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Contents

Regions and Themes covered this Week

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

Africa

- **Merkel Pushes for Investment Over Migration in Africa Tour¹**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel landed in Senegal on Wednesday, 29 August 2018 as she started off a three-country West African tour. Migration was the main focus of Merkel's first day, during which she met Senegalese President Macky Sall. Sall agreed with Merkel, saying that attempting the often deadly Mediterranean crossing was "not in the dignity of Africa," and remind his citizens that they were likely to be rejected for asylum in Europe, as there was no war or religious persecution to flee at home. After the meeting, Germany announced that it would help bring electricity to 300 villages in Senegal.

Merkel is also set to visit Ghana and Nigeria, with about a dozen German CEOs in town. With Ghana and Senegal representing two of Africa's fastest growing and most stable economies, and Nigeria's position as the region's powerhouse, many are hoping that promoting further development in these nations will stem the number of migrants heading north.

- **Theresa May backs South Africa land reform²**

UK Prime Minister Theresa May began her first official visit to Africa in Cape Town on 28 August 2018. It' was the first stop of a five-day tour in which she would travel to Kenya and Nigeria to court trade partners on behalf of post-Brexit Britain. May came to South Africa to lay the foundation for 2022, when she believes the UK could be the top G7 investor in Africa, creating new opportunities for British exporters.

May was using her visit to assure trading partners that once the UK leaves the EU bloc, Britain remains ready to do business. In South Africa, she also signed trade deals with the government of President Cyril Ramaphosa and diplomats from neighboring Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and eSwatini (Swaziland). Curbing migration to Britain by creating jobs in the developing world is part of May's stated policy. It's a message South Africa is keen to hear, as it struggles with high unemployment, especially among the youth. The UK also pledged to support Ramaphosa's goal to raise \$100 billion in investment to pull the country out of its Zuma-era malaise. Seemingly keen to stay on the good side of her new friend Ramaphosa, May said she supported land reform in South Africa. It was a markedly more reserved approach than US president Donald Trump's stance on the matter. She said "The UK has, for some time now, supported land reform that is legal, transparent and follows a democratic process."

¹ Seychelles News Agency, 18 August 2018, https://allafrica.com/stories/201808180007.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkwtb

² Quartz Africa 28 August 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1371982/theresa-may-in-africa-uk-pm-backs-south-africa-land-reform/>

- **China, South Africa Agree to Lift Ties to New Level³**

Chinese President Xi Jinping and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa held talks on Sunday, September 2 ahead of the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), agreeing to elevate the comprehensive strategic partnership of the two countries to a new level. Xi noted that China and South Africa have valued sincerity, friendship and mutual trust. He also welcomed Ramaphosa's visit and co-chairing the FOCAC Beijing Summit, believing this will inject new impetus into the development of China's relations with South Africa and the continent. Xi stressed that the significance of the relationship between China and South Africa has far exceeded the bilateral scope and is of global and strategic influence. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 20 years ago, the two countries have been committed to mutual respect, trust and benefit, and have always understood and relied on each other, said Xi. South Africa is willing to learn from China's valuable experience in areas including ruling party building and corporate management, and will actively participate in the Belt and Road cooperation, said Ramaphosa.

- **Court Rejects Angola Fund's Request to Appeal in Quantum Global Case⁴**

Angola's sovereign wealth fund has been refused permission to appeal by an English court and to extend a global freezing order against its Swiss asset manager Quantum Global, court documents seen by Reuters on Tuesday, August 28, 2018 showed. Angola's US\$5 billion fund, known by its Portuguese acronym FSDEA, has been battling in several jurisdictions to sever ties with Quantum Global. It initially obtained a US\$3 billion global asset freeze order against the asset manager in London's High Court. This was overturned following a hearing in July, although the judge granted a temporary injunction freezing a reduced amount of US\$560 million to allow the FSDEA time to apply for leave to appeal. Lawyers for the FSDEA applied for leave to appeal and to extend the temporary asset freeze, which expired on August 22. The Court of Appeal denied both applications and awarded costs against the fund, according to a court order seen by Reuters. Quantum Global said in a statement last week that it was still challenging similar court injunctions in Mauritius, which have prevented the company from managing its investments in Africa and paying its staff for five months.

- **Japan to Provide Agricultural Technology to Angola⁵**

Japan manifested in Luanda, its availability to provide to Angola its modern technology used in agriculture, with the aim of helping Angola to develop its agricultural sector, disclosed the chairman of the Angola/Japan Parliamentary

³ Xinhua Net, September 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/03/c_137439513.htm

⁴ Reuters, August 28, 2018, <https://in.reuters.com/article/angola-swf-litigation/court-rejects-angola-funds-request-to-appeal-in-quantum-global-case-idINL8N1VE29H>

⁵ ANGOP, August 29, 2018, http://www.angop.ao/angola/en_us/noticias/economia/2018/7/35/Japan-provide-agricultural-technology-Angola,68fab414-ce21-46ae-8810-d1b5e0d0ef0c.html

Committee of Friendship, Yoshitaka Sakuranda. Japan intends to contribute to Angola's production boost and economic diversification process through the agricultural sector, said the Japanese official during an audience with the Angolan National Assembly Speaker, Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos. He stressed that agriculture continues to be the main area of co-operation between both countries, which Japan is willing to strengthen more and more. During the audience, Yoshitaka Sakuranda requested Angola's support for his country to organise the 2025 universal exposition (Expo2025).

- **Xi Meets Angolan President⁶**

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Angolan President Joao Lourenco on Sunday, September 2, ahead of the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Noting that China and Angola have jointly explored a unique path of common development since the two countries established a strategic partnership eight years ago, Xi called for efforts to advance this partnership to a higher level as this year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between China and Angola. Xi said China stands ready to strengthen ruling party exchanges and governance experience sharing with Angola, deepen cooperation in all areas, and enhance communication and coordination on major international issues. China is willing to align the Belt and Road Initiative with Angola's economic diversification strategy and continues to provide assistance, without political conditions attached, to major projects suitable for Angola's national development strategy, Xi said. After the meeting, the two leaders witnessed the signing of bilateral cooperation documents.

- **Chinese Government Gives Zambia a Grant of 30 Million Dollars⁷**

The Chinese government has given Zambia a grant of thirty million dollars for electrifying the Lusaka East Multi-facility Economic Zone. State House press aide Amos Chanda says the Chinese President Xi Jinping said his government will also fund the modernisation of Mulungushi International centre in readiness for the African Union heads of state summit in 2022. Mr Chanda confirmed the development to ZNBC News in Beijing, China. And President Lungu says government is vigorously seeking investments that will promote value-addition and job creation.

