South Africa<sup>7</sup>**

Saudi Arabia intends to invest as much as US\$10 billion in South Africa's economy, with a focus on energy. The commitment was made during a state visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to the Middle Eastern nation, his spokeswoman Khusela Diko said by phone on July 12, 2018. Officials from Saudi Arabia will take part in an investment summit in October in South Africa when they are expected to give more detail about the planned spending, she said. Ramaphosa is seeking to revive a flagging economy after taking over from Jacob Zuma as the nation's leader in February and has started a drive to lure US\$100 billion in investment over the next five years.

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<sup>6</sup> BBC News, July 9, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-44764090>

<sup>7</sup> Bloomberg, July 12, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-12/saudi-arabia-pledges-to-invest-10-billion-in-south-africa>

- **Chinese Payment Card Union Pay Officially Launched in Angola<sup>8</sup>**

The Union Pay International card was officially presented on July 10, 2018 by Angola's Empresa Interbancária de Serviços (Emis) on the first day of the 34th edition of the Luanda International Fair (Filda/2018), which runs until July 14, 2018 at the Luanda/Bengo Special Economic Zone, in Viana. The ceremony, attended by the Chief Executive of Emis, José Gualberto de Matos and the director general of the African branch of Union Pay, Luping Zhang, presented the card, which is issued and topped-up abroad, and which will make it easier for Chinese citizens resident in Angola to carry out transactions without any restriction. Union Pay International will pay the commercial banks the amounts taken out in kwanzas using dollars, "which will lead a large amount of foreign currency to enter the country," said Matos.

- **Angola Announces Bidding Campaign in the Oil Sector<sup>9</sup>**

Deputy Minister of Geology and Mines Janio Victor announced on July 13, 2018 the upcoming launch of a bidding campaign for new contracts in the Angolan oil sector. After a two-hour tour through the stands of the companies represented at the 34th Luanda International Fair (Filda 2018), the Vice President read a statement to the journalists in which he ignored other details. Victor commented that during his visit to the Fair, he saw the industry is resuming its role, which has been affected by the economic and financial crisis experienced by the country since the end of 2014 with the fall in crude oil prices on the international market. He also highlighted the interest of several foreign companies in retaking projects or entering new ones.

- **Attorney Generals of Switzerland and Angola Pledge to Pursue Sovereign Wealth Fund Probe<sup>10</sup>**

Senior justice ministry officials from Switzerland and Angola have discussed closer cooperation in a major international case of suspected corruption. The Swiss authorities have blocked around US\$150 million (CHF150 million) in assets held by the Angolan National Bank and the Angolan sovereign wealth fund amid ongoing criminal proceedings involving an Angolan-Swiss businessman, Jean-Claude Bastos. In talks with Angola's attorney-general, Hélder Fernando Pitta Groz on July 12, 2018, Swiss counterpart Michael Lauber stressed the importance of coordinated action between law enforcement authorities in the fight against corruption, according to the Swiss attorney-general's office. Switzerland has already unfrozen US\$60 million in Angolan assets that were blocked several years ago. Bastos, a top manager of the Swiss-based Quantum Global Fund, is suspected of corruption and money laundering and legal cases have been opened both in Angola and

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<sup>8</sup> Macau Hub, July 11, 2018, <https://macauhub.com.mo/2018/07/11/pt-cartao-chines-union-pay-lancado-oficialmente-em-angola/>

<sup>9</sup> Prensa Latina, July 13, 2018, <http://plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=30959&SEO=angola-announces-bidding-campaign-in-the-oil-sector>

<sup>10</sup> Swissinfo.ch, July 13, 2018, [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/legal-cooperation\\_attorney-generals-pledge-to-pursue-angola-fund-probe/44255074](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/legal-cooperation_attorney-generals-pledge-to-pursue-angola-fund-probe/44255074)

Switzerland. The 50-year old entrepreneur lives in Angola and is banned from leaving the country.

- **Rovuma LNG Phase 1 Development Plan Submitted to Mozambique Government<sup>11</sup>**

Mozambique Rovuma Venture S.p.A, a joint venture owned by ExxonMobil, Eni and CNPC, has submitted the development plan for the first phase of the Rovuma LNG project to the Mozambique government, Eni announced on July 9, 2018. The Rovuma LNG project aims to produce, liquefy and market natural gas from the Mamba fields located in the Area 4 block offshore Mozambique. The submitted plan details the proposed design and construction of two liquefied natural gas trains, which will each produce 7.6 million tons of LNG per year. ExxonMobil will lead the construction and operation of natural gas liquefaction and related facilities on behalf of the joint venture, and Eni will lead the construction and operation of upstream facilities.

- **President Lungu Assures China Over Debt Management<sup>12</sup>**

His Excellency Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia has met with Chinese Ambassador to Zambia Mr Li Jie on July 10, 2018 and discussed a broad range of bilateral cooperation mainly focusing on economic cooperation between the two countries. The Chinese envoy also sought clarification on Zambia's debt restructuring programme so that Chinese authorities and financing institutions could plan accordingly. The Ambassador assured the President of China's support for Zambia in its debt restructuring measures announced by the Minister of Finance, Margaret Mwanakatwe in June 2018. On his part, President Lungu assured the Chinese Ambassador that Zambia will proactively engage China at every stage of the implementation of the Debt Restructuring Programme to avoid disruption in the financing for project implementation and overall contractual obligations. The President appealed to the Chinese Ambassador to inform all relevant Chinese authorities, financiers and companies that there will be no disruption in the ongoing projects.

- **Chinese Vice President Meets Botswana FM<sup>13</sup>**

Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan on July 13, 2018 met with Botswana International Affairs and Cooperation Minister Unity Dow. He called on the two sides to continue to strengthen political mutual trust, expand pragmatic cooperation, and share development experiences. Hailing the long-standing friendship and fruitful cooperation between the two countries, Wang said the notion of "building a community with a shared future" should be embodied in

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<sup>11</sup> Rigzone, July 9, 2018,

[https://www.rigzone.com/news/wire/rovuma\\_lng\\_phase\\_1\\_development\\_plan\\_submitted\\_to\\_mozambique\\_government-09-jul-2018-156226-article/](https://www.rigzone.com/news/wire/rovuma_lng_phase_1_development_plan_submitted_to_mozambique_government-09-jul-2018-156226-article/)

<sup>12</sup> Zambia Reports, July 10, 2018, <https://zambiareports.com/2018/07/12/president-lungu-assures-china-debt-management/>

<sup>13</sup> Global Times, July 13, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1110675.shtml>

bilateral ties and China-Africa relations. Wang welcomed Botswana President Mokgweetsi Masisi to attend the upcoming Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to be held in September, hoping that bilateral ties will be further lifted under the guidance of the two heads of state.

- **Botswana, Namibia Prepare For SADC Standby Force<sup>14</sup>**

The Botswana Defence Force (BDF) and the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) will hold a combined bilateral battalion level peace support operation (PSO) exercise from 16 to 30 July 2018 in the general area of Kang in the west of Botswana. Military authorities said the move is part of the preparations by the two nations ahead of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standby force assuming its duty roster from 1 January to 30 June 2019. BDF spokesperson, Major Fana Maswabi, said the joint exercises are a result of an agreement reached at the 22nd session of the Botswana/Namibia Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security and Security (JPCDS) of 2012 held in Gaborone, Botswana.

- **Botswana's Biased Laws Irk UN<sup>15</sup>**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has come down hard on the Government of Botswana following the release of the 2018 UNHCR report which has portrayed Botswana in bad light over issues of 'health, education and other basic liberties' for refugees. The report is a summary measure for assessing progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The report measures development by combining indicators of life expectancy, education attainment, and income. The health component contains two indicators: Anti-Retroviral Therapy access and increased gender based violence.

- **Mauritius is the Fastest Growing Wealth Market In Africa: Study<sup>16</sup>**

The number of millionaires on the offshore island of Mauritius has grown by 20 per cent in 2017, making it the fastest growing wealth market in Africa, according to a study from intelligence firm New World Wealth. The report, which details the performance of high-net-worth-individuals (HNWIs) in selected African countries between 2006 and 2016, placed Mauritius at the top in the continent for HNWIs, with a growth of 230 per cent. HNWIs refer to individuals with wealth of US\$1 million or more. The strong growth in millionaires in Mauritius has been driven by the relocation of large number of wealthy individuals over the past decade, especially from France and Southern Africa.

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<sup>14</sup> The Southern Times, July 9, 2018, <https://southerntimesafrica.com/site/news/botswana-namibia-prepare-for-sadc-standby-force>

<sup>15</sup> Weekend Post, July 9, 2018, <http://www.weekendpost.co.bw/wp-news-details.php?nid=5348>

<sup>16</sup> International Investment, July 10, 2018, <http://www.internationalinvestment.net/regions/africa/mauritius-is-the-fastest-growing-wealth-market-in-africa-study/>

- **Mauritius Funds Likely To Shift To Singapore For India Investment<sup>17</sup>**

Offshore funds from recently tagged high-risk jurisdictions such as Mauritius and Cayman Islands are likely to re-route their investments through Singapore, as the threshold for being deemed beneficial owner (BO) is much higher for the latter. Mauritius, Cyprus, Cayman Islands, UAE and China are among 25 high-risk jurisdictions identified by global banks, acting as custodians for offshore funds. “It is very likely that existing offshore funds from high-risk jurisdictions migrate to Singapore,” said Girish Vanvari, founder, Transaction Square, a tax and regulatory consultancy. “Investors will want to be in places which are genuine financial hubs and which have the capability to carry out financial activities.” “The NRI (non-resident Indian) fund manager may no longer be able to continue his investment in a Mauritius fund under the new norms. Consequently, investors, too, might not be keen on continuing their investments,” added another tax consultant, on condition of anonymity.

- **New Investment Policy in Seychelles Looks to Transparency, Modernise Legal Framework<sup>18</sup>**

A newly approved investment policy for Seychelles should help to create an environment that is predictable and stable for all investors in the private sector, said a senior government officer. “After carrying out an analysis we understood that we need to start with a policy of investment that will guide the people in the public service on how we should treat the different aspects of doing business in the country. This is to ease constraints that the private sector is facing,” Michael Nalletamby, the Principal Secretary at the Department of Investment told SNA on July 9, 2018. The investment policy promotes sustainable growth and employment, the integration of science technology and innovation as well as the pursuit of high standards of Service delivery.

- **Tanzania Unveils Cargo Train to Uganda<sup>19</sup>**

The Tanzania Railways Corporation (TRC) has launched a cargo service to Uganda through the Lake Victoria ports of Mwanza and Port Bell. The train will connect the port of Dar es Salaam to Uganda through Tabora and Isaka in western Tanzania, then Mwanza port by ships plying the lake. TRC’s terminal at the Dar es Salaam port can handle 4.1 million tonnes of dry cargo and six million tonnes of bulk liquid cargo. It serves Malawi, Zambia, DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

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<sup>17</sup> Business Standard, July 10, 2018, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/mauritius-funds-likely-to-shift-to-singapore-for-india-investment-118071000063\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/mauritius-funds-likely-to-shift-to-singapore-for-india-investment-118071000063_1.html)

<sup>18</sup> Seychelles News Agency, July 10, 2018, <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/9413/New+investment+policy+in+Seychelles+looks+to+transparency%2C+modernise+legal+framework>

<sup>19</sup> The East African, July 10, 2018, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/Tanzania-unveils-cargo-train-to-Uganda/2560-4654108-y39fkaz/index.html>



- **Tanzania Threatens Pollster That Said Magufuli's Popularity has Reduced By 41 Per Cent<sup>20</sup>**

Tanzania's government has given a pollster that published an opinion poll showing that President John Magufuli's popularity is waning, seven days to explain why 'appropriate action should not be taken against them'. Researchers from research outfit Twaweza last week said President Magufuli's approval ratings had plummeted by an alarming 41 per cent since coming to power in 2016. During his first year in office, Magufuli had a record setting 96 per cent approval rate, largely driven by his crackdown on corruption and laxity of public officials. Twaweza's survey, called 'Speaking Truth To Power', which collected opinions from 1,241 respondents from Tanzania Mainland using mobile phones, says the popularity which dropped to 71 per cent in 2017 has since reduced to 55 per cent.

- **Kenya Signs Pact to Return Stolen Wealth From Switzerland<sup>21</sup>**

Kenya has signed a mutual legal assistance framework with Switzerland for the return of assets acquired from proceeds of corruption and crime. The new deal signed at State House, Nairobi on July 9, 2018 is expected to enhance an existing Memorandum of Understanding on the repatriation of proceeds of graft. Speaking after the signing of the legal assistance framework, the President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset, said the agreement will expedite the recovery of proceeds of crime stashed in his country. "I'm extremely pleased that we've signed this framework. This framework will allow Switzerland to return financial assets that have been blocked for example in the Anglo-Leasing case," he said during a joint media briefing after signing of the pact. President Uhuru Kenyatta lauded the Swiss leader, saying he was confident the deal will, to a great extent, help his government's commitment to root out corruption in Kenya.

- **Violent Protests Force Uganda Government to Review Social Media Tax<sup>22</sup>**

Violent protests in Uganda has forced the government to review a controversial tax imposed on social media use in the country. Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda in a statement on July 11, 2018 said that the bill would be amended "taking into consideration the concerns of the public," and presented to the country's parliament on July 19. Uganda passed a new set of laws taxing online services and mobile money transactions in the country in May. Police fired teargas to disperse a crowd of demonstrators led by vocal lawmaker Robert Kyagulanyi as they marched towards the parliament in the capital Kampala, local media reported. The Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill 2018 came into effect on July 1 and meant that Ugandans were paying 200 Ugandan shillings (\$0.05) daily to use social platforms like

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<sup>20</sup> Africa News, July 13, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/13/tanzania-threatens-pollster-that-said-magufuli-s-popularity-has-reduced-by-41/>

<sup>21</sup> Capital News, July 9, 2018, <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2018/07/kenya-signs-pact-to-return-stolen-wealth-from-switzerland/>

<sup>22</sup> CNN, July 11, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/11/africa/uganda-social-media-tax-protest/index.html>

Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. The tax was highly unpopular and a tech company sued the government amid other protests online.

- **Ethiopia's Abiy and Eritrea's Afewerki Declare End Of War<sup>23</sup>**

Ethiopia and Eritrea are no longer at war, the neighbouring nations said in a joint statement on July 9, 2018 after a series of historic meetings in Asmara to end decades of acrimony and conflict. Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel said on Twitter that Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, 41, and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, 71, had inked a "Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship" on the second day of the state visit. The statement declared that the "state of war that existed between the two countries has come to an end. A new era of peace and friendship has been ushered (in)." "Both countries will work to promote close cooperation in political, economic, social, cultural and security areas," Yemane added.

