

Weekly Media Updates **(6 – 12 August, 2018)**

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

- **Zimbabwe: Mnangagwa, Chiwenga Fight Explodes Publicly¹**

The simmering political power struggle between President Emmerson Mnangagwa - currently ruling under military tutelage after coming in last November through a coup - and his co-deputy retired General Constantino Chiwenga over the unresolved Zanu PF leadership issue after the overthrow of former president Robert Mugabe has now exploded into the public domain.

This follows the shooting and killing of more than six civilians in Harare last week in the midst of violent protests over the hotly-disputed presidential election result. The incident and renewed repression in the middle of fierce reprisals against the opposition has outraged Zimbabweans and the world, leaving the country under siege as it slides back into political instability reminiscent of the Mugabe era.

Mnangagwa, who has emerged weaker after the elections which revealed his fragile social base in Zanu PF and nationally as he won by a wafer-thin 0,8% margin, while his party got a two-thirds majority, has buckled under local and international pressure to investigate the gruesome killings which were captured vividly in the mainstream media and social media platforms. High-profile security bosses and experts fear that the current environment might precipitate a bloody fight between Mnangagwa and Chiwenga, and their militarised factions.

Now that Mnangagwa has caved in to pressure to appoint a team to investigate the shootings, which suggest he did not deploy the army himself and ordered the killings, this will bring him into direct confront with Chiwenga.

- **Sudan: Ruling Party Removes Presidential Term Limits²**

On Thursday, 9 August 2018, the Consultative Council of Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) took a key first step toward abolishing presidential term limits in Sudan, paving the way for a potential presidency without end for President Omar al-Bashir in advance of elections slated for 2020. The vote by the NCP unanimously approved a proposal to amend its party regulations to allow the nomination of Bashir. The NCP constitution previously limited to two terms the nomination of the party candidates for the positions of the president and the vice president."

It is anticipated that the NCP parliamentarians would table a resolution to amend Sudan's constitution to remove the current two term limits for the positions as soon as the national Parliament returns from its current recess in October. The resolution would easily pass given the NCP's and allied satellite parties automatic majority.

- **Officials accused of corruption in Kenya³**

Kenyan authorities have arrested several senior officials on suspicion of corruption over their management of a flagship \$3.2bn railway project. The National Prosecution Authority said in a statement on Saturday that it had agreed to charge 14 civil servants and

¹ Zimbabwe Independent, 10 August 2018, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201808110075.html>

² 10 August 2018, <http://sudaneseonline.com/board/10/msg/1533942772.htm>

³ <http://www.railpage.com.au/news/s/kenya-officials-accused-of-corruption-in-flagship-rail-project>

business people, as well as three companies, over compensation for land purchased for the construction of the Chinese-funded line linking the capital, Nairobi, to the coastal city of Mombasa.

Opened in May 2017, the Nairobi-Mombasa line is part of a "master plan" agreed on by East African leaders to connect Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and Ethiopia by rail. It also forms part of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, a multibillion-dollar series of infrastructure projects upgrading land and maritime trade routes between China and Europe, Asia and Africa. Beijing's Export-Import Bank has funded 90 percent of the project's costs, while its state-owned Road and Bridges Corporation is in charge of maintaining and operating the railway.

No Chinese companies or individuals were accused of financial misdealing during the railway's construction. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has repeatedly pledged to stamp out corruption in the country, which was ranked 143rd out of 180 in Transparency International's 2017 corruption perceptions index.

- **ANC Shocks Twitter by Calling All White People ‘Murderers’⁴**

A tweet on the ANC's parliamentary Twitter account shocked many on when it appeared to call all white people murderers. The tweet, which has subsequently been deleted, read: "The biggest mistake we are making is to consult murderers. White people are 9% of the population, they own 79% of land. They never came and consulted us for the land. If they want us to forgive them now, then let us share the land, the mineral resources." It was not in quotation marks, so when it was read out of context it came as a bombshell to many, who assumed that this was the view of the ANC itself. The party then told its critics that it had merely been quoting the remarks of one of the members of the public who had come to parliament's constitutional review committee's public hearing on the review of section 25 of the constitution that was being held in the town of Beaufort West in the Western Cape.

- **Landmark Ruling in Angola Acquits Journalist Rafael Marques of all charges⁵**

A court in Luanda has acquitted journalist Rafael Marques and editor Mariano Brás of charges of insulting the Angolan state in what many considered a milestone for the country's press freedom. Marques was charged in June 2017 after publishing an article in October 2016 alleging that then-Attorney General João Maria de Souza had engaged in corrupt dealings to acquire beachfront property where he built a residential compound. The article was published on independent news website Maka Angola, of which Marques is the founder and editor. Mariano Brás, the chief editor of the newspaper O Crime, which published the article in print, was facing the same charges. Marques was additionally being accused of "offending an organ of sovereignty" for allegedly having offended the ex-president José Eduardo dos Santos in the same piece. At the latest hearing on July 6, judge Josina Falcão, who was presiding the case at Luanda Provincial Court, stated that the journalists merely "fulfilled their duty to inform" and dismissed all the accusations against both men.

- **Diamond-Producing Companies in Angola Can Freely Sell Up to 60 per cent of production⁶**

⁴ The Citizen, August 5, 2018, <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/1991557/anc-shocks-twitter-by-calling-all-white-people-murderers/>

⁵ Global Voices, August 6, 2018, <https://globalvoices.org/2018/08/06/landmark-ruling-in-angola-acquits-journalist-rafael-marques-of-all-charges/>

⁶ Macau Hub, August 6, 2018, <https://macauhub.com.mo/2018/08/06/pt-empresas-produtoras-de-diamantes-em-angola-podem-vender-livremente-ate-60-da-producao/>

Companies that extract diamonds in Angola can freely sell up to 60 per cent of production under the new “diamond marketing policy,” which has brought an end to the previous “Preferential Customers” regime, daily newspaper Jornal de Angola reported. The new “Diamond Marketing Policy” specifically provides for the restructuring of the former system of “Preferred Customers” (those who had the most advantageous conditions for the purchase of rough diamonds), into another more appropriate for the marketing policy, through contracts for the regular purchase of diamonds for an extended period of time (from one to three years), with special rules. The document, authorised by a Presidential Decree of 27 July, stipulates that diamonds from artisanal mining, through small cooperatives, are acquired exclusively by the national diamond trading company Sodiam, based on market price and the official price list, to be approved by the government. In the new system for the sale of rough diamonds the sale by producers to “indicated companies or companies owned by them,” is possible, according to the “authorised quota of up to 60% of production,” using long-term contracts, duly authorised by the government, as well as to cutting companies located in Angola.

- **Zambia Hands Back Biti, 5 Other Zimbabweans Seeking Asylum⁷**

Human Rights Watch says Zambia now likely to be taken to international courts for breaking international law and treaty obligations. The Zambian Government has handed over opposition MDC lawmaker Tendai Biti and five others to the Zimbabwean police in total disregard of a High Court Order granted to Mr Biti. According to Mr Biti’s legal team, the Zambian immigration office handed the opposition leader at 06:00hrs this morning despite being served with a court order at 04:00hrs today (August 9, 2018). “Contrary to the law and a Court order. And even assuming it was a deportation, which it was not, the law is clear that a deportee can choose a country of his choice to which he can be deported but in this case he was denied that right”. “The whole thing just smells of illegality and extra judicial behaviour by Zambian authorities. It is also a breach of international law”, the legal team said. He was accompanied across the border by a horde of heavily armed Zambian police officers and the legal team is currently making frantic efforts to establish his exact whereabouts.

- **Zambia Calls for More Investment in Agro-Processing Industries⁸**

Zambian President Edgar Lungu has called for increased investment in agro-processing industries to help boost the country’s agriculture sector. The Zambian leader said value addition especially in the fisheries and livestock sub-sectors was cardinal as the two have the potential to spur the much needed economic development in the country. The fisheries and livestock sub-sectors were among the strategic areas of focus in government’s quest of attaining sustainable economic development, he added. In remarks delivered when he officially opened the 92nd Zambia Agricultural and Commercial Show, the Zambian leader called on the private sector to increase investment in agro-processing industries to ensure increased job creation and the competitiveness of the country in the region.

- **Zimbabwe Election: Inauguration Delayed after Result Challenged⁹**

Sunday’s inauguration of Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa has been halted after a legal challenge by the opposition against the election result. MDC leader Nelson Chamisa says he has evidence to show that he was cheated out of the July 30, 2018 presidential vote. His party says the poll was marred by “mammoth theft and fraud”, but the electoral commission insists that there was “no skulduggery”. Mr Mnangagwa won

⁷ Zambian Watchdog, August 9, 2018, <https://www.zambiawatchdog.com/zambia-hands-over-6-zimbabweans-seeking-asylum/>

⁸ Khmer Times, August 6, 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50519414/zambia-calls-for-more-investment-in-agro-processing-industries/>

⁹ BBC News, August 10, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-45145093>

50.8 per cent of the vote compared with Mr Chamisa's 44.3 per cent. "The inauguration is no longer going ahead as planned," Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi said, after the opposition filed the challenge on August 10, 2018. Zimbabwe's constitution allows a presidential candidate to legally challenge electoral results within seven days of a winner being declared. The Constitutional Court now has 14 days to rule on the legal challenge by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

- **Mozambique's Former Renamo Soldiers to be Part of Country's Armed Forces**¹⁰
Soldiers of Mozambique's former rebel National Resistance Army, or Renamo, will be integrated into the country's armed forces as part of a deal signed with the government to resolve issues that have stalled a permanent peace agreement. A commission will be established to receive weapons from the fighters, Renamo interim leader Ossufo Momade told reporters by phone from his hideout in Gorongosa, more than 1,000km north of the capital, Maputo. No agreement has been reached yet on combining Renamo's fighters with the police force, Momade said. Renamo fought the government in a 16-year civil war that ended in 1992 and left as many as 1-million people dead. In July 2018, parliament passed new legislation that gives more powers to political parties that win the majority of votes in provinces, as the nation prepares for local polls in October 2018.
- **Tanzania Wants to Build Pipeline to Pump Gas to Uganda**¹¹
Tanzania wants to build a pipeline to pump natural gas to neighbouring Uganda, another step in the two countries' bid to expand energy cooperation. State-run Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC) said on August 6, 2018 that the pipeline would start from its capital Dar es Salaam, then pass through Tanga port on the Indian Ocean and to Mwanza, a port on Lake Victoria before crossing the border to Uganda. It said it was looking to hire a contractor to conduct a feasibility study to determine current and future natural gas demand "by identifying all potential customers". It did not give an estimated volume.
- **Seychelles to Get New Human Rights Commission after Signing of Bill**¹²
The Seychelles Human Rights Commission, which will operate independently of the Office of the Ombudsman, will serve to strengthen the framework for the protection of human rights. At the signing ceremony, Jean-Paul Adam, the health minister who also presented the Bill to the National Assembly in April 2018, said, "The reinforcement of this institution is very much in line with the priorities that President Danny Faure outlined to emphasise transparency and to give recourse to every citizen, no matter their background or their capacity. " Adam added that the new commission will help citizens "be able to have their rights enforced throughout their lives, to have the support necessary, to have redress where they feel their right has been disrespected." The role of the new commission will include mediation, conciliation and negotiation to enable it to investigate and detect human rights-related abuses and make recommendations to the government. It is expected to bring better, faster and wider recourse to afflicted parties.
- **Suspected al-Shabaab Militants Kill Five Soldiers in Kenya's Lamu: County Official**¹³
Five Kenyan soldiers were killed in an attack claimed by the Somali group al Shaabab in Lamu County on Kenya's north coast on August 8, 2018, a senior official said. The local

¹⁰ Business Day, August 8, 2018, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/africa/2018-08-08-mozambiques-former-renamo-soldiers-to-be-part-of-countrys-armed-forces/>

¹¹ Times Live, August 6, 2018, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/africa/2018-08-06-tanzania-wants-to-build-pipeline-to-pump-gas-to-uganda/>

¹² Seychelles News Agency, August 10, 2018, <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/9567/Seychelles+to+get+new+Human+Rights+Commission+after+signing+of+bill>

¹³ Reuters, August 8, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-security/suspected-al-shabaab-militants-kill-five-soldiers-in-kenyas-lamu-county-official-idUSKBN1KT26D>

government official in the county, who asked not to be named, said the attack occurred between the areas of Majengo and Bodhei. He said five soldiers were killed after their truck ran over an improvised explosive device. Kenya Defence Forces spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Paul Njuguna told Reuters that six soldiers were injured, two critically, in the explosion but none were killed. It was not immediately clear why the accounts of the KDF and the county official differed. Abdiasis Abu Musab, al Shabaab's spokesman for military operations, said the group was behind the attack on the KDF convoy, and put the number of those killed at nine. Kenyan officials say the group often exaggerates casualty figures.