- **Zambia is Not Facing a Debt Crisis, People Should Stop Speculating⁸**

The Government of Zambia has said that it is not facing a debt crisis and has urged people to stop speculating about economic issues and debt. Chief Government spokesperson Dora Siliya has said that people should allow the Minister of Finance

⁶ Xinhua Net, September 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/02/c_137439443.htm

⁷ Lusaka Times, September 2, 2018, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/09/02/chinese-government-gives-zambia-a-grant-of-30-million-dollars/>

⁸ Lusaka Times, September 2, 2018, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/09/02/zambia-is-not-facing-a-debt-crisis-people-should-stop-speculating/>

Margaret Mwanakatwe to do her work and stop speculating as it does not help the country. Ms Siliya said that Government will look at how to engage international organisations so that Zambia's side of the story is told in a correct manner. She has reiterated that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is not an enemy but a partner since Zambia is a shareholder in the multilateral institution. Ms. Siliya further said that the Minister of Finance will continue to engage the IMF until discussions reach a logical conclusion.

- **Germany Returns Human Remains from Namibian Genocide⁹**

Berlin, on August 29, 2018, handed back human remains seized from Namibia a century ago after the slaughter of indigenous people under German colonial rule, but descendants are still waiting for an apology. A Namibian government delegation received the remains, including 19 skulls, a scalp and bones, during a solemn church service in Berlin. "We want to help heal the wounds from the atrocities committed by Germans at the time," said Michelle Muentefering, minister of state for international cultural policies in the German foreign ministry. But representatives of descendants of the tens of thousands of Herero and Nama people massacred between 1904 and 1908 after rebelling against their colonial overlords have criticised the ceremony as insufficient. Esther Utjiua Muinjanguue, chairwoman of the Ovaherero Genocide Foundation, said the handover would have been "the perfect opportunity" for Germany to officially apologise for what is often called the first genocide of the 20th century. Although Berlin has acknowledged the horrors that occurred at the hands of German imperial troops, it has refused to pay direct reparations.

- **After South Africa, Namibia Wants to Embark on Land Reform¹⁰**

Namibia's President Hage Geingob on August 26, 2018 urged citizens to participate in land expropriation talks, as he seeks to ease political and ethnic tensions over the transfer of wealth to its majority black population. The southern African country will hold a "national land conference" from October 1-5, 2018 for discussion of policies that will accelerate the land reform programme. "I believe that we should have difficult conversations, as Namibians, with the aim of finding peaceful and sustainable solutions to the challenges of inequality, landlessness and outstanding pains of genocide," Geingob said during the heroes day commemorations in northern Namibia.

- **Construction Begins at Botswana's First Privately-Owned Coal Mine¹¹**

⁹ The Namibian, August 30, 2018, <https://www.namibian.com.na/70882/read/Germany-returns-human-remains-from-Namibian-genocide>

¹⁰ Africa News, August 27, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/27/after-south-africa-namibia-wants-to-embark-on-land-reform/>

¹¹ Energy World, August 30, 2018, <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/coal/construction-begins-at-botswanas-first-privately-owned-coal-mine/65601839>

Botswana's Minergy Limited said on Wednesday, August 29, 2018 that it had started construction at its Masama Coal Mine, which was set to be the country's first privately-owned coal mine, following government approval. Botswana has an estimated resource of 212 billion tonnes of coal but has only one operating coal mine, the state-owned Morupule Coal Mine that produces 3.5 million tonnes a year. Minergy chief executive officer Andre Boje said that commissioning of its 400 million pula (US\$37 million) Masama Coal Mine is scheduled for January 2019, and production of first saleable coal slated for the following month. Most off-site construction for Masama mine, which will produce 2.4 million tonnes a year, is already complete with some of the funding already secured.

- **Portugal: Galp to Invest €128.7 Million in Mozambique by 2020¹²**

Portuguese oil company Galp plans to invest US\$150 million (€128.7 million) in expanding its logistics and sales network in Mozambique by 2020, the company said in a statement on Thursday, August 30, 2018. The company plans to double the number of petrol stations in the country to over 70, Galp said. The number of jobs in retail is expected to grow to over 2,600 by the end of 2020. The company also said the construction of the two new logistic bases for the reception, storage and shipping of liquid fuels and LPG would be built in the cities of Matola and Beira. Galp has a 10 per cent share in the Coral South gas project in Mozambique's Rovuma basin, led by Eni and Exxon.

- **US Trade and Development Agency Grants US\$1.2 Million Funding for Mozambique Solar Project¹³**

Investment bank Fieldstone has assisted WHN Solar to raise grant funding of almost US\$1.2-million for a solar energy project in Mozambique. The funding was conferred by the US Trade and Development Agency for a feasibility study to assess the viability of a photovoltaic plant of up to 100 MW to be developed in increments of 20 MW to 40 MW. The proposed solar energy plant will be located at the Nacala International Airport, in Nampula province. A key feature of the plant will be an energy storage facility with up to 50 MW of capacity, which will be located adjacent to the plant. The Nacala solar project will be the largest in Mozambique once it reaches full scale.

- **Congo's Latest Ebola Outbreak Could Become 'Worst Ever' in East Africa, IRC Warns¹⁴**

A fast-growing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could become "the worst ever seen in East Africa," a humanitarian aid group warned on August 29, 2018 after the deadly virus spread to an area surrounded by armed

¹² Macau News Agency, August 31, 2018, www.macaubusiness.com/portugal-galp-to-invest-e128-7-million-in-mozambique-by-2020/

¹³ Engineering News, August 28, 2018, <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/us-trade-and-development-agency-grants-12m-funding-for-mozambique-solar-project-2018-08-28>

¹⁴ abc News, August 29, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/congos-latest-ebola-outbreak-worst-east-africa-irc/story?id=57482984>

militants. Since the latest outbreak was declared on August 1, a total of 115 people have reported symptoms of hemorrhagic fever in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, including 85 cases that tested positive for Ebola virus disease and 30 probable cases. There have been 77 deaths among those cases, including 47 people who died from confirmed cases of Ebola, according to the most recent data from the country's health ministry. As new infections were recorded in conflict-hit areas, the International Rescue Committee called for a "swift, concerted and efficient response" to avoid a repeat of the 2013-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which killed more than 11,000 people.

- **Vanilla's Spiralling Price Brings Madagascar Unexpected Riches, and Violent Crime¹⁵**

The lush mountains in Madagascar's northeast produce about 80 per cent of the world's vanilla, one of the most expensive flavours. Its price has soared, reaching more than US\$600 a kilogram last year, or about US\$270 a pound — more than silver — compared with US\$50 a kilogram in 2013. Growing Western demand for the flavoring is partly driving the price spike, with vanilla used in everything from ice cream to alcohol to cosmetics. The windfall, however, has come at a cost. Vanilla's high price, combined with rampant poverty and a corrupt, weak state, has made the crop a favorite target of violent criminal networks.

- **Chagos Island 'Colony' Case to Open at Top Court¹⁶**

The UN's top court will hear arguments on the future status of the British-ruled Chagos Islands on September 3, 2018. The islands are home to a strategic joint US military base but a territory claimed by Mauritius. Port Louis is set to open arguments before the International Court of Justice in a case brought by the United Nations over the Indian Ocean archipelago, which has been the centre of a dispute for more than five decades. In a diplomatic blow to Britain, the UN General Assembly in June 2017 adopted a resolution presented by Mauritius and backed by African countries asking the Hague-based ICJ to offer a legal opinion on the island chain's fate.