- **India's Rajya Sabha MoU With Rwanda Senate to Promote Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue<sup>24</sup>**

In a first in its history, Rajya Sabha (upper house in the Indian Parliament) on July 10, 2018 inked an MoU with its counterpart in Rwanda to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue, an official statement said. Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chair M. Venkaiah Naidu signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Rwanda's visiting Senate President Bernard Makuza. "The MoU seeks to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue, capacity building of parliamentary staff, organisation of conferences, forums, seminars, staff attachment programmes, workshops and exchanges," the statement said. The agreement also is also aimed at promoting collaboration in mutual interest in regional and international multilateral parliamentary bodies in furtherance of bilateral relations and friendship.

- **US Seeks to Resolve Trade Conflict With Rwanda over Mitumba<sup>25</sup>**

The United States is seeking ways to resolve trade dispute with Rwanda over tariff on importation of used clothes and shoes locally known as mitumba. "We're trying to figure out a way forward that makes both of us satisfied with the outcome," Assistant US Trade Representative for Africa Constance Hamilton told journalists on Monday. Ms Hamilton was speaking on the eve of the annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) Forum in Washington. The Trump administration has until the end of the month to decide on whether to withdraw benefits for Kigali

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<sup>23</sup> Daily Nation, July 9, 2018, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Ethiopia-s-Abiy-and-Eritrea-s-Afewerki-declare-end-of-war/1066-4654948-chavxlz/index.html>

<sup>24</sup> Business Standard, July 10, 2018, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/rajya-sabha-s-mou-with-rwanda-senate-to-promote-inter-parliamentary-dialogue-118071001253\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/rajya-sabha-s-mou-with-rwanda-senate-to-promote-inter-parliamentary-dialogue-118071001253_1.html)

<sup>25</sup> The East African, July 10, 2018, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/US-seeks-to-resolve-trade-conflict-with-Rwanda-over-Mitumba/2560-4659156-12v7h2/index.html>

exporting apparel to the US under Agoa. The White House had in April threatened to punish Rwanda for violating an Agoa eligibility provision by installing what the Washington said was a barrier to trade between the two countries. Kigali maintains its position despite the US threats of retaliation.

- **UN Council Narrowly Approves Arms Embargo On South Sudan<sup>26</sup>**

The UN Security Council narrowly approved a US-drafted resolution imposing an arms embargo on South Sudan on July 13, 2018 over objections that it could hurt African efforts to end the five-year conflict in the world's newest nation. The resolution received the minimum nine "yes" votes. The six other council members abstained — Russia, China, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan and Bolivia. In addition to an immediate arms embargo, the resolution imposes a travel ban and asset freeze on South Sudan's deputy defense chief for logistics, Malek Reuben Riak Rengu, and former chief of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, Paul Malong Awan.

- **DR Congo Opposition Leader Bemba Nominated For Presidential Election<sup>27</sup>**

Congolese politician Jean-Pierre Bemba, weeks after his conviction for war crimes was quashed at The Hague, was nominated by his party on July 13, 2018 for December's presidential vote, in what could be the stiffest challenge to President Joseph Kabila's ruling coalition. The election is due to choose a successor to Kabila, who is term-limited after having governed since 2001, and could herald Democratic Republic of Congo's first democratic transition after decades marked by repeated coups and prolonged civil war. But Kabila has refused to commit to standing down, sparking protests in which dozens of people have died. Some of his allies are now publicly arguing that he has the right to run again. After he was announced as the Movement for the Liberation of Congo's (MLC) presidential candidate at a party congress in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, Bemba briefly addressed his supporters over the phone. He is currently free in Belgium awaiting sentencing by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague on a witness tampering conviction.

- **Kabila Delays UN Chief's Visit, Refuses to See US Envoy Nikki Haley<sup>28</sup>**

Congolese President Joseph Kabila has put off a planned visit this week by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and refused to see US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, who diplomats said had also separately planned to visit Kinshasa. Kabila, who succeeded his assassinated father Laurent in 2001, was busy organising December 23 elections and had to postpone a visit by Guterres and

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<sup>26</sup> The Washington Post, July 13, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-to-vote-on-arms-embargo-and-new-sanctions-on-south-sudan/2018/07/12/bc936000-8634-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.f5b9287179ad](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-to-vote-on-arms-embargo-and-new-sanctions-on-south-sudan/2018/07/12/bc936000-8634-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05_story.html?utm_term=.f5b9287179ad)

<sup>27</sup> Africa News, July 14, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/14/dr-congo-opposition-leader-bemba-nominated-for-presidential-election/>

<sup>28</sup> The Star, July 10, 2018, [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/07/10/kabila-delays-un-chiefs-visit-refuses-to-see-us-envoy-nikki-haley\\_c1784518](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/07/10/kabila-delays-un-chiefs-visit-refuses-to-see-us-envoy-nikki-haley_c1784518)

African Union Commission chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat, said Congolese government spokesman Lambert Mende.

- **6 Dead after Attackers Target Somalia's Presidential Palace<sup>29</sup>**

Somali security forces shot dead three extremists wearing soldiers' uniforms, foiling an attempted al-Shabab attack on the presidential palace that began with a car bomb exploding, police said on July 14, 2018. The confrontation came a week after an attack on the nearby interior ministry compound in Mogadishu killed at least nine people, again raising questions about the state of security in the most sensitive areas of Somalia's capital. Six people were dead in all including a suicide car bomber, Capt. Mohamed Hussein told The Associated Press, saying the situation had calmed and security in the area was being tightened.

- **EU Steps Up Humanitarian Aid in Somalia With €89.5 Million<sup>30</sup>**

The European Union has released €89.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Somalia and Djibouti, as millions are grappling with the consequences of prolonged extreme weather conditions. The funding comes ahead of the Somalia Partnership Forum co-hosted by the European Union taking place next week over 16-17 July 2018. *"The devastating effects of two years of drought and the recent intense flooding are taking their toll on the livelihood of millions of people in Somalia,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. *"Our aid will target the most vulnerable and provide life-saving support to those affected by climatic shocks and internal conflict."*

- **Kenya, US Commit to Settling Disputes In Somalia and S Sudan<sup>31</sup>**

President Uhuru Kenyatta on July 11, 2018 met with General Thomas Waldhauser, the US-Africa Command boss, at State House, Nairobi, over regional security. They discussed the situation in Somalia and South Sudan. The President has been at the forefront in the efforts to restore peace and stability in the two countries. He told Waldhauser that Kenya is firmly committed to ensuring lasting peace in Somalia — such efforts have in the past been hampered by inadequate capacity and military commands. Uhuru said the political turmoil in South Sudan has been worsened by unwarranted fear and mistrust between supporters of President Salva Kiir and former VP Riek Machar. "We shall give it everything we can. But it is not going to be easy," he said of South Sudan. Waldhauser underlined the need for Somalia to strengthen its leadership structures. Instability is partly due to indirect interference from certain Gulf countries, he said.

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<sup>29</sup> The Washington Post, July 14, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/2-blasts-gunfire-heard-near-somalias-presidential-palace/2018/07/14/cbb79d12-8747-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.89f068d3bdc5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/2-blasts-gunfire-heard-near-somalias-presidential-palace/2018/07/14/cbb79d12-8747-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05_story.html?utm_term=.89f068d3bdc5)

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, July 10, 2018, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-4387\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4387_en.htm)

<sup>31</sup> The Star, July 12, 2018, [https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/07/12/kenya-us-commit-to-settling-disputes-in-somalia-and-s-sudan\\_c1785643](https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/07/12/kenya-us-commit-to-settling-disputes-in-somalia-and-s-sudan_c1785643)

- **Dubai's DP World Threatens Legal Action Against China over Djibouti Trade Zone<sup>32</sup>**

Dubai's DP World threatened on July 12, 2018 to take legal action against China and Djibouti for building an international free trade zone on a terminal disputed with the strategic Horn of Africa nation. The warning came one week after Djibouti launched the first phase of Africa's biggest free trade zone, developed by China, months after scrapping a concession agreement with Dubai's global port operator DP World. China, which has the only foreign military base near the Red Sea terminal, is developing and financing the free trade zone as it considers Djibouti an important part of its US\$1 trillion "Belt and Road" global investment initiative. "DP World reserves the right to take all available legal actions, including claims for damages against any third parties that interfere or otherwise violate its contractual rights," the port operator said in a statement.

- **Nigeria Opposition Parties Join Forces Against Buhari<sup>33</sup>**

More than 30 opposition parties in Nigeria said on July 10, 2018 that they are teaming up to try to prevent President Muhammadu Buhari from being re-elected to a second term in power in early 2019. Representatives of 39 registered political parties, including the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), signed a memorandum of understanding to form an anti-Buhari alliance in the election in February 2019. PDP spokesman Kola Ologbodiyan told *AFP* that the accord would enable the opposition "to come together, present one presidential candidate who will oust the incompetent government of President Muhammadu Buhari."

- **Nigeria's Ruling Party APC Splits, New Faction Emerges<sup>34</sup>**

The hopes of Nigeria's ruling party the All progressives Congress (APC) of securing a second term in the 2019 general elections may have been threatened. This comes after a faction of the party declared that it no longer supports the government of President Muhammadu Buhari describing it as incompetent. A group of politicians who were part of the APC in a news conference in Abuja on July 13, 2018 said that they had formed a new faction, called the Reformed-All Progressives Congress (R-APC). The faction is led by former Buhari ally Buba Galadima.

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<sup>32</sup> Africa News, July 13, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/13/dubai-s-dp-world-threatens-legal-action-against-china-over-djibouti-trade-zone/>

<sup>33</sup> Daily Nation, July 10, 2018, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Nigeria-opposition-parties-join-forces-against-Buhari/1066-4655092-24p0xrz/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> Africa News, July 9, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/07/09/nigeria-s-ruling-party-apc-splits-new-faction-emerges-the-morning-call/>

## Central Asia

- **Uzbekistan Introduces e-Visa for Indian Visitors**

Uzbekistan has introduced from 15 July the electronic visa (e-visa) regime for visitors from India and fifty other countries. The system provides for a single entry of 30-day stay visa. The processing time for the application is three working days and the fee is US\$ 20. A presidential decree to this effect was issued from 4 July 2018.<sup>35</sup> The government of President Mirziyoyev has undertaken multiple initiatives to improve the country's economy, including through tourism.

The country has also introduced a visa-free transit for a five day period for the travelers of 101 countries, including from India. The facility will be available at Uzbek airports if the travelers have the ticket for onward journey. In near future, the country also plans to introduce visas for Silkroad tourists, Uzbek origin people, and long-term visas for large foreign investors.<sup>36</sup>

- **Astana Marks 20th Anniversary**

Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, marked its 20th Astana Day anniversary. The Astana Day is celebrated every July 6 since 1998. The 20th anniversary was celebrated with multiple festivals, concerts and sports events starting July 4.<sup>37</sup> A large wedding ceremony was held where 40 couples married on the capital's anniversary. It has become an annual tradition. The Astana Day celebrations culminated a concert featuring Kazakh and foreign musicians.

It was reported that about US\$ 55 million was spent on the anniversary celebration events. There has been mixed response. Many people celebrated and came to join the festivities from faraway areas, there were also voices raised on spending on celebrations at the time economy was facing challenges.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Embassy of Uzbekistan, New Delhi, "Uzbekistan introduces e-visa and visa free transit regime starting from 15 July 2018," 6 July 2018, <http://www.uzbekembassy.in/uzbekistan-introduces-e-visa-and-visa-free-transit-regime-starting-from-15-july-2018/>

<sup>36</sup> The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations, "The Republic of Uzbekistan introduces E-visa system for 51 countries and a 5-day transit visa-free procedure for 101 countries," 10 July 2018, <https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/republic-uzbekistan-introduces-e-visa-system-51-countries-and-5-day-transit-visa-free-procedure>

<sup>37</sup> Meruyert Abugaliyeva, "Multiple festivals, events mark Astana's 20th anniversary celebration," The Astana Times, 10 July 2018, <https://astanatimes.com/2018/07/multiple-festivals-events-mark-astanas-20th-anniversary-celebration/>

<sup>38</sup> Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan's Astana turns 20: A tale of two capitals," *eurasianet*, 9 July 2018, <https://eurasianet.org/s/kazakhstans-astana-turns-20-a-tale-of-two-capitals>

## China

- **2nd India-China Maritime Affairs Dialogue**

The Second India-China Maritime Affairs Dialogue was held on 13 July 2018 in Beijing. The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs) in the Ministry of External Affairs while the Chinese delegation was led by Mr. Wu Jianguo, Director General at the Department of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

The two sides exchanged views on various topics of mutual interest, including perspectives on maritime security and cooperation, blue economy, and further strengthening of practical cooperation. The Indian side also elaborated on India's vision for the Indo-Pacific region as articulated in Prime Minister Modi's keynote address at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

Both sides underlined the importance of this Dialogue as an important mechanism between the two countries for consultations on maritime issues. They emphasized the need to further strengthen maritime cooperation as an important area of India-China bilateral relations, and as a platform to strengthen political and strategic mutual trust between the two countries.

During the visit, the Indian delegation also called on H.E. Mr. Kong Xuanyou, Vice-Foreign Minister of China. Both sides agreed to hold the next round of the Dialogue at a mutually convenient time in India.<sup>39</sup>

- **More areas to open for investors in China**

China may remove more items from its recently announced negative list amid efforts to further open up its market to foreign investors, a stance that will help consolidate the global multilateral governance system, senior experts and officials said.

"China has a firm stance to promote globalization amid protectionism threats," said Yuan Feng, head of the foreign investment department of the National Development and Reform Commission. "Recent efforts to ease or cancel existing restrictions on foreign investment in many fields demonstrate our determined willingness to continue promotion of opening-up."

Last month, the central government announced a shortened negative list for foreign investment at the national level and free-trade zones. At the national level, the number of restrictive measures in the negative list was reduced from 63 in the

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<sup>39</sup> <http://indianembassybeijing.in/India-China-maritime.php>

previous version to 48, while restrictive measures in free-trade zones was reduced from 95 to 45.<sup>40</sup>

- **China to set up new comprehensive cross-border e-commerce pilot zones for greater opening-up**

China has newly identified 22 cities as venues for comprehensive cross-border e-commerce pilot zones in an effort to boost cross-border e-commerce, promote opening-up and upgrade foreign trade, the State Council announced on 13 July.

“Our firm commitment to opening-up and efforts to bring forward the development of cross-border e-commerce and other new forms of business and increase imports and exports will better place us to meet the needs of upgraded consumption and overall development,” Premier Li Keqiang stressed at a State Council executive meeting held Friday.

The Chinese government puts great emphasis on the development of pilot zones as it sees cross-border e-commerce as a key step in nurturing new development drivers and increasing the country's global competitiveness.