- **South Sudanese Celebrate Peace Deal Signed by Kiir and Machar¹⁴**

Businesses are shut in South Sudan's capital, Juba, as people celebrate the signing of a power-sharing deal aimed at ending a brutal five-year civil war. The deal will see rebel leader Riek Machar return to government as one of five vice-presidents. He and President Salva Kiir signed the agreement in neighbouring Sudan. Tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions displaced in the conflict which broke out about two years after South Sudan's independence. This is essentially the same agreement that was signed in 2015 which collapsed a year or so later - with Mr Machar fleeing Juba on foot, chased by helicopter gunships. But this time around there is an impetus for peace, including from the elite on both sides of the conflict.

- **South Sudan President Kiir Grants Amnesty to Rebel Leader Machar, Others¹⁵**

On August 5, 2018, South Sudan President Kiir, SPLM-IO leader Machar and other groups signed a ceasefire and power-sharing agreement in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. South Sudan President Salva Kiir granted amnesty to all those involved in the nation's civil war including rebel leader Riek Machar, according to a television broadcast, days after they signed a peace deal. The amnesty order was read out on state-run television late on August 9, 2018. A political row between Kiir and Machar degenerated in 2013 into a war that has killed tens of thousands, forced a quarter of the population to flee their homes and wrecked the country's oil-dependent economy. The conflict has often been fought along ethnic lines. Previous peace deals have failed, including one in 2015 that briefly halted hostilities but fell apart after Machar returned to the capital Juba the following year.

- **Djibouti Rejects London Tribunal Ruling Over Doraleh terminal¹⁶**

Relations between the tiny-but-strategic Republic of Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hit a new low on Saturday (4 August) when the Djiboutian government dismissed a ruling by the London Court of International Arbitration that its seizure of the Doraleh container terminal from Dubai-based port operator DP World was illegal. In response, DP World has protested that Djibouti "does not have sovereignty over a contract governed by English law", and that its decision demonstrates that it "does not recognise the international rule of law". The Djiboutian government nationalised the facility in February 2018 on the grounds that DP World's ownership violated Djibouti's national sovereignty, and passed legislation, which it called Law 202, to end the 30-year concession agreement that was signed in 2006.

- **Djibouti Airlifts Citizens from Dire Dawa, Affirms Ties with Ethiopia¹⁷**

¹⁴ BBC News, August 6, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-45077389>

¹⁵ Eyewitness News, August 9, 2018, <https://ewn.co.za/2018/08/09/south-sudan-president-kiir-grants-amnesty-to-rebel-leader-machar-others>

¹⁶ Global Construction Review, August 6, 2018, <http://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/djibouti-rejects-london-tribunal-ruling-over-doral/>

¹⁷ Africa News, August 8, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/08/djibouti-airlifts-citizens-from-dire-dawa-affirms-ties-with-ethiopia/>

Djiboutian Foreign Minister has reaffirmed the country's ties with neighbouring Ethiopia in the wake of attacks on some nationals in the Ethiopian city of Dire Dawa. Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf confirmed that Djibouti had airlifted a total of 1,700 nationals from Ethiopia as on August 6, 2018 but that there was no reason for Ethiopians in their country to panic. He said the government was in constant communication with Addis Ababa with respect to securing the lives of Djiboutians in Ethiopia. The two peoples of Djibouti and Ethiopia have always been living together in harmony. This is not going to change. Our destinies are intertwined. We will make sure that nothing disrupt that.

- **Violent Attack on Ethiopian Nationals in Djibouti¹⁸**

A wave of violence in Djibouti has injured and uprooted thousands of Ethiopians, in what was widely believed to be a retaliation attack. The violent attacks against Ethiopian immigrants left several wounded, according to Ethiopian witnesses. Ethiopian-owned shops have been attacked and looted in Balbala area of Djibouti city, according to witnesses. The violence has been triggered following attacks that left six Djiboutian nationals dead in the Ethiopian city of Dire Dawa on August 5, 2018. "The Ethiopians who live in the Somali neighbourhoods of Djibouti city and the suburbs of Balbala have fled their homes and are now sheltered in Arhiba, an area inhabited by the Afars," an Ethiopian businessman who asked not to be named told Ethiopia Observer. Thousands of Ethiopians, most of them Oromo ethnic groups are sheltered in makeshift camps at Arhiba fearing for their lives, the witnesses said.

- **Ethiopia Signs Deal with Oromo Rebels to End Hostilities¹⁹**

Ethiopia's government has signed an agreement to end hostilities with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which it had previously labelled a "terrorist movement". The deal signed in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, on August 7, 2018 appeared to be another step by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to improve security and diplomatic relations, reform institutions and open parts of the state-controlled economy. Since the 1970s, the rebels have fought a low-level battle for self-determination for the Oromia region, which is Ethiopia's largest and home to the Oromo ethnic group. The OLF was initially part of a transitional government set up in 1991 by rebels from a coalition, which had driven former military ruler Mengistu Haile Mariam from power, but they soon fell out with the coalition. The government has now signed a reconciliation agreement to end hostilities with the OLF's exiled leader, Dawud Ibsa, who lives in exile in Asmara, the capital of neighbouring Eritrea, said Eritrea's Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel.

- **UAE Plans Oil Pipeline from Ethiopia to Eritrea in Latest Horn of Africa Move²⁰**

The United Arab Emirates plans to build an oil pipeline connecting Eritrea and Ethiopia, the latest sign of the Gulf state's increasing involvement in the Horn of Africa. The pipeline will run from Eritrea's port city of Assab to Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, an Ethiopian official said. Landlocked Ethiopia began extracting crude oil on a test basis from reserves in the country's southeast in June 2018 and will need access through Eritrea in order to export it.

North Africa

¹⁸ Ethiopia Observer, August 10, 2018, <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2018/08/10/violent-attack-on-ethiopian-nationals-in-djibouti/>

¹⁹ Al Jazeera, August 8, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2018/08/ethiopia-signs-deal-oromo-rebels-hostilities-180807184317117.html>

²⁰ Reuters, August 10, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-eritra-pipeline/uae-plans-oil-pipeline-from-ethiopia-to-eritrea-in-latest-horn-of-africa-move-idUSKBN1KV0VS>

- **Military in Egypt Claims to kill 52 Militants**²¹

The military in Egypt has claimed to kill 52 fighters in Sinai Peninsula in past few days in an ongoing operation to eliminate armed group in the desert region of Sinai. The announcement came in an army statement on Sunday that security forces had also destroyed 15 vehicles loaded with weapons and ammunition while trying to infiltrate its western border and 17 more in the southern military region. The statement said that current operation led to the death of 52 extremely dangerous persons.

During these operations in North Sinai and the centre of the peninsula, 49 fighters were also arrested in joint raids conducted by the armed forces and the police, the statement added. The deaths bring to more than 300 the number of fighters killed in the [operation](#) that the Egyptian army, backed by police and other security forces, launched in February, 2018 as part of a campaign to eradicate armed groups responsible for a surge in violence in the desert region.

Eliminating the armed group and restoring law and order in the Sinai region has been a promise of President of Egypt who was re-elected in March this year in a landslide victory against no real opposition.

- **Italy's Foreign Minister makes first visit to Egypt after death of the Italian researcher**²²

The foreign minister of Italy, Enzo Moavero Milanesi arrived in Egypt on the first visit by a top Italian diplomat since the death of Giulio Regeni. His trip comes on the heels of a visit last month by Italian Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini. Italy's foreign minister said Sunday he was pleased to hear from Egyptian officials that they are committed to completing an investigation into the 2016 killing of an Italian graduate student in the capital Cairo with a concrete result.

The visiting minister met with Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry in Cairo. He said at a news conference with Shoukry that they discussed important topics including Libya, illegal migration and the controversial death of Italian citizen Regeni. He also added that he was pleased to hear from the minister and also the Egyptian government strong willingness to bring judicial inquiry to concrete result. He further stated that his government was confident that justice will be brought in this really tragic and painful case.

West Africa and Central Africa

- **Central African Republic receives military vehicles from China**

²¹ Aljazeera English: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/egypt-military-52-fighters-killed-sinai-peninsula-180805160755084.html?utm_source=Media+Review+for+August+6%2C+2018&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+August+3%2C+2018&utm_medium=email

²² Washington Post : https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/italys-fm-visits-egypt-first-since-murder-of-researcher/2018/08/05/068392aa-98b1-11e8-a8d8-9b4c13286d6b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_campaign=Media%20Review%20for%20August%203%2C%202018&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Media%20Review%20for%20August%206%2C%202018&utm_term=.bff63eag1600

On 8 August 2018, China's Poly Technologies group donated nearly 70 vehicles costing around \$15 billion to Central African Republic's Armed Forces (FACA) to boost military capacity by investing in research and peace building. These vehicles included "troop transport vehicles, pick-ups, engineering tractors, bulldozers, graders, high-performance boats, ambulances, and a large quantity of spare parts". At the ceremony, President Faustin Archange Touadera said, "Central African Republic "entering a period of peacemaking and national reconstruction" and China's support through Poly Technologies is important for the Central African Army." CAR received this donation after getting approval by European Union military training mission and by the U.N. peacekeeping operation Minusca. The country was barred from receiving military assistance as United Nations Security Council earlier put sanctions against CAR till January 2019.²³

- **Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire agreed guidelines on Maritime boundaries**

Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire's maritime dispute came to an end with both countries agreed to develop a document on maritime boundary between both countries. During a joint committee's second meeting held for two days in Accra, Ghana's senior minister Yaw Osafo-Mafo and Adama Toungara, State Mediator of Coted d'Ivoire signed a communique that reviewed maritime boundary decided by Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). Both nations agreed that the document would be developed and implemented in the third meeting of the joint committee, to be held in October 2018 in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the Communique, there would be seven coordinates consisted of a "group of numbers used to indicate the position of a point, line or plane and azimuth, a horizontal angle or direction of a compass bearing" as provided by ITLOS. Both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire planned to initiate joint endeavours in the areas of maritime boundary, hydrocarbons and exploration of natural resources.²⁴

- **Guinea-Bissau and Senegal for joint resource exploitation contract**

On 6 August 2018, Apolinário de Carvalho, current ambassador of Guinea-Bissau in Brussels said that the country is in talks with Senegal over a new agreement for joint exploitation of petroleum resources. Guinea-Bissau offered new proposals during third round of talks between both countries held on 1-3 August 2018. Earlier in 1993, an agreement was signed that offered more leverage to Senegal by allocating 85 percent of revenue from the exploitation of hydrocarbons in the common areas whereas Guinea-Bissau receives only 15 percent of revenue. A high level delegation would visit Guinea-Bissau on 27-29 August to revise a new joint agreement for sharing of oil, gas and fisheries between both countries assaid by the ambassador²⁵

- **Vietnam and Guinea**

On 7 August 2018, Deputy Prime Minister cum Foreign Minister Phạm Bình Minh of Vietnam met Guinea's Foreign Minister Mamadi Toure. The two countries talked about enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fireld of transportation, mining, oil and gas. During visit, Guines's forign minister emphasized on political trust as foundation for economic cooperation between Vietnam and Guinea and discussed measures to expand bilateral cooperation exchange of party, assembly and people to people contact. The joint trade between both nations is US\$160 million. Highlighting traditional friendship between

²³ The Defense Post, 9 August 2018, <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/08/09/central-african-republic-military-vehicles-china-us/>

²⁴ Ghana web, 12 August 2018, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Maritime-dispute-Ghana-C-te-d-Ivoire-agree-guidelines-on-boundaries-676066>

²⁵ Macauhub, 7 August 2018, <https://macauhub.com.mo/2018/08/07/pt-guine-bissau-negoceia-com-o-senegal-novo-acordo-de-exploracao-conjunta-de-recursos/>

Africa and Vietnam, Vietnam's president is optimistic about increase of number of investors and businessmen on soils of Africa.²⁶

- **Gulf of Guinea Plans to Enhance Maritime Security**

Countries of Gulf of Guinea such as Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Togo took part in a workshop held in Monterey, USA on 6-10 August, 2018 to enhance maritime security of the region. The workshop witnessed participants from international community INTERPOL and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, organised by US Department of State funded Center for Civil Military Relations (CCMR). This whole workshop as supported by **International Maritime Organization (IMO) is second in the row. The first event took place in Abidjan in March 2018 and the final event is scheduled for March 2019 to be held in Yaounde.**²⁷