- **China, Mauritius Sign Agreement on FTA Talks¹⁷**

China and Mauritius signed four bilateral cooperation agreements on Sunday, September 2, 2018 including one that concludes the negotiation on a free trade agreement, witnessed by Premier Li Keqiang and Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth. The signing ceremony came after Premier Li's meeting with Jugnauth in Beijing. Jugnauth arrived to Beijing to attend the 2018 Beijing Summit

¹⁵ The Indian Express, August 31, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/vanilla-spiralling-prices-madagascar-5333949/>

¹⁶ Seychelles News Agency, September 3, 2018, <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/9677/Chagos+island+%27colony%27+case+to+open+at+top+court>

¹⁷ ECNS, September 3, 2018, <http://www.ecns.cn/business/2018-09-03/detail-ifypqun1872858.shtml>

of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Bilateral ties have seen smooth development, Li said. China appreciates Mauritius's firm support for the one-China principle, he said. China and Mauritius have reached an agreement on negotiation of a free trade agreement, and is willing to work with Mauritius to safeguard multilateralism and free trade, he said. China is ready to boost cooperation with Mauritius in tackling climate change, with special attention to small island nations' reasonable concerns, Li said. Jugnauth said Mauritius is committed to enhancing bilateral relations and Africa-China relations. He extended gratitude to China's help in his country's infrastructure construction and financing, which have promoted the economic and social transformation of Mauritius.

- **Mauritius Joins Nigeria, Ghana, Others as Shareholders of Africa50¹⁸**

A pan-African investment platform, Africa50, says the Republic of Mauritius has joined Nigeria, Ghana and others as the 30th shareholder of the platform. A statement on Thursday, August 30, 2018 by Fleur Tchibota, the platform's Head of Communications Department, quoted the Chief Executive Officer, Alain Ebobissé as saying by Mauritius ratification 24 other countries left would subscribe to the agreement. Africa50 is an infrastructure investment platform that contributes to Africa's growth by developing and investing in bankable projects, catalysing public sector capital, and mobilising private sector funding, with differentiated financial returns and impact. The platform's total committed capital has risen to over US\$850 million.

- **Seychelles Receives New Grant of 120 Million Rupees from China¹⁹**

China and Seychelles have signed a deal that will eventually help bring jobs and economic development to the African nation. The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between Seychelles and China provides for a new grant of 120 million Seychelles Rupees (50 million Chinese Yuan) to Seychelles to implement projects to be mutually agreed by the two governments. This agreement was signed by Ambassador Vivianne Fock-Tave, Seychelles' resident Ambassador in Beijing, and Mr Zhou Liujun, Vice-Director of the Agency of International Development and Cooperation. The agreement, signed on September 3, 2018, comes two weeks after the Chinese wrote off a US\$5.5 million loan to Seychelles.

- **Kenyan President Rebukes Theresa May on Last Day of Africa Trip²⁰**

Kenya's president has complained that no British prime minister has visited the east African country for 30 years, delivering a diplomatic rebuke to Theresa May in

¹⁸ Vanguard, August 30, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/08/mauritius-joins-nigeria-ghana-others-as-shareholders-of-africa50/>

¹⁹ CGTN, September 3, 2018, <https://africa.cgtn.com/2018/09/03/seychelles-receives-new-grant-of-120m-rupees-from-china/>

²⁰ The Guardian, August 30, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/30/kenya-president-rebukes-theresa-may-last-day-africa-trip>

a press conference on the final day of her visit to the continent. Uhuru Kenyatta told May he was pleased she had “found time” to visit and went on to struggle to remember Boris Johnson’s surname at the culmination of a three-day trip aimed at boosting Britain’s trade and diplomatic presence in the country. The president began proceedings by saying he was glad May had “honoured our invitation to come and see for yourself our country and continent that has changed in the last nearly four decades since a UK prime minister visited”. The last British prime minister to visit Kenya was Margaret Thatcher in 1988.

- **UK to Build Cyber Centre in Kenya ‘To Ensure British Paedophiles Have No Place to Hide’²¹**

The UK government will build a new “cyber centre” to help stop British paedophiles abusing vulnerable children in Kenya. The centre will be the first of its kind in Africa amid a rising number of abuse cases faced by Kenyan authorities. In the past two years two British men have been sentenced to long prison sentences after travelling to the African country to sexually abuse youngsters, some of whom were destitute street children. It is part of a wider security pact announced by Theresa May, as she heads to Nairobi on the final leg of her three-day tour of Africa, which has also taken in Nigeria and South Africa.

- **Ethiopia Arrests Ex-Somali Region Head Over Rights Abuses²²**

Police in Ethiopia arrested the former president of the volatile eastern Somali region on charges of human rights abuses after a series of deadly clashes earlier this month (August 2018). Monday’s, August 27 arrest of Abdi Mohamed Omar, who was forced to resign earlier this month, came days after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said he would face charges following fighting in the regional capital, Jijiga, and nearby towns. “Abdi was arrested for allegedly being behind the human rights violations as well as the ethnic and religious clashes that have happened in the Ethiopian Somali region,” Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) said, citing the attorney general.

- **Russia Plans Investment in Eritrean Port as Foreign Ministers Meet²³**

Russia is set to make investments in a port in Eritrea as Moscow enters talks to set up a logistics centre in the Horn of Africa nation. RIA news agency cited Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as disclosing the move on Friday, August 31, 2018 during a meeting with his Eritrean counterpart Osman Saleh. “Lavrov said the project would help develop bilateral trade, the agency reported. It did not name the port,” a Reuters report added. Eritrea’s known port are at Massawa and Assab. A recent

²¹ Independent, August 29, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/paedophiles-cyber-crime-centre-kenya-uk-government-a8513656.html>

²² Al Jazeera, August 28, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/ethiopia-arrests-somali-region-head-rights-abuses-180827161340917.html>

²³ Africa News, August 31, 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/31/russia-plans-investment-in-eritrean-port-as-foreign-ministers-meet//>

report by Bloomberg quoted a mines official hinting of a possibility of developing another port for potash export. An Eritrean delegation – comprising Saleh and presidential advisor Yemane Ghebream – were on an official visit to Russia. They arrived on August 30 and ended their engagements on September 1, 2018. Eritrea has been on a renewed diplomatic engagement since President Isaias Afwerki signed a peace deal with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in July 2018.

- **China, Djibouti Sign New Agreements Under Belt and Road**²⁴

China and Djibouti have signed new agreements under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The announcement came as Chinese President Xi Jinping met Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh in Beijing on Sunday, September 2, 2018 ahead of this week's Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Xi said that the signing of the documents between the two sides can provide new impetus for cooperation. On governance and development experience, Xi said China is willing to strengthen exchanges and mutual understanding with Djibouti and deepen humanities cooperation. Guelleh said his country is a dependable companion of China and is willing to actively participate in the Belt and Road in the process of diversified economic development and creation of a new era of cooperation between the two countries.