The comprehensive cross-border e-commerce pilot zones established in 13 cities including Hangzhou by the State Council in 2015 have since made notable progress, with cross-border e-commerce turnover doubling year on year for two years in a row.<sup>41</sup>

- **Xi sends condolences to Pakistani president over deadly terrorist attack**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on 15 July sent a message of condolences to his Pakistani counterpart, Mamnoon Hussain over a deadly terrorist attack in Pakistan.<sup>42</sup>

- **Xi stresses improving innovation capabilities for key, core technologies**

Chinese President Xi Jinping has stressed improving innovation capabilities for key and core technologies to offer a strong technological guarantee for China's development. On July 13, at a meeting of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, Xi said that key and core technologies are crucial to a country and bear major significance for promoting China's high-quality economic development and maintaining national security. He also pointed out that China must improve innovation capabilities for key and core technologies and keep a

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<sup>40</sup> <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0716/c90000-9481098.html>

<sup>41</sup> <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/60145.htm>

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/15/c\\_137325985.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/15/c_137325985.htm)



firm hold on the initiative in the development of science and technology to offer a strong technological guarantee for China's development.<sup>43</sup>

- **PLA air force to send H-6K bombers to Int'l Army Games**

The Chinese PLA air force will send H-6K bombers, J-10A fighters, JH-7A fighter-bombers, IL-76 and Y-9 transport aircraft, and a team of airborne troops to Russia to participate in the International Army Games 2018. The Games will start on July 28 with initiative taken by the Russian Ministry of Defence. It is co-organised by China, Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Iran. It will be the first time that H-6K bombers and Y-9 transport aircraft have gone abroad to take part in military competitions.<sup>44</sup>

- **Joint police patrol between China, Croatia launched in Dubrovnik**

On July 15, six Chinese police officers started joint police patrol between China and Croatia in Dubrovnik. The first ever joint patrol between the two countries is aimed at helping the Chinese tourists visiting the European country.<sup>45</sup>

- **Morocco, China vow to promote strategic partnership**

Morocco and China made the pledge to promote their strategic partnership through enhancing mutual exchanges and cooperation in various fields at a meeting held on July 9 between Moroccan Prime Minister Saadeddine El Othmani, also secretary general of the Justice and Development Party, and You Quan, head of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

You Quan said that China is willing to work together with Morocco to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state to solidify mutual political trust, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation and jointly push forward the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Othmani expressed his country's willingness to actively participate in the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative so to achieve common development with China.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “Xi stresses improving innovation capabilities for key, core technologies”, *The People's Daily*, July 14, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0714/c90000-9480945.html>, Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> “PLA air force to send H-6K bombers to Int'l Army Games”, *The People's Daily*, July 13, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0713/c90000-9480649.html>, Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> “Joint police patrol between China, Croatia launched in Dubrovnik”, *Xinhua*, July 15, 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2018-07/15/c\\_137326194.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2018-07/15/c_137326194.htm), Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Morocco, China vow to promote strategic partnership, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t1576515.htm>.

## European Union

- **Tusk slams Trump, says ‘US won’t get a better ally than the EU’**

European Council President Donald Tusk took US President Donald J. Trump to task on the eve of a key two-day NATO summit that will be held in the European Union’s de facto capital of Brussels from July 11-12, saying the mercurial, isolationist American president to “Appreciate your allies, after all, you don’t have that many”. In a tone and directness that was decidedly out of character for the notoriously confrontation-averse European Union political establishment, Tusk excoriated Trump for his overtly divisive and belligerent attitude towards the US’ traditional allies and his repeated praise for some of the world’s worst autocrats, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korea’s Kim Jong-un. “I would like to address President Trump directly, who for a long time now has been criticising Europe almost daily for, in his view, insufficient contributions to the common defence capabilities, and for living off the US,” said a stern Tusk in a strongly worded address. “Dear President Trump: America does not have, and will not have a better ally than Europe,” Tusk added. “Money is important, but genuine solidarity is even more important.” Tusk particularly addressed Trump’s constant criticisms of the NATO military alliance, which the former has often referred to as “obsolete”. In his address, Tusk outlined the ways in which the European Union has stood by the US closest ally, including after the 9/11 terror attacks and noted that Europeans spend as much on defence as China, which can field the third-largest military in the world, and nearly three times as much as Russia, the world’s second-largest military in terms of personnel and the largest nuclear-armed country on Earth.<sup>47</sup>

- **Nato expands despite Russian pushbacks**

Nato has asked Macedonia to join the Western bloc, with US leader Donald Trump giving Russia little to smile about so far. “We have decided to invite the government in Skopje to begin accession talks to join the alliance,” the 29 Nato leaders, including Trump, said in a joint communique at a Nato summit in Brussels on Wednesday (11 July). Macedonia will become “the 30th member” after it and Greece completed ratification of its new name, Nato head Jens Stoltenberg added. Nato expansion in the Western Balkans and former Soviet region is an anathema to Russia. The Nato communique said Russia had used “hybrid actions” to try to stop Montenegro from joining last year, referring to a failed Russian coup there in 2016.<sup>48</sup>

- **Trump calls European Union a ‘foe’ – ahead of Russia and China**

Donald Trump described the European Union one of his greatest “foes” in another extraordinary diplomatic intervention on Sunday (15 July 2018), just hours before sitting

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<sup>47</sup> New Europe, 10 July 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/tusk-slams-trump-says-us-wont-get-better-ally-eu/>

<sup>48</sup> EU Observer, 12 July 2018, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/142356>

down to a high-stakes summit with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Asked in a TV interview to name his “biggest foe globally right now”, the US president started by naming the European Union, calling the body “very difficult” before ticking off other traditional rivals like Russia and China. Hours earlier, British Prime Minister Theresa May revealed that Trump suggested she “sue the EU” rather than go into negotiations over Brexit. Trump’s controversial tour through Europe has turned postwar western relations inside out, the president sparring with Nato leaders in Brussels and blasting May’s Brexit strategy in the Sun newspaper. His remarks have reflected one of this president’s core beliefs: that America is exploited by its allies.<sup>49</sup>

## The United Kingdom

- **What's in the Brexit white paper?**

The government has published its long-awaited Brexit white paper, the longest and most detailed explanation yet of its proposals for the UK’s future relationship with the EU. The 104-page document lays out many of the same plans detailed after the cabinet’s meeting at Chequers last week, but goes into much more detail. The white paper says the government seeks “a principled and practical Brexit”. It says its proposals follow on from Theresa May’s set-piece speeches at Lancaster House, in Florence, at Mansion House and in Munich, “and in doing so [address] questions raised by the EU in the intervening months”. The new relationship with the EU should be “broader in scope than any other that exists between the EU and a third country”, it says. The white paper lays out five main areas of focus: i) **The economy**: “developing a broad and deep economic relationship with the EU that maximises future prosperity ... and minimises disruption to trade between the UK and the EU, protecting jobs and livelihoods – at the same time making the most of trading opportunities around the world.”; ii) **Communities**: ending free movement with a new immigration system, support for farming and fisheries, and what is called a “shared prosperity fund”; iii) **The union**: protecting the Northern Ireland peace process, avoiding a hard Irish border, safeguarding the constitutional integrity of the UK and devolving appropriate powers.; iv) **Democracy**: leaving EU institutions and reclaiming UK sovereignty, ensuring laws are made in UK.; v) **The UK’s place in the world**: promoting general principles such as openness and liberty.<sup>50</sup>

- **UK's latest Brexit plans likely to cross EU red lines, Barnier hints**

The EU has issued a veiled warning that it will not budge on its red lines after Theresa May unveiled her long-awaited Brexit plan. Michel Barnier, the EU’s chief Brexit negotiator, said he would analyse the UK’s proposals with EU member states and the European parliament “in light of guidelines” drawn up by EU leaders. This reference to guidelines was a heavy hint of the conflict to come in Brexit negotiations. The European council guidelines lay down the EU’s red lines, including the insistence that the UK

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<sup>49</sup> The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/15/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-helsinki-russia-indictments>

<sup>50</sup> The Guardian, 12 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/12/whats-in-the-brexit-white-paper>

cannot benefit from “cherry-picking” its favourite parts of the EU rulebook. Barnier said he was looking forward to further Brexit negotiations with the UK, which are due to resume on Monday. Following those talks, Barnier is due to meet ministers from the 27 EU member states on 20 July, where they will debate how to respond to the British plan. EU diplomats had already warned that the white paper proposals would probably not be good enough, while a source who had seen an earlier draft described the UK approach as “cake”, a reference to the former foreign secretary Boris Johnson’s one-liner about being “pro having [cake] and pro eating it”, meaning that it could not be accepted.<sup>51</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **US- North Korea General-level talks held**

On July 15, 2018, American and North Korean generals held a meeting in Panmunjom to discuss the repatriation of remains of U.S. soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, following up on an agreement between the leaders of the two countries struck in Singapore. It was the first time in more than nine years that the U.S. and North Korea held a meeting that involved negotiators of general-rank. The last such higher level meeting took place in March 2009. The meeting on July 15 took place after the North Korea failed to show up to a meeting scheduled for July 12.<sup>52</sup>

- **President Moon Jae-in visits India**

South Korean President Moon Jae-in made a state visit to India on July 8-12, 2018. During his visit, he held wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attended a forum of top business leaders from both the countries, and with Modi jointly inaugurated world's largest mobile phone factory of South Korean consumer electronics major Samsung in Noida, which will double its annual handset production capacity to 120 million units by 2020. During the bilateral Summit, India and Korea also inked eleven agreements and issued a joint vision statement.<sup>53</sup>

- **Japan, France agree to form maritime dialogue forum**

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<sup>51</sup> The Guardian, 12 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/12/uks-latest-brexite-plans-likely-to-cross-eu-red-lines-barnier-hints>

<sup>52</sup> "General-level talks held in DMZ", Korea JoongAng Daily, July 16, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3050630&clac=joongangdaily|home|top](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3050630&clac=joongangdaily|home|top)

<sup>53</sup> "Moon tries to boost relations with India", Korea JoongAng Daily, July 10, 2018, [koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3050389](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3050389)

On July 14, 2018, Japan and France agreed on Saturday to set up a bilateral framework for comprehensive discussions on maritime issues. The agreement was during a meeting between visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and his French counterpart, Jean-Yves Le Drian, The new framework is expected to handle a wide range of themes, including security and environmental conservation.<sup>54</sup>

- **Japan's 'plutonium exception' under fire from neighbors as nuclear pact extended**

Japan's nuclear cooperation agreement with the U.S. -- the pillar of Tokyo's nuclear energy policy -- renews automatically on July 16, 2018 after the current pact, which took effect in 1988, expires. The agreement allows Japan to be the sole non-nuclear-weapons state to use plutonium for peaceful purposes and underlies the country's policy of recycling spent nuclear fuel. But the renewal comes at a time when Japan's "plutonium exception" is increasingly under scrutiny. Japan's neighbors have cried foul over Japan's plutonium exception. China has said it creates a path for Japan to obtain nuclear weapons. South Korea, which also has a nuclear cooperation agreement with the U.S., has pressed Washington hard to be granted similar freedom on fuel reprocessing.<sup>55</sup>

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

- **Vietnam Deputy PM's meeting with US Secretary of State**

Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Phạm Bình Minh held talks with US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on July 9. According to Secretary Pompeo, the US hoped a strong, independent and prosperous Vietnam would play an increasingly important role in the region. Minh hoped that the Vietnam-US comprehensive partnership would continue to develop in a stable and result-oriented manner, with the both sides expressing their satisfaction and agreeing to further enhance their partnership. They agreed to increase mutual visits, especially those at high levels, and continue to consider trade and investment ties as a driving force for the bilateral relationship. They will also actively carry out defence agreements and bolster education-training connections and people-to-people exchange. At the talks, the two sides also exchanged views on regional and world issues of shared concern, including the East Sea situation. They voiced concern about the recent complicated happenings in the East Sea, reaffirming support for peaceful settlement of disputes on the basis of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, full implementation of the

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<sup>54</sup> " Japan, France agree to form maritime dialogue forum", The Japan news, July 15, 2018, the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004585925

<sup>55</sup> "Japan's 'plutonium exception' under fire as nuclear pact extended", Nikkei Asia Review, July 14, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/Japan-s-plutonium-exception-under-fire-as-nuclear-pact-extended>

Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea, and efforts to finalise an effective and legally binding Code of Conduct for the waters. They shared a view of the need to maintain ASEAN's central role in resolving regional issues and promoting the steady and effective expansion of the ASEAN-US strategic partnership, thus contributing to peace, stability, cooperation and development in the region and the world.<sup>56</sup>

- **Iran's Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs visits Indonesia**

Indonesian Vice-President Jusuf Kalla held a meeting with visiting Iranian Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, in Jakarta on 11 July. Iranian leader Ebtekar carried a mandate as a special envoy to convey a special message of the President of Iran and an invitation to the President of the Republic of Indonesia to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Summit, October 2018 in Tehran, Iran. During the meeting, the two leaders also discussed the development of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) implementation. Indonesian Vice-President affirmed that Indonesia is committed to honoring the JCPOA as a proof of the success of multilateral diplomacy and an important element of the global non-proliferation mechanism. Indonesia hoped that other JCPOA countries could continue to implement the JCPOA. In addition to discussing the development of JCPOA implementation, this meeting also discussed efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and Iran in various fields.<sup>57</sup>

- **Report reveals Chinese hacking group tampering into Cambodia's upcoming National election**

In a report released on 11 July by FireEye revealed how a well-known Chinese hacking group called TEMP.Periscope targeted opposition figures, government departments, rights defenders and media outlets in Cambodia. According to Benjamin Read, Senior Manager for Cyber Espionage Analysis at FireEye, "the evidence we have gets us as far as information gathering, it definitely shows that China is very interested in the upcoming elections".<sup>58</sup>

- **Philippines Vice President Leni Robredo urging the need to protect its sovereignty in the South China Sea (SCS)**

Vice President Leni Robredo on 12 July warned that the threat to Philippine sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea and Filipinos' security were the gravest and most alarming challenges facing the nation. Speaking at a forum to mark the

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<sup>56</sup> "Deputy PM holds talks with US State Secretary", *Vietnam News*, July 9, 2018, <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/451425/deputy-pm-holds-talks-with-us-state-secretary.html>, accessed on July 10, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> "The Visit of Iranian Vice-President to Indonesia: Indonesia Supports the JCPOA's Sustainability", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/The-Visit-of-Iranian-Vice-President-to-Indonesia.aspx>, accessed on July 12, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Abby Seiff, "Chinese State-Linked Hackers in Large Scale Operation to Monitor Cambodia's Upcoming Elections, Report Says", *Time*, July 11, 2018, <http://time.com/5334262/chinese-hackers-cambodia-elections-report/>, accessed on July 12, 2018.

second anniversary of the tribunal ruling on the SCS, the VP urged the Philippines to start planning how it could move forward in protecting its sovereignty in the South China Sea, two years after the judgement was handed down in its favour..<sup>59</sup>