- **Liberia received \$21.5m EU funding for electricity supply**

Liberia receives \$21.5 million from the European Union for building of electricity transmission lines and sub-stations at a ceremony occurred in Monrovia between the government of Liberia and MBH Power Limited based in Nigeria on 9 August 2018. In the event, recalling EU's contribution for regional infrastructure development in West Africa, Helene Cave, EU Ambassador to Liberia said that these electricity lines would connect "Bushrod Island to Paynesville outside Monrovia via Capitol Hill in central Monrovia and to Congo Town" and would be jointly constructed by MBH Power Limited Nigeria and INTEC. Earlier, EU also provided financial assistance for development of three cross-border electrification lines from Ivory Coast supplying electricity to Maryland, Grand Gedeh and Nimba Counties. The Chief Executive Officer of the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC), John Ashley and Samuel D. Tweah, Liberia's Finance and Development Planning Minister appreciated EU's efforts and regarded EU as one of Liberia's chief development partners.²⁸

- **China's Support to Liberia**

Liberia hosted a reception hosted in honor of the departing Deputy Chief of Mission of the Chinese Embassy, Li Zhuang. At the reception, Chinese Ambassador to Liberia Fu Jijun stated that China would always provide support for Liberia's development. Chinese President Xi Jinping officially invited Liberia's President Weah to attend FOOCA summit, to be held in China in September 2018. Chinese Ambassador to Liberia Fu Jijun viewed, "As Liberia is implementing its 'Pro-poor Agenda,' China stands ready to providing a friendly platform for further mutual cooperation that will yield sustainable benefits for our two countries and peoples". In return, President Weah called for China-Liberia cooperation under the banner of "One China policy" for sustainable development of both countries.²⁹

²⁶ Vietnam News, 8 August 2018, <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/463367/viet-nam-seeks-closer-ties-with-rwanda-guinea.html#JHoYr2eAZvyFdSiY.97>

²⁷ <https://www.marinelink.com/news/gulf-guinea-plans-enhance-maritime-440473>, 10 August 2018

²⁸ <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/liberia-gets-21-5m-eu-funding-to-revamp-electricity-supply/>, 10 August 2018

²⁹ Daily Observer, 10 August 2018, <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/chinese-ambassador-reaffirms-countrys-unstoppable-support-to-liberia/>

- **Youth inclusion in Nigerian politics**

Nigerian politics is heading towards youth inclusion in affairs of state. A new bill was passed that reduced age requirement from 40 to 35 to run for political post for the upcoming election, scheduled in February 2019. Nigeria's youngest political leader Adamu Garba aged 36 is hoping to contest election against President Muhammadu Buhari, 75. United Nations stated that Nigerian population consist of young people under the age of 30. The younger generation wants more representation in politics and started a campaign with the slogan #NotTooYoungToRun against older politicians who failed to take accountability for the country³⁰

- **Farm violence in Nigeria**

In Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba states, violence broke out between Nigerian herders and farmers since January 2018. Till now, the farmer-herder conflict killed nearly 1300 people, a great security concern for Nigeria. The conflict occurred on account of encroachment of grazing lands in the northern regions of the country. The situation aggravated with the conflict turning into religious and ethnic. The herders consisted of Muslim Fulani community on the other hand farmers are Christians³¹. In such circumstances, the government began a major military operation in north western Nigeria to crack down gunmen, involved in looting villages by taking opportunity of the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders.³² The operation is to provide security and bring back stability in the region for the forthcoming election in the country.

Central Asia

- **Tajikistan President Visits Azerbaijan**

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon paid a two-day visit to Azerbaijan on 10-11 August 2018.³³ He held talks with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev at Baku. Tajikistan and Azerbaijan reaffirmed continued commitment to further deepening cooperation in all fields of mutual interest in accordance with the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries. Both the countries expressed commitment bring to Azerbaijani investments in joint projects in trade, construction, transportation, telecommunications, industry, agriculture, energy and petroleum products.³⁴

A number of proposals were made to enhance cooperation in the field of road transportation, cargo transportation, aluminum enterprises, oil and gas companies. The two leaders also discussed the situation in Afghanistan, fight against terrorism and violent

³⁰ Mbah, Fidelis (2018), "Nigeria: Growing demand for youth inclusion in politics", Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/nigeria-growing-demand-youth-inclusion-politics-180809084233452.html>

³¹ "Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-herder Violence", International Crisis Group, 26 July 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence>

³² Al-Zazeera, 10 August 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/nigeria-farm-violence-military-operation-combat-gunmen-begins-18081011423596.html>

³³ News.az, "Date of Tajik President's visit to Azerbaijan revealed," 8 August 2018, <https://news.az/articles/politics/132837>

³⁴ President of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Tajikistan-Azerbaijan high-level talks," 10 August 2018, <http://www.president.tj/en/node/18110>

extremism, drug trafficking and other transnational organized crimes. During the visit, a joint statement was released and the two countries signed 12 documents, including on training of Tajik border troops in Azerbaijan's Academy of the State Border Service.³⁵

- **Agreement on Caspian Sea Signed in Kazakhstan**

Five Caspian Sea littoral states Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan signed convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea in Aktau, Kazakhstan on 12 August 2018. The negotiations were going on since 1996. Six other documents related to Caspian Sea cooperation were also signed.

The Caspian Sea has been given 'special legal status', which creates territorial waters within 15 maritime miles. It has a 10 mile fishing zones, and beyond the fishing zones, the common water area remains unchanged. There is freedom of maritime navigation to ships of coastal countries. The countries also agreed on freedom of transit to other water bodies. It creates the possibility of undersea pipelines provided environmental requirements are met.³⁶

- **Kazakhstan Proposes Single Tourist Visa for Turkic Countries**

Kazakhstan has offered Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey to introduce the 'Silk Road' visa for tourists. Kazakhstan and neighbouring Uzbekistan have such an agreement, which would help foreign tourists to cross the Kazakh-Uzbek border with ease.³⁷

The new multiple entry visa is proposed among Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, which are members of the Turkic Council. It was proposed by Kazakh Culture and Sport Minister Arystanbek Mukhamediuly at a recent meeting of tourism ministers of the Turkic Council in Astana.³⁸

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are Turkic states³⁹ in Central Asia but they are not members of the Turkic Council.

China

- **Chinese naval hospital ship Ark Peace concludes visit to Fiji**

The Chinese Naval hospital ship Ark Peace left the Fijian capital city of Suva on August 9, 2018, after wrapping up an eight-day good-will visit to the South Pacific island nation. During the visit, the commanders of Mission Harmony-2018 respectively paid courtesy calls on Fijian Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama and Rear Admiral Viliame Naupoto, commander of the Fijian armed forces, toured Queen Elizabeth Barracks and received 24 senior Fijian military officers and government officials for their ship tour or medical treatment as well.

During the medical services in Fiji, Ark Peace provided consultation and treatment for totally 6,577 persons, auxiliary examinations for 3,074 persons and surgical operation for 32 cases and admitted 26 inpatients.⁴⁰

³⁵ President of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Tajikistan-Azerbaijan high-level talks," 10 August 2018, <http://www.president.tj/en/node/18110>

³⁶ Elya Altynsarina, "Caspian Sea nations sign historic convention laying solid framework for use of resource-rich sea," *The Astana Times*, 14 August 2018, <https://astanatimes.com/2018/08/caspian-sea-nations-sign-historic-convention-laying-solid-framework-for-use-of-resource-rich-sea/>

³⁷ Trend news agency, "Kazakhstan offers Azerbaijan to introduce single tourist visa for Turkic countries," 9 August 2018, <https://en.trend.az/business/tourism/2938293.html>

³⁸ Rashid Shirinov, "Kazakhstan offers Azerbaijan to introduce single tourist visa for Turkic countries," *Azernews*, 8 August 2018, <https://www.azernews.az/business/135960.html>

³⁹ Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council), "General Information," http://turkkon.org/en-US/general_information/299/308

⁴⁰ "Chinese naval hospital ship Ark Peace concludes visit to Fiji", *The People's Daily*, August 10, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0810/c90000-9489723.html>.

- **Belarus-China visa-free agreement comes into force**

The intergovernmental agreement on visa-free travel between Belarus and China came into force on 10 August 2018. From now on, Belarusians can stay in China without a visa for up to 30 days in one trip, but not more than 90 days a year. The same rule applies to Chinese citizens.

However, those who need to stay for more than 30 days or engage in educational and professional activities need a special visa. Visa-free travel covers private trips, business trips and tourist trips. The Belarusian authorities expect that the implementation of the agreement will significantly increase the number of Chinese tourists to Belarus and contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure.⁴¹

- **ASEAN, China joint maritime drill “important”: Philippine FM**

On August 7, 2018, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said that the plan of China and the ASEAN to conduct a joint maritime exercise in the South China Sea “is very important” to the region. He stressed the importance of joint military exercises to prevent accidents and for improving military-to-military relations. It has been reported that China and ASEAN member states will hold a joint maritime exercise in October this year.⁴²

- **5 states sign pact for shared use of Caspian Sea**

On August 12, 2018, the Presidents of Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan signed an agreement for collective use of the Caspian Sea after two decades of negotiations. The five states inked the landmark convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea at the Fifth Caspian Summit in the Kazakh city of Aktau.

Works on the convention have been in development since 1996, and the foreign ministers of five states reached a consensus on its draft in Moscow in December 2017.⁴³

- **China offers scholarships to 30 Ugandan university students**

On August 8, 2018, China offered scholarships to 30 needy students at Uganda’s largest university, Makerere University. Chinese Ambassador to Uganda Zheng Zhuqiang expressed urgent need for strategic investment in the Ugandan human resource to turn it into the much needed human capital to drive the planned growth and transformation. He announced that the ‘Chinese Ambassador Scholarship of Excellence and Friendship’ will be awarded to Makerere University students annually. Zheng also reported that the Chinese government offers scholarships to over 500 Ugandan students to go and study in China.⁴⁴

European Union

Spain

- **Spain sells more than €361 million in arms to Saudi Arabia and other Arab states**

SPAIN’S arms industry sold more than €361 million in armaments last year to states that are part of a coalition led by Saudi Arabia currently fighting in Yemen’s civil war. The sales figures, from an annual Spanish government report sent to the country’s Parliament, show the Saudis were the leaders in the exports. About €270.2 million in arms was sold to the Saudi state including a transport plane, drones, mortar shells, artillery, ammunition and

⁴¹ “Belarus-China visa-free agreement comes into force”, *The People Daily*, August 11, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0811/c90000-9489840.html>.

⁴² ‘ASEAN, China joint maritime drill “important”: Philippine FM’, *The People’s Daily*, August 8, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0808/c90000-9488900.html>

⁴³ “5 states sign pact for shared use of Caspian Sea”, *Xinhua*, August 12, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/12/c_137385442.htm.