- **PEACE Cable Initiating Landing Coop with Pakistan, Djibouti**²⁵

PEACE Cable International Network Co., Ltd. (PEACE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and landing party agreement with Pakistan carrier Cybernet and Djibouti Telecom during the 4th Asia-Pacific Submarine Networks Forum. Remaining landing party agreements will also be signed within the next two weeks, representing a key milestone in the delivery plan which includes the permit application work in each country. Geographically the PEACE cable will connect the three most populated continents in the world: Asia, Africa and Europe with backbone connectivity in Pakistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya and France providing critical interconnection to Asia, Europe, and Africa economic corridors.

- **South Sudanese Rebels 'Approve' Peace Deal with Government**²⁶

South Sudanese rebels have approved a peace deal with Juba that is expected to be formally signed at a summit of regional leaders. Sudan's Foreign Minister Al-Dirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, who is mediating the negotiations, said rebels had signed a key document aimed at ending the country's devastating five-year civil war on Thursday, August 30, 2018. "By signing this document today, we have reached the conclusion of these negotiations, which consisted of two rounds, one

²⁴ CGTN Live, September 2, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514e3449544f79457a6333566d54/share_p.html

²⁵ Pakistan Observer, August 31, 2018, <https://pakobserver.net/peace-cable-initiating-landing-coop-with-pakistan-djibouti/>

²⁶ Al Jazeera, August 31, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/south-sudanese-rebels-approve-peace-deal-government-180831053635762.html>

about the outstanding issues and the other on the subsequent issues," Ahmed told reporters in Khartoum. "The final signing of the peace deal will happen at a summit of IGAD," he added.

China

- **China releases guideline on winning battle against poverty**

On August 19, 2018, China released a guideline on winning the battle against poverty in the next three years to prepare the nation for eradicating poverty by 2020. It is an arduous task to lift a further 30 million people out of poverty in the next three years, said the guideline released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council. The guideline reiterates the country's target of lifting all rural poor and impoverished counties out of poverty and eliminating absolute poverty by 2020 to build a moderately prosperous society.

Poor population should be guaranteed food and clothing and children from poor families should be guaranteed nine-year compulsory education. Basic medical needs and living conditions of poor population should also be guaranteed, according to the guideline. The guideline said poverty relief work should be focused on areas in deep poverty, such as Tibet, mountainous Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province and Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province.²⁷

- **China celebrates first Medical Workers' Day**

Activities were held and promotion videos released for the celebrations of China's first Medical Workers' Day on 19 August to call for respect from society for the country's 11.7 million medical and health workers. The State Council last year approved an application from the health authorities on designating Aug. 19 every year as the country's Medical Workers' Day. Zhang Yanling, President of the Chinese Medical Doctor Association, said the day will be remembered as a milestone in the history of China's health cause and the country's doctors.²⁸

- **Xi requires strengthening CPC leadership, Party building in military**

President Xi Jinping has called for efforts to comprehensively strengthen the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Party building in the country's armed forces to ensure a solid political guarantee for the building of a

²⁷ "China releases guideline on winning battle against poverty", *XinhuaNet*, August 19, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/19/c_137402580.htm (accessed on August 20, 2018).

²⁸ "China celebrates first Medical Workers' Day", *XinhuaNet*, August 19, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/19/c_137402789.htm (accessed on August 20, 2018).

strong military. Xi made the remarks at a CMC meeting on Party building, which was held on August 17 – 19, 2018 in Beijing.²⁹

- **Chinese Premier congratulates Pakistan's new PM on election**

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on August 17 sent a congratulatory message to Imran Khan on his election as Pakistan's new prime minister.

In the message, Li said the relationship between China and Pakistan, which enjoy an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, has witnessed healthy and steady development despite the challenges of time and changing international situation.

In recent years, the two countries have deepened political mutual trust, made remarkable achievements in the Belt and Road cooperation, and achieved fruitful results in building the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which in all have brought tangible benefits to the two countries and peoples, Li said.

Li expressed appreciation for Imran Khan's positive remarks on firmly supporting the development of China-Pakistan relations, saying he is willing to establish a sound working relationship and personal friendship with the new prime minister, in a bid to carry on the traditional friendship between China and Pakistan, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, and strive to build the China-Pakistan community of a shared future.³⁰

- **China, Mauritius set to sign free trade agreement**

China and Mauritius are preparing for the final signing of a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) following the signing of a MoU on wrapping up the talks. The two countries signed a bilateral free trade agreement in Beijing on September 2, 2018. It will be China's first FTA with an African country.³¹

- **Xi announces 60 billion USD of financing to Africa**

On September 3, 2018, speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China will extend a total of 60 billion U.S. dollars Africa.

The financing includes 15 billion U.S. dollars of grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans, 20 billion U.S. dollars of credit lines, the setting up of a 10-billion-U.S. dollars special fund for development financing and a 5-billion-U.S.

²⁹ “Xi requires strengthening CPC leadership, Party building in military”, August 20, 2018 <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0820/c90000-9492125.html> (accessed on August 20, 2018).

³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of China, August 18, 2018, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1586409.shtml (accessed on August 20, 2018).

³¹ “China, Mauritius set to sign free trade agreement”, *The People's Daily*, September 4, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0904/c90000-9497014.html>.

dollars special fund for financing imports from Africa. Chinese companies are also encouraged to make at least 10 billion U.S. dollars of investment in Africa in the next three years.³²

- **Chinese Arctic cargo ship sails from Arctic Circle to France**

A Chinese cargo ship named ‘Tian’en’ has used the Polar Silk Road to reach its first destination in Europe. The ship is carrying wind power equipment to France, the Netherlands and Sweden. The ship departed from Lianyungang in Jiangsu province on August 4 for Europe. China has issued a white paper on its Arctic policy in January this year and pledged to further cooperate with other countries to jointly build the ‘Polar Silk Road’.³³

- **China-Maldives Friendship Bridge opens to traffic**

On August 30, 2018, the first cross-sea bridge in the Maldives was opened to traffic. It took 33 months of construction to build the 2 kilometres long bridge. The bridge connects capital Male and Hulhule Island where the Maldives’ main international airport is located.³⁴

- **Sino-Russia drill set to guard regional peace**

On August 30, 2018, China’s Ministry of National Defence said that the upcoming joint military exercise between China and Russia known as ‘Vostok-2018 or East-2018’ will strengthen their abilities to jointly deal with different types of security threats and safeguard regional peace and security. Mongolia, China and Russia are the participating countries in the joint exercise.

A total of 3,200 Chinese troops, along with more than 900 pieces of weaponry and 30 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters will participate in the exercise to be held in Russia’s Tsugol training range on September 11-15. It will be Russia’s largest military exercise since 1981, involving around 300,000 Russian troops, 900 tanks, and 1,000 aircraft. It is also the largest Chinese military delegation to join a military exercise in a foreign country.³⁵

³² “Xi announces 60 billion USD of financing to Africa”, *The People’s Daily*, September 4, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0904/c90000-9497011.html>.