## Myanmar

- **Northern Alliance, government agree to continue talks after Panglong conference**

The Northern Alliance and the government will continue their meeting and negotiations at another time, rather than during the 21st Century Panglong Conference, leaders of armed ethnic organisations said. Despite the refusal by the government and the Tatmadaw (military) to accept the stance of the seven-member Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), the FPNCC was invited to the third round of the conference that started on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Although its members were not allowed to participate in the discussions, they were allowed to attend the opening ceremony and to meet with top government and military leaders.<sup>60</sup>

- **Panglong talks end on a positive note**

After five days of talks at the third round of the 21st Century Panglong Conference, participants have agreed on 14 points involving politics, social affairs, the economy, land issues and environmental issues that will be signed as Part 2 of the Union Accord on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The agreement comes despite tensions between the government, Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups. The agreement was made following discussions on the right of women to take part in politics and the economy. Debates centred on encouraging at least 30 percent female participation in every economic sector as well as involvement in drawing effective policies and implementing them.<sup>61</sup>

- **US should strengthen targeted sanctions on Myanmar - HRW**

The US Congress should adopt legislation to enhance targeted sanctions against Myanmar military commanders who are implicated in serious human rights abuses, Human Rights Watch said yesterday in a letter to US congressional leaders

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<sup>59</sup> Audrey Morallo, “Robredo warns: Philippines losing arbitral ruling advantage in South China Sea”, *Phil Star Global*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/07/12/1832881/robredo-warns-philippines-losing-arbitral-ruling-advantage-south-china-sea>, accessed on July 12, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Northern Alliance, government agree to continue talks after Panglong conference, 16 July 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/northern-alliance-government-agree-continue-talks-after-panglong-conference.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Panglong talks end on a positive note, 16 July 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/panglong-talks-end-positive-note.html>

with 45 other nongovernmental and faith-based organizations. The groups said it is “imperative” Congress to address the human rights crisis in Myanmar.<sup>62</sup>

- **First United Nations office opens in Nay Pyi Taw**

The United Nations opened its first office in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday to facilitate a close working relationship with the government, said the UN information department. According to the department, the new office comes at a significant moment as the General Assembly recently approved a UN reform that aims to strengthen the organisation’s ability to effectively support governments and people in need. “This UN office symbolises the UN’s effort to coordinate and do its utmost to support the government and people of Myanmar and live up to the values enshrined in the UN charter,” said Haoliang Xu, UN assistant secretary general.<sup>63</sup>

- **Tragic turn of the screw for jailed Reuters journalists as case goes to trial**

Myanmar Judge Ye Lwin has decided to proceed to trial with charges against two Reuters journalists accused of violating Myanmar's colonial-era Official Secrets Act in their coverage of the Rakhine crisis. The decision was announced in a hearing that lasted less than 20 minutes on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Both journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo pled not guilty in the hearing. The trial is set to begin on 16 July.<sup>64</sup>

- **Yanghee Lee: Govt has made no real progress**

The Myanmar government has made no progress or shown any real will to dismantle the system of discrimination in the country’s laws, policies and practices in northern Rakhine State, Yanghee Lee, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said in her end-of-mission statement on 9<sup>th</sup> July in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. Ms Lee said that unless the Myanmar government made efforts to make northern Rakhine safe, refugees will not return to Myanmar in the near future. Thus there must be a shift to medium- and longer-term planning.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> US should strengthen targeted sanctions on Myanmar – HRW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/us-should-strengthen-targeted-sanctions-myanmar-hrw>.

<sup>63</sup> First United Nations office opens in Nay Pyi Taw, 13 July 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/first-United-nations-office-opens-nay-pyi-taw.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Tragic turn of the screw for jailed Reuters journalists as case goes to trial, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/tragic-turn-screw-jailed-reuters-journalists-case-goes-trial>.

<sup>65</sup> Yanghee Lee: Govt has made no real progress, 10 July 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/yanghee-lee-govt-has-made-no-real-progress.html>.



## North America

### Canada

- **'Absolute risk of collateral damage': Canada hit by escalating U.S.-China tariff wars**

Grim scenarios of collateral damage for Canadian consumers and businesses are emerging in response to escalating the U.S.-China trade war. The Trump administration has taken aim at China by imposing a 25 per cent tariff on goods worth U.S. \$34 billion, but the worst is still on the horizon. The U.S. has announced a further round of tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods that could go into effect towards the end of the summer, after Congress takes a closer look at the implications in a round of hearings in five weeks. All of that amounts to more economic pain for Canadian consumers and businesses, which are already coping with the effects of their country's own trade war with the U.S. over President Donald Trump's imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on Canadian imports. Trade experts and analysts say it's too early to predict which specific products and sectors would be hit the hardest if the next round of U.S. tariffs on China are imposed. But trade specialists say that with so much of Canada's manufacturing sector reliant on Chinese products — bits and pieces that wind up in finished items made in Canada — there will be unavoidable consequences.<sup>66</sup>

- **Trudeau announces Canadian-led NATO mission in Iraq as Trump complains about defence spending**

The federal government has committed Canada to a new military mission in Iraq at the outset of a NATO summit where Canadian and European allies are under fire by U.S. President Donald Trump for what he considers insufficient defence spending. Canada will assume command of a new NATO training mission in Iraq for one year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced. Up to 250 Canadian troops will be posted to Baghdad to help protect and guide the training of Iraqi government troops on measures to prevent a re-emergence of Islamic State militants and other threats. Only about 50 of the deployed Canadian soldiers will be assigned to train Iraqi troops, with the bulk of trainers coming from other NATO member countries. Another 125 Canadians will be assigned to provide "force protection" for NATO operations in and around Baghdad. A further 20 will be deployed to help run headquarters.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Canadian Press, "'Absolute risk of collateral damage': Canada hit by escalating U.S.-China tariff wars," <https://fpress.com/news/canada-faces-collateral-damage-in-escalating-u-s-china-trade-war/wcm/81aa7c3a-2049-438f-978c-9c84002aec50>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Steven Chase, "Trudeau announces Canadian-led NATO mission in Iraq as Trump complains about defence spending," <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-trudeau-announces-canadian-led-mission-in-iraq-as-trump-tells-nato/>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

- **Trudeau government goes silent on Syrian refugees**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's election promise to welcome 25,000 refugees from Syria was aimed at showing voters his compassion. The followup photo opportunities he arranged in 2015 with smiling Syrian refugees, such as doctors, drew international headlines. Once in power, Trudeau's Liberals switched the name of the Immigration Department to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, to highlight their concern for those forced to leave chaotic home countries, especially Syria. But, after more than two weeks of inquiries by Postmedia, a media relations officer acknowledged the department has not produced any report in almost two years on the about 50,000 Syrian refugees now in Canada. Canada's auditor general is among the unamused. The Liberals had a plan to monitor whether the mostly Arabic-speaking refugees were learning English, working, receiving social assistance and going to school, but the government has failed to follow through, said auditor general Michael Ferguson. It is Ottawa's responsibility, he said, to make sure Syrians refugees "integrate into Canadian society."<sup>68</sup>

## The United States

- **President Trump Reportedly Threatened to Pull the U.S. Out of NATO**

President Donald Trump's displeasure with the U.S.'s military allies over their relatively low defense spending is no secret. But now, according to media reports, Trump has threatened to withdraw the U.S. from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO,) or to change its pivotal role in the alliance, over the matter.

In a closed-doors meeting at the two-day NATO summit in Brussels, Trump is said to have thrown a "tantrum" over the issue, threatening that the U.S. would go it alone on defense issues if the other NATO members—most of whom are European—do not immediately increase military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product. At the moment, NATO members are supposed to spend 2% of GDP on defense—a goal, not a requirement or a membership fee—but only eight of the alliance's 29 members will do so this year. Trump wants the spending to go up to 4% of GDP, which is more than even the U.S. currently spends on defense. Nonetheless, he has simultaneously asserted that the U.S. should pay less.<sup>69</sup>

- **Trump calls European Union a 'foe' of the U.S. before Putin summit**

President Donald Trump named the European Union as a top adversary of the United States and denounced the news media as the "enemy of the people" before

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<sup>68</sup> Douglas Todd, "Trudeau government goes silent on Syrian refugees," <https://vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/douglas-todd-trudeau-government-goes-silent-on-syrian-refugees>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>69</sup> David Meyer, "President Trump Reportedly Threatened to Pull the U.S. Out of NATO," <http://fortune.com/2018/07/12/trump-nato-pull-out-withdraw-threat/>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

arriving in Helsinki on the eve of his high-stakes summit with Russia's Vladimir Putin. Trump and his top aides were downplaying expectations for Monday's summit as Trump continued to rattle allies by lumping in the EU with Russia and China after barnstorming across Europe, causing chaos at the recent NATO summit and in a trip to the United Kingdom. He said that Russia is a foe "in certain respects" and that China is a foe "economically ... but that doesn't mean they are bad. It doesn't mean anything. It means that they are competitive." Trump has been reluctant to criticize Putin over the years and has described him in recent days not as an enemy but as a competitor.<sup>70</sup>

- **US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo makes surprise visit to Kabul**

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that there was “now hope” for peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, during an unannounced visit to Kabul. Pompeo’s first visit to Afghanistan since he was sworn in as America’s top diplomat in April came amid renewed optimism for peace in the war-weary country after last month’s unprecedented ceasefire by the Taliban and the government. Pompeo’s visit to the Afghan capital follows a ceasefire during Eid, when the Islamic holiday was marked by spontaneous street celebrations involving Afghan security forces and Taliban militants.

Fighters on both sides expressed a deep fatigue with the grinding conflict, raising hopes that an end to hostilities was possible after 17 years of war that began with the US-led invasion in 2001 that ousted the Taliban from power.<sup>71</sup>

- **India-US High-Level '2+2 Dialogue', Postponed Last Month, Now In September**

The high-level '2+2 dialogue' between India and the United States, that was postponed last month, will take place in the first week of September, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was quoted by news agency ANI as saying. "The agenda will be to develop and strengthen strategic defence cooperation and to follow-on with what had transpired during the meeting with Secretary Defence Mattis," Ms Sitharaman said, according to ANI. The US had postponed the 2+2 dialogue with India as Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo had to travel to North Korea to discuss the country's denuclearisation plan. Sources had said defence and trade relations between the US and India were on track, rejecting speculation that postponement of the dialogue was reflective of a slide in bilateral ties.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Jill Colvin, "Trump calls European Union a 'foe' of the U.S. before Putin summit," <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-trump-putin-summit-finland-20180715-story.html>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>71</sup> AFP, "US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo makes surprise visit to Kabul," <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/2154517/us-secretary-state-mike-pompeo-makes-surprise-visit-kabul>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>72</sup> NDTV, "India-US High-Level '2+2 Dialogue', Postponed Last Month, Now In September." <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/high-level-dialogue-with-us-which-was-postponed-last-month-to-be-held-in-september-says-defence-mini-1882810>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

- **Team Trump plays nice in first visit to Mexico president-elect**

Top officials from US President Donald Trump's administration met with Mexican President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, with both sides upbeat on the potential for a turning point in the countries' troubled relationship. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo led the high-level delegation to meet the leftist leader known as "AMLO," who will take office on December 1 after winning a landslide election victory. Trump's son-in-law and senior aide Jared Kushner, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin were also along for the one-day trip, which included meetings with Mexico's outgoing President Enrique Pena Nieto and Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray. US-Mexican relations have been strained since Trump won the 2016 presidential election after a campaign laced with anti-Mexican insults, attacks on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and vows to make Mexico pay for a wall on the common border. Since then, US tariffs on Mexican steel and aluminum, Trump's "zero-tolerance" policy on undocumented immigrants, and Pena Nieto's two abrupt cancellations of visits to Washington have only added to the tension. Lopez Obrador, 64, pledged during the campaign to "put (Trump) in his place." But both men say they had a positive phone call the day after Mexico's July 1 election, and Lopez Obrador has invited Trump to his inauguration.<sup>73</sup>

## Mexico

- **Incoming Mexican gov't confident there will be better Mexico-U.S. understanding**

Mexico's incoming government believes there will be a better understanding between Mexico and the United States, especially in regard to security, in the next few years, future foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard said. The future foreign minister said they gave U.S. President Donald Trump's representatives "a proposal outlining points of understanding," the details of which will be shared once Trump reviews them. Trump was on an official visit to Britain. Ebrard said the proposal touches on issues vital to the bilateral relationship, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), immigration, regional development that includes Central America, as well as security issues.<sup>74</sup>

- **Mexico opposes U.S. plan to make it take asylum seekers -document, source**

Mexico is opposed to a U.S. request to make people seeking asylum in the United States apply in Mexico instead, according to a source and a briefing note, in a setback to U.S. efforts to deepen cooperation on immigration before a leftist president takes office. U.S. officials believe a deal known as a "Safe Third Country

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<sup>73</sup> PTI, "Team Trump plays nice in first visit to Mexico president-elect," <http://www.india.com/news/agencies/team-trump-plays-nice-in-first-visit-to-mexico-president-elect-3165464/>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Xinhua, "Incoming Mexican gov't confident there will be better Mexico-U.S. understanding," [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/14/c\\_137324003.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/14/c_137324003.htm), Accessed on 16 July 2018.

Agreement,” could prove a deterrent to thousands of Central Americans who travel through Mexico each year to seek U.S. asylum, clogging immigration courts and causing a headache for U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration. Yet despite growing U.S. pressure for it to accept the treaty, Mexico views the proposal as a red line it will not cross, according to the briefing note prepared for Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray for a meeting he had with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen in Guatemala.<sup>75</sup>

- **Mexico's outgoing gov't to turnover strong economy: finance chief**

A solid and strong economy will welcome Mexico's new president and his administration when they take office later this year, said the country's finance minister. Jose Antonio Gonzalez, Mexico's minister of finance and public credit, told the press after taking part in a forum organized by the Oxford Business Group in Mexico City. He said he will not only leave the economy on a strong financial footing, but also with an average annual growth of 2.7 percent during the past five years. He said the department he heads is ready to work with the transition team named by president-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to prepare the 2019 budget. Lopez Obrador and his administration will take office on Dec. 1.<sup>76</sup>

## Latin America and Caribbean

### Barbados

- **Barbados elects first female prime minister**

Mia Amor Mottley, the newly elected prime minister of Barbados, just made history by becoming the first female prime minister. She won the elections fair and square in May in what was considered a landslide victory. Shortly after coming into office, Mottley became a proactive member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). At a recent meeting of six heads of Caribbean states in Montego Bay, Jamaica, she participated in signing an agreement that allows free movement within member states. It will also allow people who work across the region to have their immediate family join them in those jurisdictions.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Yucatan times, “Mexico opposes U.S. plan to make it take asylum seekers -document, source,” <http://www.theyucantimes.com/2018/07/mexico-opposes-u-s-plan-to-make-it-take-asylum-seekers-document-source/>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Xinhua, “Mexico's outgoing gov't to turnover strong economy: finance chief,” [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/13/c\\_137320626.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-07/13/c_137320626.htm), Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>77</sup> ---, “Caribbean Currents: Barbados elects first female prime minister,” [http://www.phillytrib.com/commentary/columns/caribbean-currents-barbados-elects-first-female-prime-minister/article\\_3b4727ad-788b-57df-b9c9-d7925914f78c.html](http://www.phillytrib.com/commentary/columns/caribbean-currents-barbados-elects-first-female-prime-minister/article_3b4727ad-788b-57df-b9c9-d7925914f78c.html), Accessed on 16 July 2018.