⁴⁴ “China offers scholarships to 30 Ugandan university students”, *Xinhua*, August 9, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2018-08/09/c_137377118.htm.

other equipment. The figures come as Spain saw a record year last year in terms of arms sales. Around €4.4 billion in weapons was bought from the country last year, an increase of 7.3 per cent on 2016 levels. They also come as two political parties in Granada called on public prosecutors to investigate the alleged illegal shipment of arms from the port of Motril. The parties claimed the shipping of weapons from the civilian port broke a number of Spanish and European Union (EU) regulations. NGOs including Oxfam and Amnesty International called on Spain to halt weapons shipments to the Saudis earlier this year. They claimed the weapons were being used in strikes that cause civilian deaths in Yemen, which has been gripped by civil war since 2015⁴⁵

European Union

- **EU-Swiss treaty ‘dead as doornail’ as labour boycotts talks**

Switzerland’s plan to forge a new treaty cementing ties with the European Union has hit the rocks after the normally pro-Europe centre left joined the far right in resisting a deal that Swiss labour unions say might undermine wages and working conditions. For the SGB union federation allied with the centre-left Social Democrats (SP), Bern’s efforts to explore tweaking Switzerland’s strict rules that protect Europe’s highest wages were a step too far towards the treaty demands of Brussels. The far-right Swiss People’s Party (SVP) also opposes a treaty that it sees as infringing Swiss sovereignty. So political support for an accord – lukewarm to start with – now appears so low as to spell the treaty’s doom. The SVP is the largest party in the Swiss parliament and the SP is second. Ties between the EU and non-member Switzerland are now governed by more than 100 separate agreements. Brussels wants to supersede them with a single treaty, to provide a better platform to settle disputes and to ensure that Switzerland adopts changes to the rules of the single market. Switzerland said on 4 July it had put further talks on a new treaty governing relations with the European Union, including sensitive labour market rules, on hold until after the summer break. But some Swiss worry that a treaty might make it easier for employers to import EU workers and undercut Swiss wages.⁴⁶

- **EU tries to soften impact of US sanctions against Iran as they re-enter into force**

As a result of the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, Washington’s re-imposition of sanctions hit European companies operating in the country from Monday (6 August) onwards. The EU has updated its ‘blocking statute’ to temper the impact. The US decision will have important repercussions for EU companies in the form of extraterritorial sanctions, which Brussels considers illegal. “They seek to determine the conduct of our economic operators while they are not subject to US law,” an EU senior official argued. In the aftermath of Donald Trump’s announcement to withdraw from the landmark deal curbing Iran’s nuclear programme, the leaders of Britain, France and Germany who signed the agreement published a joint statement, saying they will continue to stick by it. That is why the EU has included the restrictive measures in its ‘blocking statute’ which will enter into force at 6 am on Tuesday (7 August). This mechanism bans Europeans – both companies and residents- from complying with US sanctions. The ‘blocking statute’ also allows EU economic operators to recover damages that might result from those sanctions, from the entities causing them. This can be either the US administration or a third party. Companies will have to sue the alleged responsible for the damages and a judge will in any case decide. Furthermore, the EU blocking statute does not recognise any court ruling enforcing US sanctions. Whether to comply with US sanctions or keep doing business in Iran is a “purely economic decision,” one senior

⁴⁵ Euro Weekly, 10 August 2018, <https://www.euroweeklynews.com/news/on-euro-weekly-news/spain-news-in-english/1473593-spain-sells-more-than-%E2%82%AC361-million-in-arms-to-saudi-arabia>

⁴⁶ Euractiv, 10 August 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/eu-swiss-treaty-dead-as-doornail-as-labour-boycotts-talks/>

official argued. European enterprises can either comply with US sanctions or face consequences in Europe for violating the 'blocking statute' or keep doing business in Iran and face US sanctions.⁴⁷

- **Sturgeon wants a Plan B detailing what happens if Brexit negotiations fail**

The Scottish first minister **Nicola Sturgeon** called on Prime Minister Theresa May to work on a "Plan B" on Brexit negotiations. Sturgeon said that Theresa May's Brexit plan "seems to be dead," telling the media that the no-deal scenario is "catastrophic." The statement comes while Trade Secretary Liam Fox says that a no-deal scenario is the most likely outcome of negotiations with Brussels, while the Governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney says there is an "uncomfortably high" probability of no deal. In any event, "I hope she will outline her plan B, because we cannot simply take a step off that Brexit cliff-edge next March without knowing what comes next," Sturgeon said, calling for a clear outline of Plan B. Ms May was in Edinburgh on Tuesday (7 August) to sign a deal for government co-funding of research in space, life sciences and agriculture; it should have been a happy affair, except Brexit is deeply divisive. May called on her host to refrain from sowing division over Brexit and get behind the British negotiating position, arguing that "a good deal for the UK is a good deal for Scotland." Nicola Sturgeon has made clear that the nature of Brexit will determine whether or not she calls a second referendum on Scottish independence.⁴⁸

Greece

- **Greece accuses Russia of meddling in its affairs**

In the wake of Russia expelling two Greek envoys, Greece Foreign ministry in a statement issued on Friday, termed the measures as "arbitrary, retaliatory and not based on any evidence". The deterioration in relations between Greece and Russia has come about ever since Athens accused Moscow of attempting to bribe state officials and meddling in the country's internal affairs.⁴⁹ The Greek foreign ministry said that the reasoning behind the expulsions could not be compared. "The decision by the Russian foreign ministry was not based on evidence, as was that of the Greek side, [which cited] specific evidence of illegal and irregular activity by Russian officials and citizens". Russia has said that it was responding in kind to Athens decision to expel two Russian diplomats in July.

Romania

- **Protests and rallies against the government in Romania**

Thousands of people are taking part in protest against the Romanian to voice their anger against the government. The protestors are demanding resignation of the government over prevalent corruption, and attempts to weaken the judiciary by the governing Social Democrats (PSD). Among those protesting are many Romanian expats who have been returned to proclaim their anger against the government. The police has responded with the use of tear gas, water canon and pepper spray. One of the protestors remarked that "We want to see modern roads and schools and above all to not have to pay bribes to the left and right."⁵⁰

⁴⁷Euractiv, 7 August 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-tries-to-soften-impact-of-us-sanctions-against-iran-as-they-re-enter-into-force/>

⁴⁸New Europe, 8 August 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/sturgeon-wants-a-plan-b-detailing-what-happens-if-brexit-negotiations-fail/>

⁴⁹The Guardian, 11 August 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/11/greece-accuses-russia-bribery-meddling-macedonia-deal>

⁵⁰BBC News, 11 August 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45156598>

Montenegro

- **Ex-CIA officer faces arrest over alleged Montenegro coup plot**

Prosecutors in Montenegro have asked for the arrest of former CIA officer, Joseph Assad, accusing him of involvement in an [alleged Russian-backed coup attempt](#) in 2016. Mr Assad has rejected the charges saying that “This is a deception campaign against a loyal American who had no role in any crimes or coup in Montenegro,” through a statement issued through his lawyer. The accusation against Assad is the latest spin in a trial of 14 suspected coup plotters including two Russians, nine Serbs, three Montenegrins to assassinate the then Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic.⁵¹ The prosecutors have claimed that the goal of the attempted coup was to stop Montenegro from joining NATO but it was foiled by the security services. Montenegro became the alliance’s 29th member two months later.

Russia

- **Russia and India**

At a recent high-level meeting in Moscow on 9 August, Russia and India decided to further align their positions at global fora and explore measures to counter terrorism including sharing of actionable information and pushing embargo terrorist groups holding or dominating territories including in Af-Pak region. They decided to coordinate their positions in the United Nations and other international fora with an aim to urge countries to refrain from double standards in dealing with terrorist groups. The two sides decided to intensify efforts to align their positions on counterterrorism at the SCO, BRICS, ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit. The two sides decided to jointly combat radical ideologies including spread of ideology through social media. They also discussed the utility of a Russian law against misuse of mobile phones for spreading radical ideology and network. Earlier, at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary, Russia was one of sponsors of the move that finally put Pakistan in the so-called grey list of the international terror financing watchdog.⁵²

- **Russia and Pakistan**

On 7 August, Russia and Pakistan signed an agreement that allows for training of Pakistani troops at Russian military training institutes. The agreement was signed at the conclusion of the first meeting of Russia-Pakistan Joint Military Consultative Committee (JMCC). The two sides, during the talks, reviewed the progress made in bilateral defence cooperation since they signed the defence cooperation pact in November 2014. Subsequently, Pakistan and Russia in October 2015 signed the military-technical cooperation accord providing for arms supplies and cooperation in weapon development. Russia has over the past three years provided four Mi-35M combat and cargo helicopters to Pakistan and the militaries of the two countries also held joint drills codenamed ‘Friendship’. The talks also featured a discussion on the situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan. One of Russia’s key concerns in its security dialogue with Pakistan had been

⁵¹ The Guardian, 12 August 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/12/ex-cia-officer-faces-arrest-over-alleged-montenegro-coup-plot>

⁵² Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, “India, Russia favour embargo against terror groups holding territories including in Af-Pak region”, *Economic Times*, August 9, 2018.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-favour-embargo-against-terror-groups-holding-territories-including-in-af-pak-region/articleshow/65344801.cms> Accessed on 13 August, 2018.

the growing foothold of the militant Islamic State (IS) group in Afghanistan and the relocation of IS fighters from Iraq and Syria to the land-locked country.⁵³

- **Russia and the US**

At a meeting with employees of the Kronotsky State Reserve, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on 10 August said that tightening of economic sanctions against Russia can be considered a declaration of an economic war, and Russia will have to respond to this war. The news of the sanctions have depreciated the Russian ruble against the euro and the dollar.⁵⁴ President Putin on the same day convened a meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation to discuss the new sanctions that Washington is going to impose on Russia on August 22. The participants of the meeting agreed that the sanctions are completely illegitimate.⁵⁵ Moody's analyst Kristin Lindow said that Russia will be able to weather new sanctions from the US following a series of steps it took to reduce its vulnerability to future penalties. He said that Russia has safeguarded its financial system from the effect of sanctions by offloading \$81 billion of its US government debt. He predicted that markets would see an initial shock but eventually adjust. Analysts with Barclays and Oxford Economics echoed Moody's assessment that the Russian economy has the capacity to withstand new sanctions. Barclays warned, however, that asset freezes targeting Russian state banks, not just restrictions on new sovereign debt transactions, could pose systemic risks to the Russian economy.⁵⁶

- **Russia and Iran**

On 7 August, Russia said that it will do "everything necessary" to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and protect its shared economic interests with Tehran. The Russian foreign ministry website published a statement stating that Moscow is "deeply disappointed by U.S. steps to reimpose its national sanctions against Iran," before adding, "We will do everything necessary in the interests of preserving and fully implementing the SVPD (Iran nuclear deal)." The ministry added that it was "taking appropriate measures on a national level to protect trade and economic cooperation with Iran," and that Russia would continue to work with other parties to the agreement to preserve trade with the Middle East nation. The ministry said that the international community shouldn't allow the Iran deal to be "sacrificed to American attempts to settle scores with Iran on issues unrelated to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran nuclear deal)."⁵⁷

- **Russia and Georgia**

During an interview, Russian Prime Minister Medvedev on 7 August said that an attempt by NATO to incorporate the former Soviet republic of Georgia could trigger a new, "horrible" conflict. He said that NATO's plans to eventually offer membership to Georgia are "absolutely irresponsible" and a "threat to peace." The EU on the same day reiterated its "firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its

⁵³Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Accord with Russia signed for training of Pakistani troops", *Dawn*, August 8, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425673> Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁵⁴Dmitry Sudakov, "Russia PM: USA declares economic war on Russia. Russia must respond", *Pravda*, August 10, 2018. http://www.pravdareport.com/russia/economics/10-08-2018/141379-russia_sanctions-o/ Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁵⁵"Putin convenes Security Council meeting to discuss new sanctions", *Pravda*, August 10, 2018. http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/kremlin/10-08-2018/141380-putin_sanctions-o/?utm_referrer=last_news_list Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁵⁶"Russia Can Weather Any New U.S. Sanctions, Says Moody's", *The Moscow Times*, August 7, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russia-can-weather-any-new-US-sanctions-says-moodys-62463> Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁵⁷David Reid, "Russia slams US sanctions against Iran, promises to save nuclear deal", *CNBC*, August 7, 2018. <https://www.cnb.com/2018/08/07/russia-slams-us-sanctions-against-iran-promises-to-save-nuclear-deal.html> Accessed on August 13, 2018.

internationally recognized borders" and lamented the Russian military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In a show of support for Georgia, foreign ministers of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and a Cabinet member from Ukraine, visited Tbilisi on the same day, urging Russia to withdraw its troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁵⁸

- **Russia and the Caspian Sea**

On 12 August, the presidents of five states - Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan - put an end to the issue of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, which arose after the collapse of the USSR and which took several decades to resolve.⁵⁹ The summit participants have considered key issues of cooperation in various spheres and discussed the implementation of the decisions taken at the previous meetings of the 'Caspian five.' The heads of state have adopted the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea and signed a number of intergovernmental documents.⁶⁰

- **Russia and Africa**

On 10 August, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia is planning to increase its involvement in developing energy projects in Africa such as Angola, Mozambique and Gabon, during the tenth BRICS Summit in Johannesburg. His comments came after Russian oil and gas producers, including Rosneft and Rosgeologia, signed several new agreements to explore and develop hydrocarbons on the continent in recent months. He said that Russia is also planning to boost its cooperation on nuclear energy plants in Africa.⁶¹

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Former Defense Minister Ishiba announced bid to be LDP chief**

On August 10, 2018, former Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General and former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced his candidate to run in the Japanese ruling party's leadership election in September. Ishiba, 61, is the first candidate to declare a bid for the election. Unveiling his candidacy at a press conference, Ishiba pledged to implement citizen-oriented politics and carry out administrative reforms in an effort to restore public trust in politics. Ishiba highlighted the importance of transparent, honest and fair politics and public administration, apparently keeping in mind favoritism and other scandals involving the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, 63, current president of the LDP and the leading candidate for the September election.⁶²

- **North Korean Foreign Minister vows to retain 'nuclear technology'**

On August 9, 2018 North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho said his country supports the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula but will not surrender its nuclear technology because the United States may not abandon its enmity towards the regime. Minister Ri made the statement during his visit to Iran, while explaining Pyongyang's latest negotiations with Washington to Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on Thursday in

⁵⁸Vladimir Isachenkov, "Russia warns of 'horrible' conflict if Georgia joins NATO", *ABC News*, August 7, 2018. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-warns-horrible-conflict-georgia-joins-nato-57076841> Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁵⁹"Status of the sea was walking", *Kommersaunt*, August 13, 2018.