³³ “Chinese Arctic cargo ship sails from Arctic Circle to France”, *The People’s Daily*, September 3, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0903/c90000-9496670.html>.

³⁴ “China-Maldives Friendship Bridge opens to traffic”, *The People’s Daily*, August 31, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0831/c90000-9495963.html>.

³⁵ “Sino-Russia drill set to guard regional peace”, *The People’s Daily*, August 31, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0831/c90000-9495872.html>.

European Union

- **EU Elections 2019: Data protection a priority for next parliament, forecast shows**

The next European Parliament is likely to offer citizens better protection of their data, according to a study conducted by a leading European think tank. At the same time, concerns are growing about the adequacy of an EU-US deal on exchanging personal data across the Atlantic. Research carried out by VoteWatch.EU shows that currently, around 54% of MEPs support stricter data protection rules, with MEPs in such a category forecast to increase by a further 3% after the European elections take place in May 2019. The fact that no there will be no British MEPs sitting in the European Parliament, along with predictions that show a loss of seats for the EPP group, a party known for its softer stance on data protection rules, are some of the factors that may contribute to a parliament more favorable to a tougher stance on data protection. The results come after the EU stepped up its campaign to better protect citizens' data with the adoption of its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May, offering Europeans more control over how their data is collected and stored.³⁶

- **Trump rejects EU offer on auto tariffs, threatens to pull US out from WTO**

President Donald Trump on Thursday (30 August) rejected as “not good enough” a European Union proposal scrapping tariffs on automobiles, a move which threatens to amplify a simmering trans-Atlantic trade dispute. Just hours earlier, the EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström had said the bloc was “willing to bring down... our car tariffs to zero” provided that the United States did the same. “It’s not good enough,” Trump told Bloomberg News in an Oval Office interview, speaking of the Brussels offer. “Their consumer habits are to buy their cars, not to buy our cars.” Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström confirmed that the EU would be willing to reach a “reciprocal” agreement with the US to scrap car tariffs as part of a new deal, but she added that both sides still have “profound disagreements” on trade. Trump on Thursday (30 August) also compared the EU to China. He has reportedly threatened to slap import taxes on \$200 billion in Chinese goods, as a trade war escalates with Beijing. “The European Union is almost as bad as China, just smaller,” Trump said. He also warned that he could pull the United States out of the World Trade Organisation. “If they don’t shape up, I would withdraw from the WTO,” Trump said of one of the key anchors of the post-World War II multilateral trading system that the United States helped construct.³⁷

³⁶ Euractiv, 3 September 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/data-protection/news/eu-elections-2019-data-protection-a-priority-for-next-parliament-forecast-shows/>

³⁷ Euractiv, 31 August 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/trump-rejects-eu-offer-on-auto-tariffs-threatens-to-pull-us-out-from-wto/>

- **Macron proposes EU collective defence plan**

French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that Europe adopts a form of collective defence on Thursday (30 August) as he strengthens calls for EU integration in the face of concerns over the United States' security commitments. Macron, who has called on the bloc to stop its reliance on Washington as a military backstop, said Europe should seek "strategic autonomy" in defence, during a press conference with his Finnish counterpart in Helsinki. In order to achieve this he proposed "cooperation reinforced almost automatically, which will mean that, for member states who agreed with the reform, we could have a real solidarity of intervention if one state was attacked". French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday (27 August) had called for Europe to stop relying on the United States for its military defence as he pushed for fresh EU integration in the face of rising nationalism around the continent. His comments come after US President Donald Trump repeatedly distanced himself from the NATO military alliance, which groups the United States with most of Europe and has underpinned European security since World War II based on the idea of mutual defence. Macron said his suggested cooperation pact would resemble "a kind of reinforced article 5", referring to the NATO defence clause that determines that an attack on one member state is an attack on all. The French leader insisted that this was not a move to undermine the NATO agreement, which "remains an important and strategic alliance".³⁸

Italy

- **Salvini and Orbán launch anti-immigration manifesto ahead of EU elections**

Hungary's illiberal Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Italy's hardline Interior Minister Matteo Salvini launched Tuesday (28 August) an anti-migration manifesto aiming at next year's European parliament elections, targeting a common enemy. "There are currently two camps in Europe and one is headed by (French President Emmanuel) Macron," Orbán said at a press conference after holding talks with Salvini in Milan. "He is at the head of the political forces supporting immigration. On the other hand, we want to stop illegal immigration." EU countries are expected to go to the polls in May, and Salvini has aligned himself with the anti-immigration "Visegrad" countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria and Hungary. An anti-EU force called The Movement is in the making ahead of the European elections, with the support of Steve Bannon, former senior advisor to President Donald Trump. Bannon sees Salvini as a model for his future Movement partners to follow. Both Salvini and Orbán criticised Macron. Salvini accused him of not doing enough to help Italy on migration and Orbán said the French president wanted to "blow up" the EPP. Salvini's meeting with Orbán

³⁸ Euractiv, 31 August 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/frances-macron-proposes-eu-collective-defence-plan/>

came shortly after Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's more low-key summit with his Czech counterpart Andrej Babiš, which also focused on migration.³⁹

- **Italy risks losing help if it blocks EU budget, Oettinger warns**

EU budget commissioner Guenther Oettinger warned Italy on Tuesday (28 August) that if it blocked EU negotiations on the union's next long-term budget, it risked losing extra funding for migration. Asked about comments by Italy's deputy prime minister Luigi Di Maio on Monday (27 August), who had threatened to veto the EU's seven-year budget plan if the bloc did not do more to share the burden of migrant arrivals, Oettinger said that if the negotiations were blocked, the entire budget plan would be held up. The commissioner said Italy paid €15-17bn and that, taking into account what flowed back to the country in EU subsidies, Italy was a net contributor of just €2-3bn. Italy's populist leaders have been threatening to hold back EU budget contributions if other member states did not take newly arrived migrants from Italy.⁴⁰

UK

- **No-deal Brexit: study warns of severe short-term impact on UK**

The short-term impact of a no-deal Brexit on Britain's economy would be "chaotic and severe", jeopardising jobs and disrupting trade links, warn experts from the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe. The Brexit secretary, Dominic Raab, has said he believes 80% of the work on completing an exit deal with the EU27 is already done, as negotiations enter their final phase. But his cabinet colleague Liam Fox recently suggested a no-deal scenario – which would occur if negotiations broke down, or both sides agreed to disagree – was the most likely outcome. In a 30-page updated assessment of the impact of no deal, the thinktank said on Monday (3 September) it would mean "the disappearance without replacement of many of the rules underpinning the UK's economic and regulatory structure". The study plays down the risk of a full-blown financial crisis, saying that while sterling would be likely to decline sharply, and the UK could see its credit rating downgraded, recent experience suggests that would not necessarily prevent the government from borrowing cheaply. But in the short term, and particularly if talks broke down acrimoniously, making it politically difficult to negotiate measures to mitigate the risks, the disruption would be significant.⁴¹