## Brazil

- **Brazilian retail billionaire Rocha drops out of presidential race**

Billionaire Flavio Rocha dropped his bid to become president of Brazil on Friday as rival center-right parties seek to draw his Brazilian Republican Party (PRB) into an alliance for the October elections. The race remains Brazil's most fragmented in decades with dozens of parties jockeying to forge alliances to decide who will be officially named as candidates at conventions at the end of July. Both moderate parties said they would seek to strike an alliance with Rocha's PRB, which has 21 congressional deputies and two senators. Following Rocha's withdrawal, the PRB called for moderate parties to join forces.<sup>78</sup>

- **Ghost Candidates Plague Brazil's Push for Women in Politics**

With elections approaching, Brazil's political parties are preparing to field the legally required minimum quota of female candidates, but that doesn't mean they want them to win. This October Brazil faces its most unpredictable and divisive elections since the return to democracy, with this past frantic legal battle over the fate of former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva providing a foretaste of the bitter struggles to come. Changes to rules on campaign financing and gender quotas look set to play a key role in shaping the outcome, and may help improve Brazil's dire position in international comparisons of women in politics. In an effort to better represent the female 52 percent of the electorate, a 2009 law required political parties to ensure at least 30 percent of their candidates were women. But that rule merely led to a rise in "phantom candidates" women who are running in name only.<sup>79</sup>

## Colombia

- **Colombia, U.S., Mexico, Panama seek to combat Venezuelan corruption**

Colombia's Finance Minister Mauricio Cardenas hosted a meeting with officials from Mexico, Panama, and the United States to share information on Venezuelan government officials suspected of corruption and their support networks. During a meeting in the coastal city of Cartagena, the four nations agreed to expand cooperation to fight illegal financial networks in crisis-wracked Venezuela, according to the countries' joint statement released by UIAF, Colombia's government body that looks into suspicious money movements and sends them

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<sup>78</sup> Reuters, "Brazilian retail billionaire Rocha drops out of presidential race," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-politics-rocha/brazilian-retail-billionaire-rocha-drops-out-of-presidential-race-idUSKBN1K330K>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Bruce Douglas and Simone Preissler Iglesias, "Ghost Candidates Plague Brazil's Push for Women in Politics," <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-10/phantom-candidates-plague-brazil-s-push-for-women-in-politics>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

for investigation. The OPEC nation has already been hit with economic sanctions by Canada, the United States and a number of other countries over issues ranging from human rights violations to corruption and drug trafficking. The UIAF said the four nations would share financial intelligence on corruption networks.<sup>80</sup>

## Guatemala

- **Guatemala asks President Trump to weaken anti-corruption commission**

For more than a decade, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) has sought to dismantle organized crime groups operating within and at the margins of the state, tackle corruption, and strengthen institutions in Guatemala. CICIG has worked alongside its Guatemalan counterparts in the Attorney General's Office, the police, and other state institutions to arrest hundreds of corrupt members of the political and economic elite, drug traffickers, and government officials. In doing so, they have made powerful enemies in Guatemala, enemies who have spent the last few years undermining the integrity of CICIG. Until recently, the United States and international community had remained steadfast in their support for CICIG. However, such support seems to be wavering as the Guatemalan government hopes to leverage its newfound goodwill with the Trump administration to weaken CICIG.<sup>81</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia and India**

On 14 July, India's Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took a strong stand against the threat of financial sanctions for purchasing Russian weapons. She said that India was going ahead with the purchase of the S-400 air defence system deal and is not bound by internal laws of the US. She said that the \$5.5 billion deal has almost reached final stage and added that it has been conveyed to the US that India has an enduring relationship with Russia and negotiations on the deal has been on for years. CAATSA (sanctions law) is not a UN act, it's a US act....we have spoken on the S-400 for years, not just today," the minister said. She added that

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<sup>80</sup> Reuters, "Colombia, U.S., Mexico, Panama seek to combat Venezuelan corruption," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-venezuela-corruption/colombia-us-mexico-panama-seek-to-combat-venezuelan-corruption-idUSKBN1K2361>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Michael e. Allison, "Guatemala asks President Trump to weaken anti-corruption commission," <http://thehill.com/opinion/international/397075-guatemala-asks-president-trump-to-weaken-anti-corruption-commission>, Accessed on 16 July 2018.

the US has been assured that there were no technical issues it needed to be concerned about because of the purchase.<sup>82</sup>

During an interview on 10 July, Russian trade and industry minister Denis Manturov said that India and Russia during the May Informal meet in Sochi looked at the areas where they could strengthen collaboration. Areas of cooperation that were focused were electronic industry and extraction of rare-earth elements. The areas under consideration for joint production include aircraft building, machine building, aluminium industry, and production of mineral fertilisers, waste recycling, pharmaceutical industry (and) textile production. In the area of civil aviation, Russia is interested in organising a full-scale customer support centre in India in the future, which would include technical maintenance and repair lines, as well as in the possibility of creating production of air components. The 'Make in India' strategy can serve as a programme for localising the production of Ka-226T helicopters. Mr. Manturov said that "Indian partners are strong in programming. If we join forces, we will be able to achieve maximum efficiency in the creation of unmanned air, sea and motor vehicles."<sup>83</sup>

- **Russia, US and China**

Russia and the US are moving closer to opening their own centers for military-related research into artificial intelligence, as China did in the spring of last year. But the three governments have differing approaches. The U.S. Joint Artificial Intelligence Center aims to apply lessons from an Air Force pilot project to other military services, while the Chinese approach fuses civilian and military research and Russia's efforts are closely directed from the Kremlin.<sup>84</sup>

- **Russia and US**

On 11 July, US President Donald Trump criticized Germany for its pipeline deal with Russia and called on NATO allies to double their commitment to defense spending.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Manu Pubby, "Will not bow to US pressure on Russian sanctions: MOD", *Economic Times*, July 14, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/will-not-bow-to-us-pressure-on-russian-sanctions-mod/articleshow/64977895.cms> Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>83</sup>Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, "Technology, aviation, metals, pharma offer potential for larger India-Russia trade: Denis Manturov", *Economic Times*, July 10, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/interviews/technology-aviation-metals-pharma-offer-potential-for-larger-india-russia-trade-denis-manturov/articleshow/64925989.cms> Accessed on July 16 2018.

<sup>84</sup>Patrick Tucker, "China, Russia, and the US Are All Building Centers for Military AI", *Defense One*, July 11, 2018. <https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2018/07/china-russia-and-us-are-all-building-centers-military-ai/149643/> Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>85</sup>"Trump at NATO summit: 'Germany is totally controlled by Russia'", *Nightly News with Lester Holt*, July 11, 2018. <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/trump-at-nato-summit-germany-is-totally-controlled-by-russia-1275033155702> Accessed on July 16, 2018.



- **Russia, Argentina and Iran**

On 12 July, Argentina has asked Russia to arrest former Iranian foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati for extradition in connection with the 1994 bombing of a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. Velayati was in Russia last week as a special advisor to President Hassan Rouhani. Argentina is awaiting a response from Russia to the request, which was made within the framework of the extradition treaty between the two countries. Velayati was foreign minister when a bomb destroyed the headquarters of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) on July 18, 1994 leaving 85 dead and 300 people wounded. Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah group is accused of the carrying out the bombing of the Jewish center and an attack on Israel's embassy in Buenos Aires two years earlier at Iran's demand.<sup>86</sup>

- **Russia and Greece**

On 11 July, a Greek diplomatic source said that Greece will expel two Russian diplomats suspected of meddling in the politically sensitive issue of Macedonia. Russia said it would respond in kind to the Greek move, in a rare diplomatic tussle between two Orthodox Christian nations that have traditionally enjoyed warm relations. Macedonia is expecting an invitation at the NATO summit in Brussels this week to join following its landmark deal with Greece whereby it will change its name to the Republic of North Macedonia. Moscow strongly opposes NATO expansion. A member of Russia's upper house of parliament, Andrei Klimov, said that Moscow would expel two Greek diplomats in response. He did not mention Macedonia or give further detail about the matter. The Greek diplomatic source said that Athens would expel two diplomats and bar two other Russians from entering the country due to concerns that they were involved in rallies in Greece against the deal with Macedonia and that they had attempted to offer money to Greek state officials.<sup>87</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Peace and stability of Afghanistan was the agenda of Ulema Conference**

The International Ulema Conference occurred on 10 July 2018 in Jeddah and Mecca, Saudi Arabia in the presence of 200 representatives from 57 countries and 108 Ulema members from 32 countries. Peace and Security in Afghanistan was the

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<sup>86</sup>"Argentina Asks Russia To Arrest Iran Official Over 1994 Bombing", *Radio Farda*, July 13, 2018. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/argentina-ask-russia-to-arrest-iran-official-over-1994-bombing/29360602.html> Accessed on July 16, 2018.

<sup>87</sup>"Greece, Russia to expel diplomats in Macedonia row as NATO summit begins", *France24*, July 11, 2018. <http://www.france24.com/en/20180711-greece-russia-nato-expel-diplomats-macedonia-row-summit-begins> Accessed on July 16, 2018.

main focus of the conference where the country sent a 35 member Ulema delegation led by Mawlawi Qayamuddin Kashaf, head of the Ulema Council. Indeed, Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, head of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) rightly said, “The military operation is not the way out of war in Afghanistan. OIC is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan to reach to peace”. In the conference, both Saudi Arabia and OIC asked neighbours of Afghanistan to support Afghanistan in achieving peace. The conference condemned all kinds of terrorist and extremist activities and called on all Islamic nations to support peace effort in accordance with true values of Islamic religion.<sup>88</sup> At the conference, High Peace Council (HPC) Secretary Mohammad Akram Khpalwak quoted Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and said, “Saudi Arabia has always been striving for the wellbeing of the Islamic Ummah. We believe the kingdom will mediate on the issue of the peace process and help bring stability”.<sup>89</sup>

- **NATO to assist Afghan forces to end War**

During the NATO Summit on 11-12 July 2018 held in Brussels, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General announced that NATO members would increase their efforts to bring Taliban to the peace negotiation. However, there is a vast change in NATO’s strategy towards Afghanistan. Earlier NATO contributed nearly 100,000 troops combating Taliban influences. At present, NATO handed over the responsibility to Afghan forces by creating a specialised and committed Afghan forces especially Afghan police and soldiers to deal with Taliban and other insurgents by themselves. By acknowledging its success, thorough adoption of new strategy Jens Stoltenberg said, “There is violence, there is terrorism, there is uncertainty, there are many challenges and sometimes a lot of disappointments. That concept, I am absolutely certain, is the right concept. Then our presence now is conditions based and I think that’s also one of the reasons why we have seen some progress in the efforts to find a political solution”. Stoltenberg assured that NATO would train Afghan Special Operation forces in building a strong air force.<sup>90</sup>

- **Jawzjan Protestors Closed Key Highway**

The north and north-eastern provinces of Afghanistan witnessed huge protests since early July 2018. The supporters of Junbish-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan came out to streets on account of arrest of Nizamuddin Qaisari, the police chief of Qaisar district in Faryab on 2 July 2018. Protesters even closed Kabul-North highway and demanded negotiation between the Presidential Palace and exiled First Vice President Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum who headed Junbish group. Noor Mohammad, one demonstrator said, “We want peace, we want schools. You know

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<sup>88</sup> Tolo News, 10 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/saudi-arabia-hosts-ulema-conference-afghanistan>

<sup>89</sup> “Ghani Vows to Accept Decisions of Religious Scholars”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 12 July 2018, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=21337](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21337)

<sup>90</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 July 2018, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/07/14/nato-help-find-negotiated-end-afghan-war>

that currently Daesh is in Darzab district and they are beheading people; the government should try to destroy Daesh instead of arresting Qaisari”.<sup>91</sup>

### **India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show to be held in Mumbai in September 2018**

Trade cooperation between India and Afghanistan achieved a new height with the launch of the second annual “Passage to Prosperity: India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show” scheduled to be held in Mumbai, India on 12-15 September 2018. Launching the event on 16 July 2018, U.S. Ambassador John R. Bass said, “In the enduring partnership between the United States and Afghanistan, it is becoming increasingly clear that an outward-looking development strategy with exports at its heart is the path to a more resilient Afghanistan”. The event was attended by nearly 200 Afghan delegates consisted of government officials, business representatives, international donors, NGO representatives, diplomatic officials. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) viewed India as a key partner for Afghanistan’s economic development and this event would facilitate **cooperation between India and Afghanistan in areas of “healthcare, higher education, services, and trade promotion”**.<sup>92</sup>

- **US change of policy towards Taliban**

The New York Times reported that the US administration drastically changed its policy towards Afghanistan and prepared to hold direct talks with the Taliban to end 17 year war. Taliban always made it clear that they would likely to have direct talks with the US rather than Afghan government, a condition constantly rejected by US officials. Instead US and its allies focused on “Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process”. Amidst of increasing attacks of Taliban and rising casualties, US reconsidered its earlier strategy and deciding over to pursue direct talks with the Taliban, as reported by the New York Times. However, there is no official announcement in this regard. <sup>93</sup>

### **Bangladesh**

- **India deports Khaleda Zia's aide**

Lord Alexander Carlile, the British lawmaker denied entry into India on Wednesday night (July 11), had come prepared to be turned back from the Delhi airport and had already booked himself on a return British Airways flight scheduled to depart two hours after he landed. The Foreign Ministry also accused the lawmaker, who was hired as a member of former Bangladesh Prime Minister

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<sup>91</sup> Tolo News, 16 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/jawzhan-protectors-threaten-close-key-highway>

<sup>92</sup> Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 14 July 2018, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=21343](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21343)

<sup>93</sup> Tolo News, 18 July 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/white-house-orders-direct-talks-taliban>

Khaleda Zia's legal team, of trying to create problems between India and Bangladesh.<sup>94</sup>

- **Delhi to help expedite safe return of Rohingyas**

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh has said his country is committed to assisting the safe, speedy and sustainable return of Rohingyas to their homes in Myanmar. He made India's position clear during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office on Saturday (July 14), reports UNB. Rajnath said India is working on a project to construct prefabricated housing in Rakhine state for the Rohingyas. India will also continue to provide relief materials to help the Bangladesh government deal with the needs of those in the relief camps, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka said while sharing the outcome of the meeting.<sup>95</sup>

- **Govt wants Khaleda, Tarique far from polls: BNP**

The government is planning to amend the Representation of People Order (RPO) to disqualify Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman from the election, BNP alleged today (July 15). "The government is engaged in hatching a deep-rooted conspiracy to remove Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman from the party's leadership," the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged in a press conference at Nayapaltan.<sup>96</sup>

- **Bangladesh, India agree to ensure crime free border**

The sixth Bangladesh-India home minister level talks on Sunday (July 15) decided to work in closer cooperation to ensure a crime free border, training of policemen and combating militancy. Briefing newsmen after the talks with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said security issues largely featured their meeting with particular focus on border management, cross-border crimes and illegal activities.<sup>97</sup>

- **Indian cos to tap \$1b opportunity in Rooppur nuke project**

Indian companies are likely to participate in upcoming tenders for what The Hindu BusinessLine called non-critical works at the \$12.6-billion Rooppur Nuclear

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<sup>94</sup> "India deports Khaleda Zia's aide from Delhi as his motive was suspect," *The Independent*, July 13, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/157716>, accessed on July 13, 2018.