<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3712671> Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁶⁰"Fifth Caspian Summit", *President of Russia*, August 12, 2018.

⁶¹"Russia planning to increase involvement in African energy projects: Putin", *SP Global*, July 27, 2018.

<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/072718-russia-planning-to-increase-involvement-in-african-energy-projects-putin> Accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁶²"Ishiba declares bid to be LDP chief", *The Japan News*, August 10, 2018, the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004652060

Tehran. It remains unclear what Ri precisely meant by “nuclear technology.” The phrase does not appear in the Panmunjom Declaration signed by the leaders of North and South Korea on April 27 or in the Singapore agreement signed by the leaders of North Korea and the United States on June 12, though both say Pyongyang is committed to denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.⁶³

- **No sanctions relief for inter-Korean effort: Says Washington**

On August 8, 2018, US State Department indicated that the United States will not lift sanctions for an inter-Korean rail project until North Korea fully gives up its nuclear weapons. In late June, the two Koreas agreed to connect their railroads and work together on modernizing the North’s infrastructure with the stated goal of “balanced development of the national economy and co-prosperity.”⁶⁴

- **Raksha mantri held talks with visiting South Korean Defense Ministry**

On August 10, 2018, Raksha Mantri Nirmala Sitharaman held talks with visiting South Korean defense Minister Song Young-moo to explore ways to expand bilateral ties. According to Indian Defense ministry, two ministers discussed “issues of mutual interest” and ways to strengthen cooperation in defence and security. During his two-day visit that began August 9, Song also met with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and shared views on the need to specify ways to further expand the two countries’ exchanges in the defense industry. Song’s trip marked the first visit to India by a South Korean defense chief since 2012.⁶⁵

- **South Korea confirmed the possibility of a third inter-Korean Summit**

On August 12, 2018, South Korea’s Presidential office said that it expects to hold the third summit between the two Koreas in North Korea’s capital city of Pyongyang. “Cheong Wa Dae (Office of the President) hopes the high-level ministerial meeting between the two Koreas will discuss specifics about the timing, place and other relevant details of the third inter-Korean summit,” the spokesman told reporters in a media briefing. He said Seoul still prefers the North Korean capital as the venue for the next meeting of President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The North’s Kim previously invited President Moon to Pyongyang at their April summit in Panmunjom. Moon accepted the request.⁶⁶

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **President Jokowi meeting with Secretary Pompeo**

United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on Indonesian President Joko Widodo, on August 5, during his first visit to Jakarta after taking charge in April. Mr Pompeo stated that the US values its relations with Indonesia being its strategic partner. The Secretary also expressed the US appreciation on the growth of democracy in Indonesia, as it is something that is highly valued in America. President Jokowi stated that Indonesia is proud that not only is it the largest country in South-east Asia and the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, but also that it remains a growing democracy.

⁶³ “Top North envoy vows to retain ‘nuclear tech’”, The Korea JoongAng Daily, August 10, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3051743

⁶⁴ “No sanctions relief for inter-Korean effort”, The Korea JoongAng Daily, August 9, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3051666

⁶⁵ “Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets South Korean counterpart”, Time of India, August 10, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/defence-minister-nirmala-sitharaman-meets-south-korean-counterpart/articleshow/65357582.cms>

⁶⁶ “Seoul confirms hopes to hold third summit”, The Korea Times, August 12, 2018, www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/08/356_253753.html

Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, told reporters that the President expressed to Mr Pompeo his hope that a US preferential tariff scheme for Indonesia, called the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), will be retained. The US Trade Representative's Office had said in April that it was reviewing the eligibility of Indonesia, along with India and Kazakhstan, for the GSP based on concerns over compliance with the services and investment criterion. Indonesia's Trade Minister Enggartiasto Lukita, who also present at the meeting told reporters that Mr Pompeo agreed there was a need to improve economic ties between the US and Indonesia, as the two countries look to mark 70 years of diplomatic relations next year.⁶⁷

- **President Duterte passes Law granting greater autonomy to the Philippines' South**
President Rodrigo Duterte unveiled a law on August 6, which would grant greater autonomy to the Philippines' south. The President expressed his hope that the measure will at last end decades of bloody separatist conflict. The passage of legislation would be a key step to ending one of Asia's longest and deadliest conflicts. The measure was a crucial missing element to a languishing peace pact with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which, along with other groups, waged a rebellion that claimed about 150,000 lives in the Mindanao region since the 1970s. The law enforces a historic but fragile 2014 peace deal where the MILF vowed to give up its quest for an independent homeland and lay down its fighters' weapons in return for self-rule. Both sides believe creating the area will head off the lure of violent extremism and draw investments to a region where brutal poverty and perennial bloodshed has spawned radical armed groups. Under the law Duterte signed, a new political entity known as the Bangsamoro which would have a Parliament and would replace the current autonomous region, gaining more power and resources. It would keep 75 per cent of taxes collected in the area as well as receive an annual fund allocation worth five per cent of national revenues, or about 60 billion pesos (USD1.12 million).⁶⁸

- **President Jokowi and opponent Prabowo chooses their respective running mate for 2019 National elections**

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has chosen Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) chairman Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate for the 2019 presidential election. This was announced on August 9 after a meeting was held between Jokowi and other party leaders and secretaries-general. The appointment of Ma'ruf has surprised many as it was widely reported that Jokowi would pick former Constitutional Court chief justice Mahfud MD as his vice presidential candidate. Ma'ruf, who will turn 76 next year, is the supreme leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the nation's largest Islamic organization. In terms of influence among Muslim voters, Ma'ruf is seen as being more representative of the NU than Mahfud, who is often described as only "culturally" involved in the NU, but has never held any position in the organization.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, coalition partners Gerindra Party, National Mandate Party (PAN) and Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) have decided to pair Gerindra leader Prabowo Subianto and Jakarta deputy governor Sandiaga Uno against the incumbent President in next year's national election, without the support of its fourth coalition partner the Democratic Party.

⁶⁷"Pompeo: US values growth of democracy in Indonesia", *The Straits Times*, August 6, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/pompeo-us-values-growth-of-democracy-in-indonesia>, accessed on August 7, 2018.

⁶⁸"Philippines' Duterte urges peace in unveiling autonomy law", *Borneo Bulletin*, August 7, 2018, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/philippines-duterte-urges-peace-in-unveiling-autonomy-law/>, accessed on August 8, 2018.

⁶⁹"Breaking: Mui chief Ma'ruf Amin tapped as Jokowi's running mate", *The Jakarta Post*, August 9, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/08/09/breaking-mui-chief-maruf-amien-tapped-as-jokowis-running-mate.html>, accessed on August 10, 2018.

Prabowo has practically ignored the recommendation made by Islamist groups that asked him to pick celebrity preacher Abdul Somad as his running mate. Former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Democratic Party said it rejected Sandiaga's VP candidacy. Susilo and Prabowo last week had made a deal to have Agus Yudhoyono, who is Susilo's son, to be the vice presidential candidate. The Democratic Party is now left with the option of joining either the Prabowo or Jokowi camp. The Election Law bans political parties from sitting out the presidential election.⁷⁰

- **Vietnam objects to China's Recent Activities in the Paracel Archipelago**

In response to China's recent activities in the Paracel archipelago, including celebrations marking six years of the so-called "Sansha city" and installing wave monitoring devices on Phú Lâm Island, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' spokeswoman Lê Thị Thu Hằng on August 9 stated that Vietnam's resolutely objects and demanded that China immediately stop the aforementioned activities. Meanwhile, China Central Television's (CCTV) children's channel recently organised a reality TV show for kids on the Hoàng Sa (Paracel) archipelago. The Sun Yat-sen University of China also conducted a series of scientific surveys on the Hoàng Sa islands. Ms Hằng stated that Vietnam had sufficient legal foundations and historical evidence affirming its sovereignty over Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa (Spratly) archipelagos in line with international law. She added that these actions are also "contrary to the spirit and content of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (DOC) and do not benefit the negotiations between ASEAN and China on a Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC), as well as the maintenance of an environment of peace, stability, cooperation, and development in the East Sea (South China Sea) and the region." Further a representative of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs met with a representative of the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam to talk about this issue, Hằng added.⁷¹

Oceania

- **Australian Foreign Minister's visit to Samoa**

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells visited Samoa from 8-10 August to deepen Australia's engagement with the Pacific nations in the lead-up to the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers' meeting. Senator Fierravanti-Wells lead the Australia's delegation to the Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 10 August, underlining Australia's enduring commitment to the Pacific Islands Forum. The Ministers met the Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi to discuss a range of issues like ways to strengthen security, development and economic cooperation as part of Australia's stepped-up engagement with the Pacific. The Foreign Minister said that "Australia is the largest destination for Samoan goods exports. We will meet with Samoan business representatives to explore further links and opportunities for private sector-led growth".⁷²

- **Australian dollar at 1½-year low as Turkey worries rise**

The Australian dollar fell to an 18-month low against the US dollar on Monday, 13 August, as worries about an impending financial crisis in Turkey prompted selling in the currency

⁷⁰ "Prabowo Subianto to run for 2019 Indonesian presidential election with Jakarta deputy governor", *The Straits Times*, August 10, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/prabowo-subianto-says-to-run-again-for-indonesian-president-in-2019-election>, accessed on August 10, 2018.

⁷¹"Việt Nam opposes China's activities in Hoàng Sa", *Vietnam News*, August 13, 2018, <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/463611/viet-nam-opposes-chinas-activities-in-hoang-sa.html>, accessed on August 13, 2018.

⁷² Visit to Samoa, 08 August 2018, https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/jb_mr_180808a.aspx

with strategists warning of more downside ahead. Turkish lira fell to a record low against the US dollar on Friday after US President Donald Trump reportedly said he had authorized higher tariffs on imports from Turkey in response to the sliding Turkish currency. Concurrently, the Australian dollar fell 1 per cent at the end of last week and stumbled again on Monday to trade at US72.83¢, a level not seen since the beginning of 2017. National Australia Bank's head of foreign exchange, Ray Attrill said that "It's a stark reminder that the Australian dollar enjoys the status as the market's preferred risk proxy,". He argued that "another step lower for the Australian dollar could see it fall to around US68¢ to US69¢ against the greenback. Australian dollar's superior liquidity made it such as magnet for traders trying to de-risk in nervous times".⁷³ Markets are on alert for contagion from Turkey to the other emerging markets space.