- **One in 18 migrants die crossing the Mediterranean as death rate soars amid divisions over EU rescue policy**

³⁹ Euractiv, 29 August 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-elections-2019/news/salvini-and-orban-launch-anti-immigration-manifesto-ahead-of-eu-elections/>

⁴⁰ EUObserver, 29 August 2018, <https://euobserver.com/economic/142677>

⁴¹ The Guardian, 2 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/02/no-deal-brex-it-study-warns-of-severe-short-term-impact-on-uk>

The death rate for migrants attempting to reach Europe has risen even though the numbers trying to make the crossing has fallen, the UN Refugee Agency has warned. More than 1,600 people have died or gone missing this year, the UNHCR said in a new report, with the rate of fatalities rising sharply, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea. For every 18 people crossing to Europe over the central Mediterranean between January and July 2018, one person died. Over the same period in 2017, there was one death for each 42 refugees and migrants attempting the crossing. The UN report blamed the increase in the death rate on fewer NGO boats being active on the Libyan coast. In 2017, there were eight but now there are just two. The Libyan Coast Guard, which has two patrol boats, is now the main organisation intervening off the Libyan coast. In practice this has meant migrants travelling in unsafe vessels for longer and further with less likelihood of being detected and with fewer boats able to help, the UNHCR said.⁴²

Greece

- **US military chief visits Greece amid strain with Turkey**

The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff has begun a two-day visit to Greece, starting off a week of high-level contacts between the two countries amid increased strain between the United States and Turkey. Gen. Joseph Dunford arrived Monday and is scheduled to meet his Greek counterpart Adm. Evangelos Apostolakis in Athens Tuesday. The United States is keen to boost trade and military cooperation with NATO ally Greece as tension with neighboring Turkey continues to escalate over a variety of regional and political disputes. Later this week, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is due to visit an annual trade fair in northern Greece, along with Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, who is chairman of the Senate committee of homeland security and subcommittee on European and regional security cooperation.⁴³

Spain

- **Spain's new PM in favor of a vote in Catalonia – but not on independence**

The solution to the problem of the ongoing independence drive in Catalonia lies with a vote. That's an idea that a significant part of the northeastern Spanish region's inhabitants have long been calling for, and that the current Socialist Party (PSOE) prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, has now accepted as a possibility – in stark contrast to the hardline position taken by his conservative Popular Party (PP) predecessor, Mariano Rajoy. But there is an important nuance to Sánchez's stance: there will not be a vote on self-determination, something that would be impossible according to the Spanish Constitution in its present form. Rather, he would like to

⁴² The Telegraph, 3 September 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/03/migrant-death-rate-mediterranean-rises-despite-fewer-crossings/>

⁴³ Fox News, 3 September 2018, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/09/03/us-military-chief-visits-greece-amid-strain-with-turkey.html>

see a vote on a new regional statute – the legal framework covering the rights and obligations of the citizens of Catalonia, as well as the region’s financing, political institutions and competences. So he said this morning during an interview with the Spanish radio network Cadena SER.⁴⁴

Moldova

- **Thousands in Moldova rally, call to reunite with Romania**

Several thousand Moldovans have gathered in the capital Chisinau to call for reunification with Romania. Supporters carried the Romanian and Moldovan flags, which are virtually identical, and shouted: "Unity," and "Bessarabia, Romanian land," using the old name for Moldova. Moldova united with Romania in 1918 and was annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940. It gained independence in 1991. Demonstrators applauded a group of several dozen Romanians who joined Saturday's reunification rally after a 1,300-kilometer (812-mile) "Centenary March" march they started in Romania on July 1. The Romanians had been barred entry from Moldova for several days this week after border police said they were a threat to public order.⁴⁵

Russia

- **Russia and Xenophobia**

According to a new survey published by the Levada Center on 27 August, negative attitudes toward foreigners in Russia have surged since 2017. Last year, Levada registered record tolerance levels for foreigners among Russians. The share of respondents who said they would like to restrict one or more nationalities from the country fell to its lowest of 54 percent, down from an all-time high of 81 percent in 2013. This year (2018) This year, the share of respondents who favored limiting immigration for non-Russians has jumped 12 points to total 64 percent. According to a sociologist, the reasons behind these sentiments is caused by a rechanneling of Russians’ discontent with pension reform and worsening consumer and social sentiment toward irritation with the ‘Other’. Rising negativity was most pronounced toward the Roma, Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic groups, with year-on-year spikes of at least 14 percent.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ El Pais, 3 September 2018, https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/09/03/inenglish/1535977912_755723.html

⁴⁵ ABC News, 1 September 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-moldova-rally-call-reunite-romania-57545950>

⁴⁶“Xenophobia on the Rise in Russia, Poll Says”, *The Moscow Times*, August 27, 2018.

<https://themoscowtimes.com/news/xenophobia-on-rise-in-russia-poll-says-62681> Accessed on September 4, 2018.

- **Russia and India**

On 30 August, Randall Schriver, the Pentagon's assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, said that there is no guarantee for a special waiver for India from the punitive US sanctions over its weapons purchase from Russia as Washington has concerns over the nearly five billion deal. He said that US understands the historical India-Russia relationship. America wants to have a conversation with India not on legacy, but on future. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis has publicly been a strong proponent of granting India waivers from sanctions. However, it can't be guaranteed a waiver will be used for future purchases.⁴⁷

- **Russia and Sanctions**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on 1 September said that US sanctions against Russia are counter-productive but Moscow is ready for dialogue once the US side is ready for talks with mutual respect.⁴⁸

- **Russia and Ukraine**

President Vladimir Putin called the killing of east Ukraine separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko on 31 August a "dastardly" act that aimed to destabilize the fragile peace in the region. However, Putin, in a statement issued by the Kremlin, did not accuse Ukraine of being behind the killing.⁴⁹ Russia's state investigative committee said that it was treating the killing of Alexander Zakharchenko, leader of Russian-backed separatists in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, as an act of international terrorism. A criminal investigation into the killing has been opened, the committee said in its statement.⁵⁰

⁴⁷"Top Pentagon official cautions India over buying Russian arms", *Economic Times*, August 30, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/top-pentagon-official-cautions-india-over-buying-russian-arms/articleshow/65604615.cms> Accessed on September 4, 2018.

⁴⁸"Russia's Lavrov says U.S. sanctions counter-productive: TASS", *Reuters*, September 1, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-sanctions/russias-lavrov-says-us-sanctions-counter-productive-tass-idUSKCN1LH3AV> Accessed on 4 September 2018.

⁴⁹"Russia to Treat Zakharchenko Murder as Terrorism", *The Moscow Times*, August 31, 2018. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russia-to-treat-zakharchenko-murder-as-terrorism-62746> Accessed on September 4, 2018.

⁵⁰"Russia to treat killing of east Ukraine rebel leader as 'international terrorism'", *Reuters*, August 31, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-zakharchenko-investiga/russia-to-treat-killing-of-east-ukraine-rebel-leader-as-international-terrorism-idUSKCN1LG2G5> Accessed on September 4, 2018.