<sup>95</sup> "Rajnath: Delhi to help expedite safe return of Rohingyas," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2018/07/14/rajnath-delhi-to-help-expedite-safe-return-of-rohingyas>, accessed on July 14, 2018.

<sup>96</sup> "Govt wants Khaleda, Tarique far from polls: BNP," *Daily Star*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/politics/government-wants-khaleda-zia-tarique-rahman-far-bangladesh-elections-bnp-1605787>, accessed on July 15, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> "Bangladesh, Indian home ministers agree to ensure crime free border," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/07/15/dhaka-delhi-home-minister-level-talks-begin-in-dhaka>, accessed on July 15, 2018.

Power Plant (NPP) in Bangladesh. The construction of the second 1,200-megawatt unit of the plant kicked off on Saturday (July 14). The project is being executed by the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and Russia's state-owned nuclear corporation Rosatom.<sup>98</sup>

## नेपाल

### प्रोटोकॉल संधि अनिर्णीत रही:

बुधवार को चीन और नेपाल के मध्य बीजिंग में प्रोटोकॉल संधि को लेकर हुई दूसरी मीटिंग अनिर्णीत रही . कुटनीतिक सूत्रों के मुताबिक दोनों देशों के प्रतिनिधि प्रोटोकॉल के पाठ्य पर कोई आपसी सहमति नहीं बना .सके दोनों ही पक्ष इसके लिए काठमांडू में तीसरी बैठक के लिए राजी हुए हैविदित हो कि चीन और नेपाल ने . में पारगमन और परिवहन समझौते संधि पर हस्ताक्षर किये थे और समुद्री मार्ग से तीसरे देश के साथ 2016 वर्ष .व्यापार से पहले प्रोटोकॉल बनाना जरूरी होता है<sup>99</sup>

### भारत नेपाल रेल प्रोजेक्ट:

नेपाल और भारत के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों ने यह तय किया है कि रक्सौल काठमांडू रेल लाइन के लिए प्राथमिक इंजीनियरिंग और ट्रैफिक सर्वे के लिए जल्द ही एक ज्ञापन समझौता बनेगाइसके लिए हुई बैठक में नेपाल के . भौतिक संरचना और परिवहन मंत्रालय के संयुक्त सचिव केशव कुमार शर्मा और भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय के संयुक्त सचिव नामग्या खामपा ने भाग लिया.<sup>100</sup>

### डॉ के सी की मांगों की उपेक्षा :

पिछले काफी समय से डॉ गोविन्द के सी विरोध प्रदर्शन कर रहे है और इसको लेकर सरकार की काफी आलोचन हो रही है डॉ के सी राष्ट्रीय मेडिकल .शिक्षा बिल को केदार भक्त मथेमा की संस्तुतियों के आधार पर चाहते है लेकिन सरकार इसे मनाने को तैयार नहीं है.<sup>101</sup>

### भुआबद्ध जल मार्ग कोशी और नारायणी नदी से शुरू करने की बात:

भारत और नेपाल के अधिकारियों के मध्य गंगा नदी से कोशी और नारायणी नदी में जल परिवहन की बातचीत शुरू हो गयी हैइस प्रोजेक्ट पर ओली के भारत .यह प्रधानमंत्री के पी शर्मा ओली का ड्रीम प्रोजेक्ट रहा है . भ्रमण के दौरान बात हुई थी जिसके तहत भारत की नदियों से नेपाल की नदियों के मध्य परिवहन होगा और

<sup>98</sup> "Indian cos to tap \$1b opportunity in Rooppur nuke project," *Prothom Alo*, July 15, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/179831/Indian-cos-to-tap-1b-opportunity-in-Rooppur-nuke>, accessed on July 15, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> "Anil Giri, "Dispute delays transit protocol pact with China", *The Kathmandu Post*, 12 July 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-07-12>

<sup>100</sup> "Nepal, India to expedite rail project", *The Kathmandu Post*, 11 July 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-07-11>

<sup>101</sup> "Center continues to ignore Dr KC's plight", *The Kathmandu Post*, 11 July 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-07-11>

काठमांडू मे .माल और लोगों का सुगमता पूर्ण आवागमन होगां हुई इस बाबत पहली बैठक में तकनीकी और आर्थिकी संभाव्यता पर चर्चा हुई.

## Pakistan

- **Pakistani Satellites Launched**

Pakistan has launched two indigenously built satellites into orbit, using a Chinese launch vehicle. The satellites were launched onboard a Chinese Long March (LM-2C) rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre located at the Gobi desert, China. One of the satellites launched is a remote sensing satellite (PRSS<sub>1</sub>) – a dual-purpose Earth observational and optical satellite. The second test satellite launched is a PAK-*TES-1A*, developed by Space and Upper Atmospheric Research Commission (SUPARCO). Pak*TES-1A* is a 285 kg satellite equipped with an optical payload commensurate with national needs and has a design life of three years. The satellite will enable Pakistan to meet its imagery requirements in the areas of land mapping, agriculture classification and assessment, urban and rural planning, environmental monitoring, natural disaster management and water resource management for socio-economic development of the country.<sup>102</sup>

- **Increase in Remittances**

Remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis reached \$19.62 billion in FY18, up 1.4 per cent, from \$19.35bn the previous year. The State Bank of Pakistan, however, reported that the inflows in June fell to \$1.59bn, down 13.36pc, from \$1.84bn in the same period of 2016-17. Despite a continued decline, Saudi Arabia remained the largest source of remittances with inflows from the kingdom clocking in at \$4.86bn, witnessing a drop of 11.17pc. This change has come after Saudi authorities introduced strict taxation laws for overseas citizens, prompting many Pakistanis to return back home. Remittances from other Gulf Cooperation Council countries were recorded at \$2.158bn in FY18, falling by 7.19pc, from \$2.325bn in FY17. There was a massive growth of 35.92pc from the European Union with inflows reaching \$656.08 million in FY18 from \$482.69m the previous fiscal year. The single-largest yearly increase in remittances among all countries came from Spain, posting a mammoth growth 132.06pc while Oman accounted for the steepest fall at 13.61pc.<sup>103</sup>

- **Heads of Intelligence meet in Islamabad**

Heads of intelligence services of Russia, Iran, China, and Pakistan held a meeting in Islamabad on July 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss the measures against the threat of aggregation of the Islamic State militants in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Foreign Office on July

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<sup>102</sup> Sehrish Wasif, “Pakistan launches two satellites using Chinese rocket”, *The Express Tribune*, July 9, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1753260/1-pakistan-launches-two-satellites-using-chinese-rocket/> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>103</sup> “Remittances crawl up to \$19.62bn”, *Dawn*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419287> as accessed on July 16, 2018

12<sup>th</sup> expressed ignorance about such a meeting. The meeting, which was supposed to be secret, was first reported by Russian newswire TASS.<sup>104</sup>

- **Terrorist Attack In Mastung**

Around 132 people were killed and 180 injured in two separate terrorist attacks during election-related activities in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Siraj Raisani, brother of former chief minister of Balochistan Nawab Aslam Raisani was killed in the attack. The banned Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan's 'Ghazi force Lal Masjid' wing in a Whatsapp message claimed responsibility for the suicide attack.<sup>105</sup>

- **European Union on Pakistan Elections**

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Pakistan on July 14<sup>th</sup> said it would not be able to thoroughly assess some key aspects of the electoral processes owing to delayed issuance of accreditations to them. In a statement issued on July 14<sup>th</sup>, it said the mission had been operational in Islamabad since June 24<sup>th</sup>. It was deployed after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) welcomed the presence of an observation mission for the general elections.<sup>106</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **Military releases another 522 acres to original owners**

The military will hand back to the original owners another 522 acres of private land under its control in the Jaffna Peninsula, a senior army officer told. The military is still occupying 3,100 acres of private land in the peninsula. According to Military Spokesman Sumith Atapattu, the military has already given back 3,800 acres of land to the owners. "We have received part of the money from the Ministry of Rehabilitation to relocate our military camps and as soon as we receive the balance, we will be able to release most of the remaining lands to their owners," he said. The military has asked the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Ministry for Rs. 880 million to relocate military installations in privately owned lands.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Baqir Sajjad Syed, "FO says not aware of quadrilateral meeting of spy chiefs", *Dawn*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419720> as accessed on July 16, 2018; "Heads of Russian, Iranian, Chinese, Pakistani intelligence services discuss IS threat", *TASS*, July 10, 2018, <http://tass.com/world/1012616> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>105</sup> Abdul Salam & Saleem Shahid, "128 perish as savage attack on Mastung rally stuns nation", *Dawn*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419972/over-125-perish-as-savage-attack-on-mastung-rally-stuns-nation> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>106</sup> "EU mission airs inability to assess key election aspects", *Dawn*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419994/eu-mission-airs-inability-to-assess-key-election-aspects> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>107</sup> Military releases another 522 acres to original owners, 15 July 2018, <https://news.lk/news/business/item/21404-military-releases-another-522-acres-to-original-owners>.

- **Probe continues on mass grave found in Mannar**

Investigations are continuing on the mass grave which was found in Mannar, officials said. Skeletal remains of around 38 people had been found during the ground digging to build a new construction at the old cooperative store site in the northeastern town of Mannar. The town was occupied by the LTTE during Sri Lanka's civil war between 1983 and 2009. International rights groups have said that at least 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed by Government forces under the command of former president Mahinda Rajapakse in the final months of the war. Since the end of the military battles, Sri Lanka has faced international accusations of rights abuses by its troops.<sup>108</sup>

- **Sri Lanka, Thailand aim to increase bilateral trade to USD 1.5 bn by 2020 through FTA**

The President of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chan-ocha have reaffirmed their commitment to increase the bilateral trade volume to USD 1.5 billion by the year 2020, together with achieving an equitable trade balance, during the Thailand Prime Minister's official visit to Sri Lanka from 12 to 13 July 2018 at the invitation of President Sirisena.<sup>109</sup>

- **Gotabaya prepared to contest the next Presidential elections**

Former Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa says he is prepared to contest the next Presidential elections. Rajapaksa has said this in an interview with the Veerakesari newspaper. In the interview, Rajapaksa also said that it was clear slain LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran was never committed to peace talks. He said that Prabhakaran had several opportunities to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict yet he never made use of those opportunities.<sup>110</sup>

- **EU says no to Death penalty**

The heads of diplomatic missions of the European Union (EU) countries would convey their displeasure to President Maithripala Sirisena on the move to execute death sentence. Sri Lankan courts hands down the death sentence. Nevertheless, no execution has taken place since 1976. As a result, those sentenced to death are virtually commuted life in prison. President Sirisena announced recently that he would place his signature to hang death to two criminals found to be operating

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<sup>108</sup> Probe continues on mass grave found in Mannar, 14 July 2018, <https://news.lk/news/business/item/21394-probe-continues-on-mass-grave-found-in-mannar>.

<sup>109</sup> Sri Lanka, Thailand aim to increase bilateral trade to USD 1.5 bn by 2020 through FTA, 14 July 2018, <https://news.lk/news/sports-travel/item/21389-sri-lanka-thailand-aim-to-increase-bilateral-trade-to-usd-1-5-bn-by-2020-through-fta>.

<sup>110</sup> Gotabaya prepared to contest the next Presidential elections, 14 July 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/07/14/gotabaya-prepared-to-contest-the-next-presidential-elections/>



drug trafficking from their prison cells with the covert support of the Prison Authorities. Currently, there are over 1,200 prisoners sentenced to death.<sup>111</sup>

- **Projects invested by India to be launched this year: PM**

The projects which were assisted and invested by India would be commenced this year, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said. He expressed this when Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale called on the PM at Temple Trees in Colombo. The discussions also focused on the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) and the housing projects which are being constructed in the North for the displaced families, with the Indian assistance.<sup>112</sup>

## Maldives

- **Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Government of Maldives and the Saudi Fund for Development**

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed today between the Government of Maldives and the Saudi Fund for Development, at a ceremony held at the President's Office on 9<sup>th</sup> July. The agreement was signed as part of the visit by the Interior Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef. The agreement signed was the Memorandum of Understanding between the Saudi Fund for Development and the Government of the Republic of Maldives, regarding Saudi Fund's participation in the Financing of Affordable Housing Scheme Project, and the Development of Fisheries Sector Project.<sup>113</sup>

- **China donates sea ambulance to Maldives**

The Chinese government on 12<sup>th</sup> July donated a sea ambulance to Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF). Donation of the sea ambulance was part of the China free aid agreed upon between China and Maldives, during the official visit of China's President Xi Jinping to the island nation in 2014. The free aid agreement was signed between the two countries in 2015. The donated sea ambulance is larger and features more medical facilities aboard, compared to Maldives' existing fleet of 25 sea ambulances.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> EU says no to Death penalty, 15 July 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/EU-says-no-to-Death-penalty-152730.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Projects invested by India to be launched this year: PM, 13 July 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Projects-invested-by-India-to-be-launched-this-year-PM--152677.html>.

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Maldives, "MOU SIGNED BETWEEN THE MALDIVES AND SAUDI ARABIA", 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018, <http://www.foreign.gov.mv/index.php/en/mediacentre/news/4511-mou-signed-between-the-maldives-and-saudi-arabia>.

<sup>114</sup> "China donates sea ambulance to Maldives", 12 July 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6505>.