- **US Embassy in Port Moresby signs agreement with the US department of commerce in Australia**

As part of an Indo-Pacific initiative, the US Embassy in Port Moresby has described its new partnership post agreement with the US department of commerce in Australia as a bridge to exporting to the US. International trade and commercial specialist and Pacific Islands commercial coordinator Doug Hartley said as a result of the agreement, the US Embassy in Port Moresby will offer services to American companies interested in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanvatu. These include business matchmaking services, market research and intelligence on local markets, trade counseling, and background checks on potential partners for US firms. This is a long term initiative, as part of much wider strategy of engagement in the pacific. The ultimate process for export was the PNG government's responsibility, the opportunity for the US was to bring in new companies, new products to help Papua New Guinean companies grow through increased sales.⁷⁴

- **Australian Government to strengthen its flagship Pacific vocational training facility**

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop announced that Australian Government will build on its longstanding investment in Pacific skills by strengthening Australia's flagship Pacific vocational training facility. Since its inception in 2007, the Australia-Pacific Technical College has transformed the lives of over 12,000 graduates from 14 Pacific Island countries by providing them with Australian-standard technical and vocational qualifications. The APTC will be rebranded to the Australia Pacific Training Coalition to reflect changes in its approach, which are designed to strengthen innovation in the delivery of training and increase engagement with the private sector. Strong emphasis would be on boosting employment outcomes, addressing skills shortages in the region and strengthening technical, vocational educational training systems in Pacific Island countries and recently-announced Pacific Labour Scheme by Australia.⁷⁵

- **Fiji to strengthen trade and investment with PNG**

The Fiji Trade Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Navitalai Tuivuniwai will visit Bougainville this week in a bid to strengthen trade and investment. He said there were enormous opportunities for developing long term partnerships and investments between Fiji and PNG. During the visit the focus would be on key sectors such as tourism,

⁷³ Sarah Turner, "Australian dollar at 1½-year low as Turkey worries rise", Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August, <https://www.smh.com.au/business/markets/australian-dollar-at-1-year-low-as-turkey-worries-rise-20180813-p4zx6z.html>

⁷⁴ Bridging the Highway of Export to the US, Post Courier, 12 August 201, <https://postcourier.com.pg/bridging-highway-export-us/>

⁷⁵ Australia Continues to Invest in Pacific Skill, Australian Department of foreign Affairs and Trade, , 9 August 2018, https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/jb_mr_180809.aspx

agriculture and manufacturing. The Fiji trade office in PNG runs a "Bula Wantok Investment Roadshow" to raise awareness across the country about the opportunities for doing business with Fiji.⁷⁶

- **Pacific countries plans to set up climate change fund**

The Pacific Islands Forum summit in Nauru next month will consider the region pooling resources to create a US\$1.5 billion climate change fund. The aim is for fund to be used by states to build their own infrastructure. The secretary general of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor, said "such a fund would allow Pacific nation to strengthen their infrastructure, so they are prepared for disaster instead of waiting for it to happen and then asking for help."⁷⁷

North America

Canada

- **Cost of confrontation: Canada stands to lose a great deal from its spat with Saudi Arabia**

The sudden and unexpected diplomatic crisis between Canada and Saudi Arabia has raised questions about their levels of bilateral economic relations, the \$12-billion arms sale signed by the two countries in 2014, and the fate of thousands of Saudi students pursuing higher education at Canadian universities. This spat was ignited when the Saudi government ordered the expulsion of Canada's ambassador and halted "all new business and investment transactions with Canada". This was in response to tweets from Canada's foreign affairs minister, Chrystia Freeland, and her ministry's Twitter account criticising the arrest of human rights activist Samar Badawi. Saudi Arabia is Canada's largest trading partner in the Middle East and North Africa. The overall value of trade between the two nations between 2011 and 2017 was 3-4 billion Canadian dollars. With the new Vision 2030 launched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom is becoming increasingly open to foreign direct investment, presenting commercial opportunities for Canadian industries, but Ottawa seems on its way to missing out on them. There is also a \$15 billion deal to sell light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia that is now in jeopardy. The deal, if scrapped, could be a blow to Canada's defence industry, which employs 65,000 people and contributes \$6 billion annually to the country's gross domestic product.⁷⁸

- **Cabinet approves signing of MoU with India-Canada CA institutions**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPAC). The Cabinet's nod has been granted to the ex-post facto approval of the MoU signed in 2011, and approval for signing of MoU between ICAI and CPAC, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said at a press conference. As per Cabinet statement, the MoU would help encourage more and more young Indian chartered accountants to take up the recognition of CPAC professional designation to further help them pursue opportunities in Canada. A

⁷⁶Fiji to strengthen trade and investment with PNG, 13 August 2018, <http://fijivillage.com/news/Fiji-to-strengthen-trade-and-investment-with-PNG--sr95k2/>

⁷⁷ Pacific Countries may set up huge climate fund, 13 August 2018 <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/363976/pacific-countries-may-set-up-huge-climate-change-fund>

⁷⁸ Housseem Ben Lazreg, "Cost of confrontation: Canada stands to lose a great deal from its spat with Saudi Arabia," <https://scroll.in/article/889989/cost-of-confrontation-canada-stands-to-lose-a-great-deal-from-its-spat-with-saudi-arabia>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

number of Indian chartered accountants are holding top level positions in Canadian companies and with the recognition from CPAC, the Canadian corporates would trust Indian talent and skills more and proceed to hire them, said the statement.⁷⁹

- **Canada in wait-and-see mode as U.S. and Mexico work on bilateral NAFTA issues**
The federal government finds itself in a holding pattern on NAFTA negotiations with one-on-one talks between the United States and Mexico. A source familiar with the effort says Canadian negotiators won't be returning to the NAFTA bargaining table in Washington until its two partners find common ground on issues, especially the complex sticking points around the auto sector. However, if the U.S. and Mexico can resolve their bilateral differences, the source says Canada's team possibly including Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland could rejoin negotiations later. Media reports say today's meeting between U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo ended with bilateral work still to be done.⁸⁰

The United States

- **I share Trump's vision of prosperity through strong India, US ties: Modi**
Amid uncertainties regarding US President Donald Trump's trade and visa policies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that he shares Trump's vision of prosperity for India and the US. India and the US, apart from Japan and Australia, are part of a quad that was revived last year to work for peace in the Indo-Pacific, a geostrategically important region. Modi's comments come ahead of the India-US 2+2 Dialogue next month in New Delhi involving External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and their US counterparts Mike Pompeo and Jim Mattis. In February, the Trump administration came up with a new visa policy that makes the procedure for issuing H-1B visas tougher. According to the new policy, the hiring company would have to prove that its H-1B employee at a third-party worksite has specific and non-qualifying speculative assignments in speciality occupation. In March, US President Donald Trump slapped import tariffs of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium, unfolding the prospect of an all-out global trade war. In retaliation, India raised customs duty on 29 products, including on iron and steel products imported from the US. Stating that India and the US were two important engines of growth in the world, Modi said: "The focus of President Trump and our own priority in India on innovation and entrepreneurship has the potential to take this relationship to new heights." He stressed that the India-US Strategic Partnership had "deepened in an unprecedented manner in the past few years". India and the US share a Global Strategic Partnership based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues.⁸¹
- **U.S. President Trump threatens auto tariffs against Canada if trade talks fail**
Donald Trump launched a fresh auto-tariff threat against Canada late Friday at a time when Ottawa finds itself in a holding pattern on NAFTA negotiations as it awaits the completion of one-on-one talks between the United States and Mexico. In a tweet that appeared to reference NAFTA's renegotiation, the U.S. president said the "deal with

⁷⁹ IANS, "Cabinet approves signing of MoU with India-Canada CA institutions," https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/cabinet-approves-signing-of-mou-with-india-canada-ca-institutions-118080901365_1.html, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸⁰ The Canadian Press, "Canada in wait-and-see mode as U.S. and Mexico work on bilateral NAFTA issues," <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canada-in-wait-and-see-mode-as-u-s-and-mexico-work-on-bilateral-nafta-issues-1.4048257>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸¹ IANS, "I share Trump's vision of prosperity through strong India, US ties: Modi," https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/i-share-trump-s-vision-of-prosperity-through-strong-india-us-ties-modi-118081200303_1.html, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

Mexico is coming along nicely" and that "Canada must wait." Trump then sent a warning to Ottawa: "Their Tariffs and Trade Barriers are far too high. Will tax cars if we can't make a deal!" Bilateral NAFTA negotiations between the U.S. and Mexico have been building momentum in recent weeks after taking a break in late May ahead of Mexico's July presidential election. The one-on-one talks are expected to extend. Canada, however, has yet to return to the NAFTA table this summer. Some observers have raised concerns about Canada's absence from recent high-level negotiations on the three-country trade deal. There have been warnings Canada could be put in a position where it might have to accept a deal reached between the U.S. and Mexico. But Canadian officials have insisted Ottawa hasn't been sidelined during the U.S.-Mexico discussions, arguing there have been lots of bilateral talks between NAFTA partners during the year-long renegotiation process. To complicate matters, the already rocky Canada-U.S. relationship has deteriorated since the partners suspended talks in the spring.⁸²

- **Mattis visits South America amid political, economic upheaval**

Defense Secretary James Mattis has embarked on his first diplomatic visit to South America, arriving as the region continues to be embroiled in political and economic upheaval that could have a destabilizing effect. The Pentagon chief first will visit military and national security counterparts in Brazil, before traveling to Argentina and Chile and ending his visit with meetings with administration officials of newly elected Colombian President Ivan Duque — the youngest president elected in the South American nation. The visit coincides with Trump administration efforts to expand U.S. cooperation with allies in the Americas, according to a Pentagon statement on Mr. Mattis' trip. "These relationships are critical to a collaborative, prosperous and secure Western hemisphere," Defense Department officials noted, according to the statement. However, internal tensions in Venezuela and in nearby Nicaragua threaten to undermine efforts by Washington and the international community in Central and South America.⁸³

- **Erdogan Faces Crossroads in Dispute With U.S.**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rejection of U.S. demands to immediately free an American pastor has burnished his reputation at home as a strong-willed leader, but the financial costs are already proving to be steep. The dispute with the U.S. and long-brewing concerns over Turkey's ability to access vital foreign funding at a time when investors have grown more cautious on emerging markets have snowballed, causing panic on currency markets where the lira plunged to its lowest level ever. The financial cost, including a 40% drop in the lira's value against the dollar so far this year, could force Mr. Erdogan to seek compromise. In recent years, Mr. Erdogan has had serious run-ins with the leaders of Germany and Russia before normalizing relations. Last month, Turkey and the Netherlands turned the page on a yearlong diplomatic row that had led both countries to withdraw their ambassadors. Mr. Erdogan blamed the U.S. for stoking confrontational relations. He said that President Trump's decision to impose sanctions and tariffs on Turkey after months of negotiations failed to free the American pastor, Andrew Brunson, risked jeopardizing decades of partnership between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies.⁸⁴

⁸² Andy Blatchford, "U.S. President Trump threatens auto tariffs against Canada if trade talks fail," <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2018/08/12/news/us-president-trump-threatens-auto-tariffs-against-canada-if-trade-talks-fail>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸³ Carlo Muñoz, "Mattis visits South America amid political, economic upheaval," <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/12/james-mattis-visits-south-america-amid-political-e/>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸⁴ David Gauthier-Villars, "Erdogan Faces Crossroads in Dispute With U.S.," <https://www.wsj.com/articles/erdogan-faces-crossroads-in-dispute-with-u-s-1534114798>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

Mexico

- **López Obrador turns attention to Mexico's trade deficit with China**

As Nafta talks resume in Washington without Canada, Mexico's incoming president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador turned his attention east, to Mexico's trade deficit with China. While the US focuses on how to slash its trade deficit with Mexico — which President Donald Trump and Robert Lighthizer, US Trade Representative, have made clear are overarching aims of the Nafta renegotiation — Mexico's incoming team pondered its similar problem with China. “We want to reduce the imbalance which is unfavourable to us,” Marcelo Ebrard, incoming foreign minister, told reporters after Mr López Obrador received China's ambassador Qiu Xiaoyi at his transition office. Mr Ebrard said there was an 8 to 1 ratio of Mexico's imports from China — principally cell phones, computers and integrated circuits — to Mexico's exports, mainly car products. “We want to reduce this imbalance as much as possible,” he said. “It seems there is good will,” he said. Beijing has invited Mr López Obrador's transition team to an investment fair in Shanghai on November 5. The incoming government, which takes office on December 1, is eyeing investment from China in infrastructure projects. Mr Ebrard said China's investments in Mexico but “not 100 per cent of what they could be”. Aside from China, Mexico is also planning meetings with representatives from other Latin American countries, the EU, Russia, India, Pacific countries and Japan, Mr Ebrard said.⁸⁵

Latin America and the Caribbean

Argentina

- **Argentina's President Faced a Crisis. Now a Scandal Shields Him.**

Argentine President Mauricio Macri faced withering criticism as Argentina's currency plunged, growth sputtered and inflation surged. The coverage only got worse when Macri ultimately sought aid from the International Monetary Fund, an institution blamed by Argentines for causing the country's 2001 economic crisis. On top of that, Macri's political coalition, Cambiemos, came under scrutiny for alleged illegal campaign financing. Now the focus is on an expanding corruption probe surrounding Macri's top political foe and an intense debate on legalizing abortion. At the center of the alleged corruption is Macri's longstanding nemesis and predecessor, former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. A newspaper investigation, which has led to more than a dozen arrests, reported that bribes were delivered to Fernandez's properties while she was president. Fernandez will appear in court to face questioning. The scandal keeps Fernandez, now a senator, in the spotlight while reducing her chances of challenging Macri in next year's presidential election, analysts say. If Macri wins, it would be a clear victory for investors who widely support his market-friendly reforms and stayed away from Argentina during the previous administrations' populist 12-year reign. The graft probe -- in which business executives are accused of providing bribes in exchange for government contracts -- could lead to more arrests of corporate chiefs. That would cool investment and put the already-fragile