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Japan and China endorses Global Trading System**⁵¹

On August 31, 2018, Japan and China pledged support for the multilateral system of global trade regulation ahead of a possible new round of U.S. tariff hikes in a battle over Beijing's technology policy. Two countries made the agreement during the meeting of Japanese Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Taro Aso's meeting Chinese officials in Beijing. Two sides agreed that "protectionist measures" help no country. "On trade, we agreed that protectionist measures that lead to inward-looking policies do not benefit any country, and to maintain and propel a multilateral, free and open rules-based trade system," said Aso after the meeting.

- **Japan approves a record high military budget**

On August 31, 2018, Japanese government approved record-high 5.3 trillion yen (\$47 billion) request made by the Ministry of Defense for the fiscal year 2019. The approved budget is 2.1 percent up from last year. The military spending has risen seven consecutive years under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Japan's Defense Ministry is seeking to more than double spending on missile defense, including purchases of costly American arsenals, to defend against North Korean threats. The request related to missile defense rises to 424 billion yen from about 180 billion yen last year. A big chunk would buy a pair of land-based Aegis missile defense systems and a ship-to-air SM-3 Block IIA interceptor with an expanded range and accuracy developed jointly by the United States and Japan, as well as upgrading of fighter jets and destroyers to make them compatible with advanced interceptors.⁵²

- **Abe vows to lead fight against protectionism**

On September 3, 2018, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe vowed to "lead the world" in countering the recent rise in protectionism and trade wars if he wins re-election in his ruling Liberal Democratic Party's leadership contest later this month. Abe said that world is witnessing a "worrying emergence of protectionism" that has led to the imposition of retaliatory tariffs by some of the world's largest economies, Japan "must not be an introvert," he added. "In the face of such a historic turning point, I want Japan to lead the world toward setting forth rules that will make people all over the globe happier and richer," Abe said, emphasizing roles Japan has played in putting together international frameworks, such as the revised Trans-Pacific

⁵¹ "Japan's Aso, Chinese officials endorse global trade system", Asahi Shimbun, August 31, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808310046.html

⁵² "Japan would boost missile defenses in record military budget", Asahi Shimbun, August 31, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808310035.html

Partnership agreement hammered out after the United States' withdrew from the pact. Tit-for-tat tariffs, he said, "produce nothing. They will only bring unhappiness to people in any country."⁵³

- **South Korea sends a special delegation to North Korea**

On September 2, 2018, South Korean President Moon Jae-in named his top security adviser as a special envoy to North Korea. Chung Eui-yong, head of the presidential National Security Office, will head a five-member delegation to the communist state that is set to leave for Pyongyang on September 5. It will be Chung's second trip to North Korea in less than six months as he headed the same five-member delegation to Pyongyang in early March. The trip in March helped arrange the first-ever summit between Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, which was held in the border village of Panmunjom on April 27. The upcoming trip by the South Korean delegates is again aimed at arranging what would be a third Moon-Kim summit, already scheduled to be held in Pyongyang this month. The leaders of the two Koreas held their second bilateral summit on May 26, followed by Kim's historic summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore on June 12. The visit by the South Korean officials also comes amid an apparent stalemate in denuclearization talks between the United States and North Korea.⁵⁴

- **No need to resume US-South Korea 'war games': President Trump**

On August 29, 2018, US President Donald Trump hailed his personal relationship North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and said there was currently no reason to resume war games with South Korea. President Trump's remark came few days after canceling a planned visit to North Korea by Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State citing insufficient progress in denuclearization talks between the two countries. Trump's statement on US-South Korea military exercise came a day after his defense secretary hinted that the drills, which North Korea denounces as rehearsals for invasion, could resume. Trump tweeted a White House statement in which he once again questioned China's role in helping to resolve the crisis over North Korea's development of nuclear weapons that threaten the United States.⁵⁵

⁵³ "Abe vows to lead fight against protectionism at LDP pre-election rally", Japan Times, September 3, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/09/03/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-vows-lead-fight-protectionism-ldp-pre-election-rally/#.W44Y9ugzaM9>

⁵⁴ "Moon picks chief security adviser, top spy as special envoys to North Korea", The Korea Times, September 2, 2018, www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/09/356_254881.html

⁵⁵ "Trump hails Kim, sees no need to resume US-South Korea war games", The Korea Times, August 30, 2018, www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/09/356_254731.html

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Increase in India-Vietnam bilateral trade**

According to the data released by Vietnam's General Department of Customs, the two way trade between Vietnam and India in the last seven months experienced a significant increase of 50 per cent to US\$6.36 billion. As a consequent, Vietnam achieved a trade surplus of \$1.48 billion in its trade with India. The positive bilateral trade was mainly due to Vietnamese exports at \$3.92 billion, a year-on-year increase of 96 per cent. Among major staples, machinery, equipment and parts recorded the strongest turnover with \$1.23 billion, up 590 per cent year-on-year and contributing 32 per cent of Vietnam's total exports to India. Handsets and components came next at \$470 million, up 72 per cent, followed by computers, electronics and parts at \$380 million, up 26 per cent, and metal and metal-made products at \$353 million, up 40 per cent. Others recording impressive export growth were bamboo-made goods at 1,470 per cent; iron and steel products at 270 per cent; means of transport and components at 170 per cent and products from plastic and rubber at 150 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. Vietnam imported \$2.44 billion worth of goods from India, surging 9.2 per cent over the same period last year, with cotton taking the lead at \$320 million, up 44 per cent. Its other imports included maize, worth \$23 million, a hike of 1,800 per cent while spending \$145 million on importing animal feed and raw materials from the market, an increase of 29 per cent. In the period, the Southeast Asian nation also upped its imports of several other goods from India such as metal (up 180 per cent); automobile components (130 per cent); plastic materials (up 110 per cent) and ore and other minerals (75 per cent).⁵⁶

- **Indonesia offers Infrastructure Projects to China**

According to a press release on August 27, the Indonesian government has offered various infrastructure projects to China worth US\$13.2 billion. This was announced after a recent market sounding event attended by 90 potential investors in Guangzhou, China. Investment Coordination Agency (BKPM) deputy head of investment planning Tamba P Hutapea said the event was held in cooperation between BKPM and the Indonesian Consulate General in Guangzhou. The offered projects include electricity power plants under the independent power producer (IPP) scheme and toll roads in a number of regions.⁵⁷

The Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has cumulatively approved US\$691.5 million in loans for four infrastructure projects in Indonesia,

⁵⁶“VN's trade with India sees strong growth”, *Vietnam News*, August 27, 2018, <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/464534/vns-trade-with-india-sees-strong-growth.html>, accessed on August 27, 2018.