- **Nasheed blasted over IS ‘recruiter’ barb**

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed has been condemned for calling Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed “an alleged recruiter” for the Islamic State group. Shaheem, chancellor of the Islamic University of Maldives, was named as the running mate of President Abdulla Yameen for the September presidential election. Nasheed linked the former Islamic minister to the jihadi group. “President Yameen picks Shaheem – an alleged recruiter for Islamic State – as his running mate. Saudi Ambassador Bader Ali Al-Kohail endorses him. Tells you everything you need to know about Saudi support for violent extremism in the Maldives,” he tweeted.<sup>115</sup>

- **Amnesty International demands release of opposition MP Faris**

Amnesty International has called on the Maldives government to release Dhiggaru MP Faris Maumoon and withdraw the charges levied against him. The son of former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, MP Faris was convicted to jail time of four months and 24 days over unlawfully using ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM)’s flag and logo at a press conference held with the opposition coalition last year. The international rights body described Faris a prisoner of conscience, stating that he had been detained for almost a year through unfair trial proceedings on trumped-up charges, and called for immediate release of the lawmaker.<sup>116</sup>

- **The Government of Maldives has once again renewed the Invitations for Talks**

The Chair of All-Party-Talks, Dr. Mohamed Shainee, has extended invitations to Maldivian Democratic Party’s (MDP) nominated Presidential Candidate, MP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, and Jumhooree Party’s (JP) nominated running mate, MP Faisal Naseem, renewing the invitation to participate in talks with the Government. In his invitation, the Chair of All-Party-Talks has stressed the importance of engaging in dialogue to reconcile political differences to guarantee free, fair, transparent, and successful elections.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> “Nasheed blasted over IS ‘recruiter’ barb”, 11 July 2018, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/nasheed-blasted-over-is-recruiter-barb-139338>.

<sup>116</sup> “Amnesty International demands release of opposition MP Faris”, 12 July 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6502>.

<sup>117</sup> THE GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES HAS ONCE AGAIN RENEWED THE INVITATIONS FOR TALKS, 14 July 2018, <https://presidency.gov.mv/presidentNews/news/9625>.

## West Asia

### Iraq and GCC

- **Hundreds of Iraqis continue protests at Southern oil fields<sup>118</sup>**

Hundreds of Iraqis resumed protests on Saturday (July 14) near oil fields in the country's south, demanding enhanced services and employment. Over the past week, protesters at some southern provinces, including Basra, invaded airports, local councils and main roads protesting poor services and unemployment.

Tensions in Basra escalated after police opened fire to disperse protesters who had blocked the road leading to West Qurna, home of the largest oil fields in Iraq, on last Sunday (July 8). Iraq's top Shiite authority voiced on Friday (July 13) support for popular protests, saying they faced an "extreme lack of public services". Representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Abdel Mahdi al-Karbalai said: "It is not fair and it is never acceptable that this generous province is one of the most miserable areas in Iraq." He urged the "federal and local government to deal seriously with the demands of citizens", while also calling on demonstrators to refrain from violence.<sup>119</sup>

Subsequently, hundreds of Iraqis stormed the airport and halted air traffic in Najaf on Friday, extending protests to the Shi'ite holy city. Late Friday, a meeting by the ministerial security council, chaired by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, concluded that unrest during the protests was the making of "infiltrators", vowing to "take deterrent legal measures" against those.<sup>120</sup> Despite measures by the Iraqi government, including shutting down all social media and most internet services, protests in southern Iraq have continued.

- **US to install third base in Iraq's Anbar, near Syria<sup>121</sup>**

The United States is planning to install its third military base near Iraq's borders with Syria, an official security source was quoted saying on Friday. BasNews quoted the source from Iraq's Anbar province saying that the U.S. is planning to inaugurate its third base in western Anbar, near the borders with Syria, to join its already operating bases, Ain al-Assad (in al-Baghdadi region) and Habbaniya (east of the city of Ramadi).

According to the security source, the new base will cater for Iraqi and international affairs in upstream Euphrates cities, and will oversee the Anbar cities of Rutba, Qaem, Hadtiha, Annah, Rawa, the western desert and the strategic international road.

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<sup>118</sup> <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/hundreds-of-iraqis-continue-protests-at-southern-oil-fields/>

<sup>119</sup> <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1331066/iraq-sistani-backs-basra-protests-abadi-calls-calm>

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-protests-port/iraq-protests-spread-to-najaf-in-fifth-day-of-unrest-over-services-corruption-idUSKBN1K310P>

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/u-s-to-install-third-base-in-iraqs-anbar-near-syria/>

- **India-Bahrain relations in a new phase: Sushma Swaraj**

Addressing the Indian diaspora in Bahrain, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj talked about the relationship between the two countries and said, it has arrived at a new phase. "Both India and Bahrain share a glorious past and a dynamic present. The journey that began centuries ago, has arrived at a new phase in its course," she said. "India and Bahrain share a long relationship lost in the midst of time when a trade existed between Indus Valley and Dilmun Civilisation. Bahrain was a transit point for significant trade route that saw the exports of spices, ivory, timber and gems from India," she added.

Counter-terror co-operation, trade and investment are on the agenda of the minister's visit to Bahrain. Ms Swaraj co-chaired the second meeting of the India-Bahrain Joint High Commission along with Bahrain's Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, at The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain. A number of memorandums of understanding were signed following the talks.<sup>122</sup>

- **Chinese President plans to make first visit to UAE<sup>123</sup>**

The President of China, Xi Jinping, will make his first visit to the UAE next week as trade between the two countries continues to grow. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, stressed in comments published by state news agency WAM that the keenness of the UAE to develop ties with China. Sheikh Mansour said that during the three-day visit, the Chinese President will meet Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and discuss ways to enhance bilateral ties. He described the visit as an important step and also expressed his confidence that the historic visit would bring "positive results". The Chinese President will be accompanied by a high-profile delegation, which includes a number of ministers, top officials and business people from China. The visit comes just days after it was revealed that the value of trade between the UAE and China in 2017 grew to \$53.3 billion, compared to \$46.3 billion in the previous year, an increase of 15.1 percent. The UAE's foreign trade with China made up 14.7 percent of the its total foreign trade in 2017, according to statistics issued by the Ministry of Economy.

## Turkey

- **Turkey Faces Ticking Bomb with Energy Loans of \$51 Billion**

Confronted with a plunging lira, Turkey's central bank last month urged the general public to borrow in the currency in which they are paid. That warning came too late for the country's energy companies. Turkish power producers are

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<sup>122</sup> <http://www.gdnonline.com/Details/382169/Indian-External-Affairs-Minister-meets-the-Premier>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/400700-wkd-chinese-president-set-to-make-first-visit-to-the-uae>

emerging as one of the biggest risks to the nation's banks after they plowed billions of dollars into new power generation, distribution projects and deals over the past 15 years. Now, with the lira depreciating faster than they can raise electricity prices, some utilities earn less per year than what they have to repay in foreign-currency loans, according to the Ankara-based Electricity Producers' Association.<sup>124</sup>

- **White House opposes sanctions on F-35s to Turkey**

The White House is opposed to Senate appropriators' efforts to restrict the transfer of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to Turkey, according to the Insider. In a July 9 letter to Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, the White House's Office of Management and Budget Director, Mick Mulvaney, argued that "Turkey is an important NATO ally and has been an international participant with the F-35 program since 2002."<sup>125</sup>

- **Turkey to sell 30 ATAK helicopters to Pakistan in major military export deal**

Turkey and Pakistan have finalized a deal for the sale of 30 multi-role and all-weather TAI/AgustaWestland T129 ATAK attack helicopters in an agreement that has been billed as one of Ankara's largest single defense industry exports. Military sources, requesting anonymity, said the helicopters will be delivered gradually over five years, and that the TAI has also agreed to provide logistics, spare parts, training, and ammunition services.<sup>126</sup>

- **Turkey's state of emergency expected to be lifted on July 18**

Turkey's state of emergency imposed in the wake of the defeated 2016 coup attempt is expected to be lifted on July 18, a top Turkish presidential aide said on July 13. "If we are faced with a very extraordinary threat, the state of emergency mechanism can be declared again," Ibrahim Kalin told reporters after the country's first Cabinet meeting under the new presidential system.<sup>127</sup>

- **Turkey's accession talks 'should end,' Kurz tells Kathimerini**

The European Union should end accession negotiations with Turkey and pursue a different kind of cooperation with the country, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz

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<sup>124</sup> Turkey Faces Ticking Bomb With Energy Loans of \$51 Billion, *Bloomberg*, 11 July 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-11/turkey-faces-ticking-time-bomb-with-energy-loans-of-51-billion>

<sup>125</sup> White Houses opposes sanctions on F-35s to Turkey, *Ahval*, 11 July 2018. <https://ahvalnews.com/f-35/white-houses-opposes-sanctions-f-35s-turkey>

<sup>126</sup> Turkey to sell 30 ATAK helicopters to Pakistan in major military export deal, PressTV, 13 July 2018. <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/07/13/567992/Turkey-to-sell-30-ATAK-helicopters-to-Pakistan-in-major-military-export-deal>

<sup>127</sup> Turkey's state of emergency expected to be lifted on July 18, Anadolu Agency, 14 July 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-state-of-emergency-expected-to-be-lifted-on-july-18-134557>

told Kathimerini in an interview published on 15 July 2018. “The EU-Turkey negotiations should stop immediately,” he said, adding that Turkey has steadily moved away from Europe and its values in recent years. However, he said Austria has always been in favor of an “honest” relationship with the country.<sup>128</sup>

## Saudi Arabia

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

On 11 April 2018, Saudi Arabia’s oil giant, Aramco signed one of the biggest investment deals with Ratanagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals (RRPL), a joint venture of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL). The initial agreement signed between the two sides aims to build a mega refinery and petroleum project on western coast in the state of Maharashtra. The project is estimated to cost around \$ 44 billion<sup>129</sup> and Saudi Arabia holds 50 per cent stake in the project. The project is likely to produce includes a 1.2 million-barrel-per-day (bpd) refinery integrated with petrochemical facilities with a total capacity of 18 million tonnes per year.<sup>130</sup> This investment will give Saudi Arabia an assured market of an additional 30 million tonnes of its crude oil.<sup>131</sup>

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

President Amin Hasan Al-Nasser also underlined that his company is interested in entering the retail sector of India and face the consumers directly. According to him, ‘Investing in India is a key part of our company’s global downstream strategy, and another milestone in our growing relationship with India’. ‘Participating in this mega project will allow Saudi Aramco to go beyond our crude oil supplier role to a fully integrated position that may help usher in other areas of collaboration, such as refining, marketing, and petrochemicals for India’s future energy demands,’ he added.

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<sup>128</sup> Turkey’s accession talks 'should end,' Kurz tells Kathimerini, Ekathimerini.com, 16 July 2018. <http://www.ekathimerini.com/230710/article/ekathimerini/news/turkeys-accession-talks-should-end-kurz-tells-kathimerini>

<sup>129</sup> <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1234456/saudi-aramco-signs-mou-build-refining-and-chemicals-complex-india>

<sup>130</sup> [http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-saudi-aramco-agree-to-partner-on-44-billion-refinery-petchem-project-118041100513\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/reuters/india-saudi-aramco-agree-to-partner-on-44-billion-refinery-petchem-project-118041100513_1.html)

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/saudi-aramco-the-worlds-largest-oil-producer-signs-50-per-cent-stake-in-usd-44-b/310886>

As a part of capturing global oil and petrochemical markets, Aramco has signed billions of dollars of deals with several countries, including US, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, etc. With China, Aramco is further strengthening its refining role. It has a refinery joint venture with Sinopec and Exxon Mobil, and is building a 300,000-bpd refinery with Norinco. It is also aiming to sign a deal with CNPC this year to buy a stake in a 260,000-bpd refinery in Yunnan.<sup>132</sup>

- **Nato ‘ready to welcome’ Saudi Arabia and Oman**

Nato is “ready” to welcome Saudi Arabia and Oman into its co-operation initiative with Gulf countries, according to a senior official. The initiative, launched at the military alliance’s 2004 summit in Istanbul, focuses on regional security co-operation in areas such as counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation. With the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar already members of the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative, Saudi Arabia and Oman are the only Gulf Cooperation Council members yet to join.<sup>133</sup>

- **SA urges Saudi Arabia to produce more oil to help decrease petrol price**

In a bid to decrease the petrol price, the South African government has urged oil-producing Saudi Arabia to produce more oil. President Cyril Ramaphosa met with Saudi King Salman after holding talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is the heir apparent, in Jeddah on Thursday. Energy Minister Jeff Radebe says the impact of the high oil price on the staggering cost of petrol for ordinary South Africans featured in bilateral talks between South Africa and Saudi Arabia.<sup>134</sup>

- **Saudi Arabia intercepts ballistic missile targeting Najran**

Saudi Arabia’s air defense system intercepted a ballistic missile fired by the Houthi militia from northern Yemen on Saturday. A Saudi-led coalition said the missile was fired from Saada province toward the southern Saudi city of Najran. No casualties were reported. Coalition spokesperson, Col. Turki Al-Maliki, said that at 12:52 p.m. the coalition’s

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<sup>132</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/business/saudi-aramco-signs-44-bn-deal-for-indian-refinery-complex/article23504593.ece>

<sup>133</sup> Nato ‘ready to welcome’ Saudi Arabia and Oman, *The National*, 13 July 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/nato-ready-to-welcome-saudi-arabia-and-oman-1.749925>

<sup>134</sup> SA urges Saudi Arabia to produce more oil to help decrease petrol price, *EWN News*, 13 July 2018. <http://ewn.co.za/2018/07/13/sa-urges-saudi-arabia-to-produce-more-oil-to-help-decrease-petrol-price>

air defense forces spotted the missile launched by the Iran-backed militant group, where it was intercepted and destroyed.<sup>135</sup>

- **UAE follows Saudi Arabia with \$10bn pledge to South Africa**

The United Arab Emirates intends to invest as much as \$10 billion in South Africa's economy, with a focus on tourism and mining. The commitment was made during the first state visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to the Middle Eastern nation, the Presidency said in an emailed statement on Saturday. It matches a pledge by Saudi Arabia earlier this week when Ramaphosa visited that country too.<sup>136</sup>

- **Bahrain, UAE slam Qatar for attempts to defame Saudi Arabia**

Bahrain's Ministry of Information Affairs has announced full support for the Saudi Media Ministry's statement rejecting Qatar's irresponsible and false allegations linking Saudi Arabia with the pirate TV channel beoutQ. The Bahraini ministry also rejected the allegation of political intent connected to the anti-terror Arab quartet's dispute with Qatar. The ministry asserted its understanding of the reasons behind the Saudi ban on BeIN Sport, a subsidiary of Al Jazeera Media Network, owing to the involvement of the Qatari channels in supporting terrorism and extremism, as well as promoting sedition, hatred and extremism<sup>137</sup>m in the region.<sup>138</sup>