⁸⁵ Jude Webber, “López Obrador turns attention to Mexico's trade deficit with China,” <https://www.ft.com/content/94b684f6-967c-11e8-b747-fb1e803ee64e>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

economy on thinner ice. Borrowing costs have already surged, and economists expect Argentina to fall into a brief recession this year.⁸⁶

Brazil

- **Presidential debate showcases divided Brazil**

Brazil's top presidential candidates -- minus imprisoned frontrunner Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva -- have clashed in the first debate of the campaign, showcasing sharp divides in Latin America's biggest nation. The debate in Sao Paulo, broadcast on TV Bandeirantes featured eight of the 13 candidates competing ahead of the October 7 first round of voting. The combative tone among the seven men and one woman quickly illustrated the battle lines after two years of severe recession, a tidal wave of violent crime, and one of the world's biggest corruption scandals. With deeply unpopular President Michel Temer not seeking a new term, it is the least predictable election in decades.⁸⁷

Colombia

- **Colombia to ask UN for special envoy to manage Venezuelan migrant crisis**

Colombia will ask the United Nations to designate a special envoy to coordinate humanitarian aid for the hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants flooding into countries around the region, the foreign minister said. More than a million people have arrived in Colombia from Venezuela over the last year and a half, fleeing a severe economic and political crisis.⁸⁸

- **New Colombian president promises 'corrections' to peace deal**

Colombia's youngest elected president was sworn in to office on 02 August 2018, promising to "make corrections" to a peace deal with leftist rebels that has divided the country and to crack down on lingering armed groups still roaming the countryside. Ivan Duque, the 42-year-old protege of a powerful right-wing former president, now faces the task of implementing the historic accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia that ended a half century bloody conflict, but which remains on shaky ground. He will also have to deal with burgeoning coca and cocaine production that has strained relations with key ally Washington and negotiate a peace with a holdout guerrilla army. The new president said he believed in "the demobilization, disarmament and reinsertion of the guerrilla base" into society under the accord with the FARC. But he added that "we will make corrections to ensure that the victims receive truth, proportional justice, reparations and not a repetition" after a conflict that left at least 260,000 dead, some 60,000 missing and millions displaced. In another nod to conservatives who have demanded tougher negotiation terms with rebel groups, Duque said he will push for a constitutional reform that makes it impossible for the government to grant amnesty to individuals who have been involved in drug trafficking and kidnappings.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Patrick Gillespie, "Argentina's President Faced a Crisis. Now a Scandal Shields Him," <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-12/argentina-s-president-faced-a-crisis-now-a-scandal-shields-him>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸⁷ AFP, "Presidential debate showcases divided Brazil," <https://www.rappler.com/world/regions/latin-america/209251-presidential-debate-brazil-august-2018>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸⁸ Reuters, "Colombia to ask UN for special envoy to manage Venezuelan migrant crisis," <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-ask-un-special-envoy-manage-venezuelan-migrant-crisis>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁸⁹ Manuel Rueda, "New Colombian president promises 'corrections' to peace deal," https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/whitehouse/incoming-colombia-president-faces-long-list-of-challenges/2018/08/07/aad95362-99f6-11e8-a8d8-9b4c13286d6b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.321a734c96f6, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

Venezuela

- **Venezuela 'drone attack': Maduro would accept FBI help to investigate**

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has said he would allow US FBI agents into the country to help investigate the alleged assassination attempt against him. The president said he believed that the people involved had fled to Florida, Peru and Colombia. The US has indicated it will co-operate with investigations, but it has not made a known offer for an FBI visit. The Venezuelan leader regularly accuses the US of wanting to overthrow him. The two countries have long had a tense relationship. When Mr Maduro was re-elected in May, the US increased its sanctions on Venezuela, saying the vote had not been free or fair. However, in a televised address late on Saturday, President Maduro surprised many by saying he would accept US help to investigate the alleged plot. "If the US government offered, or confirmed its offer, of FBI co-operation to investigate, I would accept it," he said. Mr Maduro said there were "terrorist" cells in Florida, which had masterminded the plan and needed to be dismantled. He also called on the Peruvian government to extradite suspects living there. The incident happened when Mr Maduro was speaking at military parade on 4 August. Communications Minister Jorge Rodríguez later said that two drones loaded with explosives had gone off near the president's stand. The president was unharmed, but seven soldiers were injured.⁹⁰
- **Bolivian leader digs up Pompeo comment about 'transition' in Venezuela after attack on Maduro**

Evo Morales has lashed out at "Yankee interventionism" after an assassination attempt on the president of Venezuela, pointing to comments made by Mike Pompeo that the US is hoping for "transition" in the South American state. Morales, Bolivia's staunchly anti-American president, took to Twitter to accuse the US of having "plans" for Venezuela, a day after Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro was targeted by armed drones during a military parade in Caracas. Shortly after, Maduro blamed the "Venezuelan ultra-right in alliance with the Colombian extreme right" for the attack. Morales pointed out the fact that then-CIA director and current Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had openly boasted about the CIA's dealings with Mexico and Colombia, in hopes of fostering a "transition" in Venezuela. At the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado last year, Pompeo, apparently speaking on behalf of the CIA, said that "we are very hopeful that there can be a transition in Venezuela," adding that the "CIA is doing its best to understand the dynamic there, so that we can communicate to our State Department and to others."⁹¹

South Asia

Pakistan

- **Pakistanis stranded in China returns**

Pakistanis including women and children, who had been stranded in China since July 29, came to an end on August 6th when they were finally brought back by the same airline, Shaheen Air International that was responsible for their agony. Despite having confirmed return tickets, they had been told at the Guangzhou airport July 29th about the cancellation of their flight by the SAI reportedly due to technical issues.⁹²
- **The Case of School Burning in Diamer**

⁹⁰ BBC, "Venezuela 'drone attack': Maduro would accept FBI help to investigate," <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-45161166>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁹¹ RT, "Bolivian leader digs up Pompeo comment about 'transition' in Venezuela after attack on Maduro," <https://www.rt.com/news/435260-morales-maduro-venezuela-us-transition/>, Accessed on 13 August 2018.

⁹² Khalid Hasnain, "Pakistanis stranded in China back home", *Dawn*, August 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425398> as accessed on August 13, 2018

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman on August 6th said that four suspected militants believed to be involved in torching of girls schools in Diامر had been arrested in the Tangir area during a search operation. The minister claimed that at least 40 persons had been arrested so far, but only four of them were suspected to be involved in the incident as they had resisted the police. The army was assisting the government in the operation, he added.⁹³

- **Pakistan and Russia**

Pakistan and Russia on August 7th signed an agreement that allows for training of Pakistani troops at Russian military training institutes. The agreement was signed at the conclusion of the first meeting of Russia-Pakistan Joint Military Consultative Committee (JMCC) at Islamabad, described by the defence ministry as the highest forum of defence collaboration between Pakistan and the Russian Federation. Russian Deputy Defence Minister Col Gen Alexander Fomin led his side at the talks while Pakistani Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Zamirul Hassan Shah headed the host side.⁹⁴

- **Switzerland, NAB and Zardari**

The National Accountability Bureau on August 8th told the Supreme Court of Pakistan that Swiss cases against PPP co-chairman President Asif Ali Zardari cannot be reopened as they were time-barred and their statutory limitation period has elapsed. The NAB today submitted a two-page report to the apex court, detailing its findings on the National Reconciliation Ordinance as well as the cases against Zardari.⁹⁵

Sri Lanka

- **Marine security by the Sri Lanka Navy for foreign vessels**

Legal framework on marine security provided by the Sri Lanka Navy for foreign - International merchant vessels deploy armed Sea Marshalls to protect the vessels from the attacks of pirates. Ports of Colombo and Galle are used for embarkation of Sea Marshalls in vessels travelling to the high risk areas of threats and for disembarkation of those Sea Marshalls coming in Vessels through such high risk areas. Accordingly, the proposal made by President Maithripala Sirisena, in his capacity as the Minister of Defence, to regulate the transportation and storage of weaponry and ammunition belonging to the said Private Maritime Security Services upon the operational requirement under the supervision and security of the Sri Lanka Navy, was approved by the Cabinet.⁹⁶

- **JO to file legal action against S'pore-SL FTA**

The joint opposition is planning to file legal action against the Singapore-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA), JO MP Bandula Gunawardene said. He told a media briefing held at the parliamentary complex that his party file papers at the Supreme Court and pointed out that the FTA was illegal because the government had embarked on waving tax and import duty on 3000 items. "Government has claimed that a gazette notification

⁹³ Jamil Nagri, "Four more picked up for torching schools in Diامر", *Dawn*, August 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425432> as accessed on August 13, 2018

⁹⁴ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Accord with Russia signed for training of Pakistani troops", *Dawn*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425673> as accessed on August 13, 2018

⁹⁵ Haseeb Bhatti, "Swiss cases against Zardari cannot be reopened, NAB tells Supreme Court", *Dawn*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425750> as accessed on August 13, 2018

⁹⁶ Marine security by the Sri Lanka Navy for foreign vessels, 12 August 2018, <https://www.news.lk/news/world/item/21797-marine-security-by-the-sri-lanka-navy-for-foreign-vessels>

containing a list of items for which tax and duty will be removed was issued, but such a document cannot be found. Therefore the FTA is illegal,” he said.⁹⁷

- **US to provide \$39 million in military financing for Sri Lanka**

The US Department of State said that it will provide approximately \$39 million in Foreign Military Financing for Sri Lanka, pending Congressional approval. “We look forward to discussing with the Government of Sri Lanka how this contribution can support our Bay of Bengal initiative and Sri Lanka’s humanitarian assistance and disaster response priorities,” the US Embassy in Colombo said.⁹⁸

- **India warns states on dealing directly with countries like Sri Lanka**

The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has warned states against directly dealing with policing agencies of “countries of concern” like Sri Lanka, China, Iran and Afghanistan on matters of internal security, the Deccan Herald reported. States police should “not facilitate or entertain” any such requests from organisations or agencies from countries of concern without prior consultation with the MHA, it said. “It has come to the notice of the ministry of home affairs that some foreign organisations/agencies from countries of concern are extending invitations for mutual cooperation, training, joint exercise, exchange of views etc, directly to state/ union territory police without routing such requests through the Ministry of Home Affairs,” the communication said.⁹⁹

- **Modi reiterates India’s commitment to the people of Sri Lanka**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi today reiterated the Government and People of India’s commitment to be with the people of Sri Lanka in their journey towards greater peace and prosperity. In a special ceremony held at Dunsinane Estate in Punduloya, Nuwara Eliya District, the first lot of houses built under the Indian Housing Project in Plantation Areas were handed over for possession by beneficiaries. The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi addressed the beneficiaries of the housing project via a message.¹⁰⁰

Maldives

- **Indian PM calls for conducive environment for Maldives election**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 12th August renewed calls to restore the independent functioning of democratic institutions before the September 23 presidential election. “We hope that Maldives government will ensure early resumption of the political process and allow democratic institutions, including the judiciary to function independently in a fair and transparent manner,” he told the Times of India.¹⁰¹

- **Maldives says gifted India copters no longer needed**

Two military helicopters provided by India are no longer needed because the Maldives has built up enough resources of its own, the country’s ambassador said. Ahmed Mohamed told Reuters that the helicopters, mainly used for medical evacuations, were not needed

⁹⁷ JO to file legal action against S’pore-SL FTA, 10 August 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/JO-to-file-legal-action-against-S-pore-SL-FTA--153914.html>

⁹⁸ US to provide \$39 million in military financing for Sri Lanka, 13 August 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/08/13/us-to-provide-39-million-in-military-financing-for-sri-lanka/>

⁹⁹ India warns states on dealing directly with countries like Sri Lanka, 13 August 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/08/13/india-warns-states-on-dealing-directly-with-countries-like-sri-lanka/>

¹⁰⁰ Modi reiterates India’s commitment to the people of Sri Lanka, 12 August 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/08/12/modi-reiterates-indias-commitment-to-the-people-of-sri-lanka/>

¹⁰¹ “Indian PM calls for conducive environment for Maldives election”, 13 August 2018, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/indian-pm-calls-for-conducive-environment-for-maldives-election-140103>

because of improved local facilities. “They were very useful in the past but with the development of adequate infrastructure, facilities and resources we are now in a position to handle medical evacuations on our own,” he was quoted as saying.¹⁰²

- **China to develop an ophthalmology clinic in Hulhumale’**
Chinese Ambassador to Maldives Zhang Lizhong have said that China will donate an ophthalmology clinic to the Maldives, which will be developed in Hulhumale’. Chinese Ambassador made this statement while speaking at “My story with China” event. In addition, he said that they plan to donate desalination system to various islands of Maldives and also promised to donate 58 solar power systems.¹⁰³
- **Will maintain ties with Saudi and China: Ibu**
Opposition coalition presidential candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih (Ibu) has stated that Maldives’ bilateral ties with Saudi Arabia and China will not be affected in an administration of the coalition. Speaking to local media Raajje TV, the coalition candidate stated that ties with Saudi Arabia will be maintained in an administration of the coalition, highlighting that Saudi Arabia is a friendly nation, sharing the same state religion as the Maldives. Noting on snags faced due to the strains in Maldives’ bilateral ties, MP Solih earlier pledged to restore ties with Qatar, Iran and the Commonwealth of Nations, in an administration of the opposition.¹⁰⁴
- **Govt assures EU sanctions will not be imposed**
Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Dr. Mohamed Shainee has accused the European Union (EU) of trying to extort money from businessmen, and assured that the government is taking all necessary actions to ensure that the framework adopted by the EU will not be imposed on any citizens of the Maldives. The fisheries minister took to Twitter, in response to a tweet by the EU to the Maldives on the full text of EU’s restrictive measures framework adopted last month.¹⁰⁵

West Asia

Iraq and GCC

- **Iraq opposes US sanctions on Iran but will abide by them: PM Abadi¹⁰⁶**
Iraq does not agree with U.S. sanctions against Iran but will abide by them to protect its own interests, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday (August 7). “As a matter of principle we are against sanctions in the region. Blockade and sanctions destroy societies and do not weaken regimes,” he said at a news conference. “We consider them (sanctions on Iran) a strategic mistake and incorrect but we will abide by them to protect the interests of our people. We will not interact with them or support them but we will abide by them,” he added. U.S. President Donald Trump pledged on Tuesday that firms doing business with Tehran would be barred from the United States, as new U.S. sanctions against Iran took effect. The United States and Iran, increasingly at odds, are Iraq’s two biggest allies, and the sanctions put Abadi’s outgoing government in a difficult position.

¹⁰² Maldives says gifted India copters no longer needed, 10 August 2018, <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/maldives-says-gifted-india-copters-no-longer-needed-140083>

¹⁰³ China to develop an ophthalmology clinic in Hulhumale’, 12 AUG 2018, <http://miadhuvu.mv/article/en/10703>

¹⁰⁴ Will maintain ties with Saudi and China: Ibu, 12 August 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6803>

¹⁰⁵ Govt assures EU sanctions will not be imposed, 6th August 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/6740>

¹⁰⁶ August 7, 2018 , <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iraq/iraq-opposes-u-s-sanctions-on-iran-but-will-abide-by-them-pm-idUSKBN1KS1PW>

- **Abadi's coalition claims deal to form new Iraqi government¹⁰⁷**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's political alliance announced on Friday that it had reached an agreement with other major parties to form the next government. According to a statement released by Khaled al-Obeidi, chief negotiator of the Nasr (Victory) Coalition, the deal includes the frontrunner of May's election, Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon coalition, Ammar al-Hakim's al-Hikma (Wisdom) party, and Ayad Allawi's al-Wataniya (National) coalition. "We have also forged understandings with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)," Obeidi added. On Thursday (August 9), Iraq's electoral commission announced the results of the manual recount of votes as a result of widespread controversy amid charges of fraud in the May 12 national elections. There were no substantial changes in the seat numbers won by main parliamentary blocs. According to the final results, Sairoon remains the winner with 54 seats out of total 329, followed by the bloc associated with Shi'a militias, al-Fatih, with 48 seats. Abadi's coalition came in third with 42 seats.

- **Iraq election: Kurdish opposition parties reject result of manual recount¹⁰⁸**

Four Kurdish opposition parties have jointly rejected the revised results of the May 12 Iraqi parliamentary election after a manual recount of votes at disputed polling stations found little evidence of fraud. Officials from the Change Movement (Gorran), the Coalition for Democracy and Justice (CDJ), Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) and the Islamic League (Komal) met at Gorran's headquarters in Zargata, Sulaimani on Saturday to decide whether to participate in Iraq's next government or to boycott it. "This recount was to conceal and pass the huge rigging which was committed [during the election]," the parties said in their joint statement. "We reiterate that we reject these results insist on our previous position and we will take necessary legal and political procedures in order to return trust for the political process and preserve the votes of voters," the parties added. Laith Jabr Hamza, spokesperson for Independent High Election Commission (IHEC), announced on Saturday that the political parties can appeal the final results from Sunday. They have until Tuesday to lodge their complaints.

Turkey

- **Turkey's defense procurement agency reviews 45 projects¹⁰⁹**

Turkey's defense procurement agency has reviewed the implementation process of 45 projects outlined in the 100-day action plan of the government amid threats by the United States to block the sale of F-35 aircrafts and other military equipment against Ankara's plans to purchase the S-400 air defense systems from Russia. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan chaired the Defense Industry Executive Committee on Aug. 7, which was attended by senior committee officials, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and Chief of Staff Gen. Yaşar Güler

- **Trump's Turkey tariffs seen raising costs for Kinder Morgan pipeline project¹¹⁰**

Pres. Trump's plan to double tariffs on steel imported from Turkey to 50% could push up costs even further on Kinder Morgan's (NYSE:KMI) proposed 1.98B cf/day Gulf Coast Express Pipeline and hurt prospects for future U.S. natural gas projects, *Platts* reports. KMI, which moves more than a third of the gas consumed in the U.S., is sourcing 144K

¹⁰⁷ August 11, 2018 <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/5c4aefac-8be3-496f-9f94-efc0800054dd>

¹⁰⁸ August 12, 2018, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/11082018>

¹⁰⁹ "Turkey's defense procurement agency reviews 45 projects", Hurriyat Daily News, 07 August 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-defense-procurement-agency-reviews-45-projects-135560>

¹¹⁰ "Trump's Turkey tariffs seen raising costs for Kinder Morgan pipeline project", Seeking Alpha, 10 August 2018. <https://seekingalpha.com/news/3381837-trumps-turkey-tariffs-seen-raising-costs-kinder-morgan-pipeline-project>

metric tons of specialized steel pipe from Turkish producer Borusan Mannesmann to be used for the project, and already had ordered nearly half of the pipe it needed before Trump's original move in March to raise tariffs on most steel and aluminum imports by 25%.

- **Erdogan: Alliance with US at risk, Turkey target of 'trade war'**¹¹¹

Turkey's president has pledged to defy what he describes as United States attempts to weaken his country's economy, rallying supporters a day after Washington imposed even higher tariffs on Turkish metals - sending the lira tumbling. The two NATO allies remain at loggerheads over multiple issues ranging from diverging interests in Syria to Ankara's expressed desire in purchasing Russia's S400 anti-missile system, as well as the lingering case of an Evangelical pastor who is on trial in Turkey on terrorism charges.

- **Iraq PM to visit Turkey, Iran**¹¹²

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is to visit Turkey and Iran next week, an official said on Aug. 11. Abadi "will head to Turkey on Aug. 14 and Iran on Aug. 15 to discuss economic affairs with the two countries," the official said on condition of anonymity. Iraq is the second-largest importer of Iranian non-hydrocarbon products, buying some \$6 billion worth of goods from its eastern neighbour in 2017.

Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Arabia orders its foreign students out of Canadian schools**¹¹³

In the wake of Saudi Arabia's expulsion of Canada's ambassador, the kingdom has suspended scholarships for about 16,000 Saudi students studying here and ordered them to attend schools elsewhere. It's the latest in a war of words between the Saudi government and Canada over human rights, a dispute that began with a tweet on 02 August from Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland.

- **Eritrean delegation in Saudi Arabia to deepen bilateral relations**¹¹⁴

An Eritrean delegation led by Foreign Minister Osman Saleh on 05 August arrived in Saudi Arabia for a visit aimed at deepening relations between the two countries. Saleh met with his Saudi counterpart Adel Jubeir during which meeting they discussed consolidation of bilateral ties, particularly trade and investment ties. According to Eritrea's Information Minister, Yemane Meskel, "Both sides further discussed the recent developments in the Horn of Africa, especially peace and friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia."

- **Saada target was legitimate military action, Saudi Arabia tells UN**¹¹⁵

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations said in a message to the Security Council that legitimate military action was taken on Aug. 9 when

¹¹¹"Erdogan: Alliance with US at risk, Turkey target of 'trade war'", Al Jazeera, 12 August 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/erdogan-alliance-risk-turkey-target-trade-war-180811183650835.html>

¹¹²"Iraq PM to visit Turkey, Iran", Daily News, 12 August 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/iraq-pm-to-visit-turkey-iran-iraq-pm-to-visit-turkey-iran-135709>

¹¹³ "Saudi Arabia orders its foreign students out of Canadian schools", The Star, 06 August 2018. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/08/06/saudi-arabia-orders-its-foreign-students-out-of-canadian-schools.html>

¹¹⁴ "Eritrean delegation in Saudi Arabia to deepen bilateral relations", Africa News, 06 August 2018. <http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/06/eritrean-delegation-in-saudi-arabia-to-deepen-bilateral-relations/>

¹¹⁵ "Saada target was legitimate military action, Saudi Arabia tells UN", Saudi Gazette, 13 August 2018. <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/541042/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saada-target-was-legitimate-military-action-Saudi-Arabia-tells-UN>

Houthi leaders were targeted in Saada governorate. Saudi Arabia's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Abdullah Al-Mouallimi said in his message to President of Security Council Karen Pierce and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres that the targeted Houthi leaders were responsible for recruiting and training young children and sending them to battlefields.

Israel

- **Israel and UN**

Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon harshly criticized a suggestion by UN official Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories for the UN, that Israel be suspended from the world body over what the United Nations characterizes as violations of international law on August 8th.¹¹⁶

- **Israel and Russia**

Israel and Russia have reached an understanding to ensure the preservation of the 1974 cease-fire line on the Golan Heights, according to Israel's Ambassador to Russia Gary Koren on August 6th.¹¹⁷

- **Ongoing Violence at Gaza**

- There was intense shelling of mortars and rockets both from Gaza and Israel on August 8th. Mortars and rockets fell in southern Israel including in the city of Ashkelon and Beersheba. The international community condemned such attacks and requested to show restraint.¹¹⁸ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on August 12th warned Hamas that Israel will continue to operate against the terrorism stemming from the Gaza Strip, apparently confirming that no official ceasefire agreement had been reached with the terrorist group.

¹¹⁶ Yvette J. Deane, "Amb. Danon blasts official who suggested Israel be suspended from U.N.", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Amb-Danon-blasts-official-who-suggested-Israel-be-suspended-from-UN-564366?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=8-8-2018&utm_content=amb-danon-blasts-official-who-suggested-israel-be-suspended-from-un-564366 as accessed on August 13, 2018

¹¹⁷ Herb Keinon, "Russia and Israel reach understanding on Golan border line", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Russia-and-Israel-reach-understanding-on-Golan-border-line-564355?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=8-8-2018&utm_content=russia-and-israel-reach-understanding-on-golan-border-line-564355 as accessed on August 13, 2018

¹¹⁸ "Timeline: The Israel-Hamas escalation", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 9, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Live-updates-Flareup-in-the-south-564419?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=8-9-2018&utm_content=live-updates-flareup-in-the-south-564419 as accessed on August 13, 2018; Anna Ahronheim, "Israel pounds Hamas after 19 injured in rocket barrage, one critical", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Two-injured-as-Gazan-rockets-land-in-Sderot-564411?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=8-9-2018&utm_content=two-injured-as-gazan-rockets-land-in-sderot-564411 as accessed on August 13, 2018

He said that Israel wouldn't rest until security was restored in full for the residents of southern Israel.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ “Netanyahu: Israel won't accept anything less than a full ceasefire in Gaza”, *The Times of Israel*, August 12, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-israel-wont-accept-anything-less-than-a-full-ceasefire-in-gaza/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=3ef29e94ab-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_12_01_18&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-3ef29e94ab-55556173 as accessed on August 13, 2018