## Israel

- **Israel and Russia**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met on July 10<sup>th</sup> with a visiting delegation of top Russian officials to discuss regional developments. The delegation consisted of Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy, Alexander Lavrentiev, and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin. According to Netanyahu's office, the prime minister "made it clear that Israel will not tolerate a military presence by Iran or its proxies anywhere in Syria and that

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<sup>135</sup> Saudi Arabia intercepts ballistic missile targeting Najran, Arab News, 14 July 2018. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1338726/saudi-arabia>

<sup>136</sup> UAE follows Saudi Arabia with \$10bn pledge to South Africa, *Arabian Business*, 14 July, 2018. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/400709-uae-follows-saudi-arabia-with-10bn-pledge-to-south-africa>

<sup>138</sup> Bahrain, UAE slam Qatar for attempts to defame Saudi Arabia, *Arab News*, 15 July, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1339056/saudi-arabia>



Syria must strictly abide by the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement.”<sup>139</sup> Later on July 11<sup>th</sup>, while meeting Russian President Putin in Moscow, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel would not seek to topple Russian ally, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, but Moscow should encourage Iranian forces to quit Syria. Netanyahu conveyed the message in talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, just hours after Israel shot down a Syrian drone manufactured in Russia that had penetrated its airspace, underscoring the frontier’s volatility.<sup>140</sup> Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed Israel’s position regarding Syria and Iran’s involvement with US President Trump in a telephone call on July 14<sup>th</sup>. It should be noted that US President Donald Trump will be meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki on July 16, 2018.<sup>141</sup>

- **Border Clash Intensifies at Gaza**

Clashes between Gaza protestors and the IDF intensified on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Two teenagers were killed by Israeli air raids on July 14<sup>th</sup>. The Israeli military carried out its largest airstrike campaign in Gaza since the 2014 war on July 14<sup>th</sup> as Hamas militants fired dozens of rockets into Israel throughout the day, threatening to trigger an all-out war after weeks of growing tensions along the volatile border. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, two more people died in Gaza during an attempt to detonate an Israeli bomb dropped during the weekend.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> “Netanyahu to Visiting Russian Officials: Israel Will Not Tolerate Iranian Military Presence in Syria”, *Algemeiner*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/07/10/netanyahu-to-visiting-russian-officials-israel-will-not-tolerate-iranian-military-presence-in-syria/> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>140</sup> Dan Williams & Gleb Stolyarov, “Israel to Russia: Assad’s safe from us, but Iran must quit Syria“, *Reuters*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-israel/israel-to-russia-assads-safe-from-us-but-iran-must-quit-syria-idUSKBN1K11RX> as accessed on July 16, 2018; “Israeli interceptor missile shot down Russian unmanned air vehicle”, *Defence Blog*, July 16, 2018, <https://defence-blog.com/aviation/israeli-interceptor-missile-shot-russian-unmanned-air-vehicle.html> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>141</sup> Herb Keinon, “Netanyahu talks to Trump before Trump-Putin summit”, *The Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/PM-talks-to-Trump-before-Trump-Putin-summit-562545> as accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>142</sup> “Israeli Air Raids Kill two Palestinian Teens in Gaza”, *The Palestine Chronicle*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/israeli-air-raids-kill-two-palestinian-teens-in-gaza-videos/> as accessed on July 16, 2018; Anna Ahronheim, “Rocket barrages fired from Gaza after IAF strikes Hamas targets”, *The Jerusalem Post*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/IDF-officer-injured-in-Gaza-grenade-attack-562460> as accessed on July 16, 2018; “Israel exchanges intense fire with Hamas militants in Gaza”, *CTV News*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/israel-exchanges-intense-fire-with-hamas-militants-in-gaza-1.4013243> as accessed on July 16, 2018;

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 10	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	Awami National Party (ANP) leader Haroon Bilour and 12 others were killed while 30 others were injured when a suicide bomber detonated the explosives targeting his vehicle in ANP rally in Yakatoot area OF Peshawar. <sup>143</sup>  On July 11, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. <sup>144</sup>	14	30
2	July 12	Balochistan	Unidentified armed assailants targeted the campaign office of Agha Shakeel Durrani, the leader of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), contesting elections from Khuzdar district, and injured two people in the blast. <sup>145</sup>	0	2
3	July 12	KP	Unidentified assailants shot dead political activist Qari Said Alam while he was travelling with two of his companions, Fahad and Tayyab, on Nasir Bagh Road in provincial capital Peshawar. While Fahad sustained injuries, Tayyab escaped unhurt. <sup>146</sup>	1	2
4	July 13	Balochistan	At least 128 people, including politician Nawabzada Siraj Raisani, were killed and more than 200 injured in a suicide attack in Mastung district. The attack targeted a corner meeting organised by Nawabzada Siraj, a Balochistan Awami Party	149	189

<sup>143</sup> Iftikhar Firdous, ANP leader Haroon Bilour, 12 others martyred in Peshawar suicide blast, *The Express Tribune*, July 10, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1754606/1-anp-leader-critically-injured-blast-partys-rally-peshawar/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>144</sup> TTP claims responsibility for Peshawar blast; ANP's Haroon Bilour laid to rest, *Dawn*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419202/ttp-claims-responsibility-for-peshawar-blast-anps-haroon-bilour-laid-to-rest>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>145</sup> Syed Ali Shah, 2 injured in blast near political party's office in Khuzdar, *Dawn*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419625/2-injured-in-blast-near-political-partys-office-in-khuzdar>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>146</sup> Political activist shot dead in Peshawar, *Dawn*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419690/political-activist-shot-dead-in-peshawar>, accessed on July 16, 2018

			(BAP) candidate for PB-35 (Mastung).  Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack through its Amaq News Agency. <sup>147</sup>  The death toll increased to 149 with 189 others till injured. <sup>148</sup>		
5	July 13	KP	At least four people were killed and 32 others were injured in a remote controlled bomb blast near the convoy of former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani in Bannu District. Durrani escaped unhurt. <sup>149</sup>	0	4

## Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 11	Nangarhar	At least 11 people were killed and 10 others were injured after two militants stormed an education department's office in Jalalabad. Attaullah Khogyani, the governor's spokesman, said that the assault lasted for four hours and ended with the killing of the two militants.  No outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. <sup>150</sup>	11	10
2	July 13-14	Kabul	Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed in a statement that at least 162	162	66

<sup>147</sup> Syed Ali Shah, Mastung bombing: 128 dead, over 200 injured in deadliest attack since APS, IS claims responsibility, *Dawn*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419812/mastung-bombing-128-dead-over-200-injured-in-deadliest-attack-since-aps-is-claims-responsibility>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>148</sup> Mohammad Zafar, CM Marri vows to avenge deaths of 149 people killed in Mastung carnage, *The Express Tribune*, July 16, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1758971/1-cm-marri-vows-avenge-deaths-149-people-killed-mastung-carnage/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>149</sup> Ali Akbar, Blast targets convoy of JUI-F leader Akram Khan Durrani in Bannu, 4 killed, *Dawn*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419792/blast-targets-convoy-of-jui-f-leader-akram-khan-durrani-4-killed>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>150</sup> 11 Killed, 10 Injured in Nangarhar Office Attack, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 12, 2018, [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=21334](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21334), accessed on July 16, 2018

			militants, including seven Taliban ‘commanders’, were killed and 66 others were wounded in the past 24 hours in Afghan security forces’ operations in the country. <sup>151</sup>		
3	July 15	Kabul	At least seven people were killed and 15 others sustained injuries in a suicide attack close to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Kabul. <sup>152</sup>	7	15
4	July 15	Kabul	Residents of Khak-e-Jabar district said Taliban has occupied dozens of villages in the district, following government’s unilateral June ceasefire. The residents said when government announced the ceasefire the Taliban members arrived in the district, but when the ceasefire ended, they did not leave the area. <sup>153</sup>	Taliban seize villages in Kabul	

## Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 11	Diyala	Two civilians were killed in a bomb blast in Kanaan region of Diyala.  According to United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a total of 76 people were killed and 129 others were injured due to acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflicts during the month of June. <sup>154</sup>	2	0
2	July 12	Kirkuk	Seven IS militants were killed in an airstrike carried out by Iraqi fighter jets in al-Samaka village and at Wadi al-Shai region in Dakuk, south of Kirkuk. The airstrikes “left seven Islamic State members killed and their rest houses	7	NS

<sup>151</sup> 162 Insurgents Killed Across The Country: MoD, *Tolo News*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/162-insurgents-killed-across-country-mod>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>152</sup> Explosion near Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation in Kabul city, *Khaama Press*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/explosion-near-ministry-of-rural-rehabilitation-in-kabul-city-05590/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>153</sup> Aniaa Shaheed, Taliban Occupy Villages In Kabul After Ceasefire *Tolo News*, July 15, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-occupy-villages-kabul-after-ceasefire>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>154</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Roadside bomb explodes, kills two civilians in Iraq’s Diyala: Source, *Iraqi News*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/bomb-blast-leaves-two-civilians-killed-in-diyala-source/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

			destroyed,” according to an unnamed source. <sup>155</sup>		
3	July 14	Mosul	At least 14 IS militants were arrested in a wide-scale security operation that was carried out south of Mosul. Spokesperson for Nineveh Police Command, Lieutenant General Emad Hanash, said, “Security troops confiscated three tunnels for Islamic State in villages of Mahana and al-Haj Ali.” <sup>156</sup>	Arrest	

## Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 13	Idlib	<p>ISIS has recently stepped up their operations against the rebel forces in the Idlib Governorate, targeting the latter in several parts of the province using their sleeper cells.</p> <p>In a new report from their official media wing, IS claimed that they carried out drive-by shooting against some Jaysh Al-Izza fighters along the Ma’arat Al-Nu’man Road in southern Idlib.<sup>157</sup></p>	ISIS targets rebel forces	
2	July 14	Idlib	The armed groups in Idlib are preparing to launch an offensive against the regime troops in the towns of Kafraia and Foawa, north of Idlib. A military source in Idlib informed that the offensive will be carried out under the command of Hay’at Tahrir al-	Armed groups preparing to launch offensive	

<sup>155</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Seven Islamic State members killed in airstrikes, south of Kirkuk, *Iraqi News*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/seven-islamic-state-members-killed-in-airstrikes-south-of-kirkuk/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>156</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Fourteen Islamic State members arrested in security operation, south of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/fourteen-islamic-state-members-arrested-in-security-operation-south-of-mosul/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>157</sup> Leith Aboufadel, ISIS carries out drive-by shooting against rebels in Idlib (photos), *Al Masdar News*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-carries-out-drive-by-shooting-against-rebels-in-idlib-photos/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

			Sham, along with the factions deployed in both towns. <sup>158</sup>	
3	July 15	Idlib	Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reportedly told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that the de-escalation zone agreement could be jeopardized by a potential Syrian Army offensive in the Idlib Governorate. The two leaders discussed the Syrian Army's capture of Dara'a and the potential issues that would arise if the latter carried out a similar operation in Idlib.	Turkish President warns Russian President over Syrian offensive

## International Economic Issues

- **Trade Policy Review: China**

The seventh review of the trade policies and practices of China took place on July 11-13, 2018. The basis for the review was a report by the WTO Secretariat and a report by the Government of China. According to the review, during the review period, the Chinese economy continued to be a major driver of global economic growth. However, real GDP growth has been moderating as the economy adjusts to the “new normal”, which implies more stable, albeit lower, growth rates of around 7% per year in the foreseeable future; growth rebalances from investment to consumption, from external to internal demand, and from manufacturing to services. Real GDP grew by 6.7% in 2016, and is expected to be around 6.8% in 2017. Consumption was responsible for around two-thirds of the growth during the review period. The share of services in GDP exceeded 50% for the first time in 2015. Within services, e-commerce sales and tourism services imports have been particularly strong. In contrast, the share of merchandise trade in GDP has declined. Income inequality and poverty levels have declined. Excess capacity in some energy and manufacturing sectors and implicit assistance to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has increased over a number of years.<sup>159</sup>

- **Switzerland initiates WTO dispute complaint against US steel, aluminium duties**

Switzerland has requested WTO dispute consultations with the United States regarding US duties on certain imported steel and aluminium products. The request was circulated to WTO members on July 12, 2018. Switzerland claims the

<sup>158</sup> Loaa Adel, Armed groups to launch offensive north of Idlib, *Iraqi News*, July 14, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/armed-groups-to-launch-offensive-north-of-idlib/>, accessed on July 16, 2018

<sup>159</sup> WTO, “Trade Policy Review: China”, July 11-13, 2018, [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tpr\\_e/tp475\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp475_e.htm) (accessed on July 16, 2018)

US duties of 25% and 10% on imports of steel and aluminium products respectively are inconsistent with provisions of the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 and the Agreement on Safeguards.<sup>160</sup>

- **IMF lowers India's growth projection, but it still retains world's top spot**

On July 16, 2018, the *Economic Times* reported that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cut India's growth forecast by 10 basis points to 7.3% for the current year and by 30 basis points to 7.5% for 2019, citing faster-than-anticipated monetary tightening and higher crude prices. The international body had projected 7.4% and 7.8% growth for 2018 and 2019, respectively in its April forecast. India is still the fastest growing economy, well ahead of 6.6% and 6.4% growth for China. Among emerging market and developing economies, growth prospects are also becoming more uneven, amid rising oil prices, higher yields in the United States, escalating trade tensions, and market pressures on the currencies of some economies with weaker fundamentals, as per IMF's update of the World Economic Outlook (WEO). Forecast for global growth remains unchanged at 3.9% with oil producers gaining at the expense of consumers.<sup>161</sup>

- **IMF warns Trump trade war could cost global economy \$430bn**  
In its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO), released on July 16, 2018, the International Monetary Fund has warned that rising trade tensions between the United States and the rest of the world could cost the global economy \$430bn (£324bn), with America "especially vulnerable" to an escalating tariff war. Delivering a sharp rebuke for Donald Trump, the Washington-based organisation said the current threats made by the US and its trading partners risked lowering global growth by as much as 0.5% by 2020, or about \$430bn in lost GDP worldwide. Although all economies would suffer from further escalation, the US would find itself "as the focus of global retaliation" with a relatively higher share of its exports taxed in global markets.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> WTO, "Switzerland initiates WTO dispute complaint against US steel, aluminium duties", July 12, 2018, [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news18\\_e/ds556rfc\\_12jul18\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/ds556rfc_12jul18_e.htm) (accessed on July 13, 2018)

<sup>161</sup> "IMF lowers India's growth projection, but it still retains world's top spot", *The Economic Times*, July 16, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/imf-cuts-indias-growth-projection-but-it-still-retains-worlds-top-spot/articleshow/65012326.cms> accessed on July 16, 2018)

<sup>162</sup> Richard Partington, "IMF warns Trump trade war could cost global economy \$430bn", *The Guardian*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jul/16/imf-trump-trade-war-global-economy-us-tariff-weo> (accessed on July 16, 2018)