⁵⁷“Indonesia offers US\$13.2b infrastructure projects to China”, *The Straits Times*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-offers-us132b-infrastructure-projects-to-china>, accessed on August 29, 2018.

thereby making the country the second-largest borrower among its 66 members. AIIB head of communications Laurel Ostfield said before a leader's discussion meeting on infrastructure development on August 28 that the bank was also finalizing the process of approving another \$260 million loan for Mandalika urban and tourism infrastructure development on Lombok Island. Indonesia is the eighth-largest shareholder of AIIB, which has an authorized capital of \$100 billion.⁵⁸

- **EAM Sushma Swaraj Visit to Vietnam**

The Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, paid an official visit to Vietnam (August 27-28) for the 16th Meeting of the Vietnam-India Joint Committee on Economic, Commercial, Scientific, and Technological Co-operation. Vietnam's PM Nguyen Xuan Phuc after the bilateral meeting on August 28 stated that there is plenty of room for expanding cooperation in science-technology, culture, tourism, and people-to-people exchange between Vietnam and India; however the two sides should establish appropriate mechanisms to facilitate them. He asked EAM Swaraj to help maintain the political trust between the two countries and foster Vietnam-India co-operation in multiple fields, particularly defence and security – a pillar of bilateral relations, economics, and trade. He hoped the two sides would go on to discuss ways to reduce trade barriers and that more large corporations from India will be investing in Vietnam in power, renewable energy, and oil and gas exploitation. The Indian FM, for her part, said she is impressed with Vietnam's socio-economic development in recent years and is pleased to see the two nations' Comprehensive Strategic Partnership growing, bringing real benefit to their peoples. The EAM also stated that India wants to further intensify its multi-faceted partnership with Vietnam with a special focus on economics, trade, investment, science-technology, security-defence, and people-to-people exchange, thereby contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and across the globe.⁵⁹

- **Philippines Supreme Court begins hearing against the country's withdrawal from ICC**

The oral arguments on the consolidated petitions challenging Philippines exit from the international tribunal began at the Philippines Supreme Court on August 28. President Duterte in March 2018 announced the withdrawal of its ratification of the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). Philippines became the fourth country to withdraw from the ICC after the President cited "outrageous" attacks on him and his administration and the supposedly illegal attempt by ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to place him under

⁵⁸“AIIB lends \$692 million to Indonesian infrastructure”, *The Jakarta Post*, August 29, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/08/29/aiib-lends-692-million-to-indonesian-infrastructure.html>, accessed on August 29, 2018.

⁵⁹“Plenty of room for expanding Vietnam – India ties: PM”, *Vietnam News*, August 29, 2018, <https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/464749/plenty-of-room-for-expanding-viet-nam-%E2%80%93-india-ties-pm.html>, accessed on August 29, 2018.

the Hague-based court's jurisdiction. This came a month after the ICC initiated a preliminary examination into allegations of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. Petitioners composed of Philippine Coalition for the ICC (PCICC) and minority opposition Senators argued that the executive department committed grave abuse of discretion in withdrawing the country's membership in the ICC without the concurrence of the Philippines Senate. According to Advocate Romel Bagares from the PCICC, the executive cannot unilaterally withdraw from a treaty without violating the constitution. Such withdrawal, therefore, is a violation of separation of powers. Article VII, Section 21 of the 1987 Constitution states that no treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective unless concurred in by at least two-thirds of all the members of the Senate. Further, since the Rome Statute is a treaty that has the same status as a law enacted by Congress, withdrawal from it needs the approval of at least two-thirds of the Senate. The reverse is also true if the president withdraws from a treaty such as the Rome Statute then it also needs the concurrence of the Senate, according to, Gilbert Andres part of the PCICC. Mr Andres, in his opening statement, also pointed out that the country's withdrawal "will abolish the Filipino people's parallel means of enforcing right to effective remedies against international crimes committed by state forces and/or armed groups".⁶⁰

- **EAM visit to Cambodia**

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on the concluding leg of her four-day two-nation tour visited Cambodia. On August 30, she met her Cambodian counterpart Prak Sokhonn during which both discussed bilateral, multilateral and key international issues. Both countries also signed two agreements to step up cooperation. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is on the restoration and preservation of the world heritage site of a temple of Lord Shiva in Cambodia's Preah Vihear. The second MoU is on cooperation between India's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and Cambodia's National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations (NIDIR). Ms Swaraj, also call on Prime Minister Hun Sen and President of the Senate Say Chhum.⁶¹

Myanmar

- **Rights group accuses Myanmar of blocking aid to Kachin refugees**

Thousands of civilians who have been displaced by civil war in Kachin State for about seven years are suffering from a lack of assistance and food, according to a

⁶⁰ Gaea Katreena Cabico, "Highlights from the oral arguments on ICC withdrawal", *Phil Star Global*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/08/29/1846894/highlights-oral-arguments-icc-withdrawal>, accessed on August 29, 2018.

⁶¹ "India Signs Two Agreements to Step up Cooperation with Cambodia", *NDTV*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-signs-agreement-to-preserve-lord-shiva-temple-in-cambodia-1908318>, accessed on August 31, 2018.

regional human rights group. A report by Fortify Rights released on 30th August in Yangon said that Myanmar was blocking humanitarian aid for displaced people in Kachin State, and that was one of the reasons why the UN Security Council referred Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.⁶²

- **Military pledges help in Rakhine probe**

The Tatmadaw (military) has offered its full cooperation with the Independent Commission of Enquiry looking into human rights abuses in northern Rakhine and presented facts and evidence at a meeting with the panel on 30th August, according to a Foreign Ministry official. The official said the commission's members, headed by former Philippine deputy foreign secretary Rosario Manalo, met with Vice-Senior General Soe Win in Nay Pyi Taw to discuss Rakhine. During the meeting, General Soe Win said the international community lacks understanding of the truth in northern Rakhine, despite the evidence the government provided to diplomats and the United Nations Security Council.⁶³

- **International outrage after Reuters journalists get 7 years for 'just doing their job'**

Foreign governments and rights groups joined the UN in their condemnation of a harsh jail sentence Monday for two Reuters reporters for breaking Myanmar's archaic Official Secrets Act in what some allege was a "set-up". International condemnation of the verdict came thick and fast from the UN, EU, various governments and human rights groups, claiming the pair had been unjustly jailed for "just doing their job".⁶⁴

- **Govt rejects UN fact-finding mission report on Rakhine**

The government has rejected a report by a UN Human Rights Council fact-finding mission on northern Rakhine State that called for the prosecution of the country's military chief and other senior generals for allegedly committing genocide against Rakhine Muslims. U Hau Do Suan, Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations, said the government has serious questions about the mission's objectivity, impartiality and sincerity. He criticised the timing of the report's release on the eve

⁶²“ Rights group accuses Myanmar of blocking aid to Kachin refugees”, 31st August 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/rights-group-accuses-myanmar-blocking-aid-kachin-refugees.html>

⁶³“Military pledges help in Rakhine probe”, 31st August 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/military-pledges-help-rakhine-probe.html>

⁶⁴“International outrage after Reuters journalists get 7 years for 'just doing their job'”, 4th September 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-features/international-outrage-after-reuters-journalists-get-7-years-%E2%80%98just-doing-their-job%E2%80%99>

of the UN Security Council meeting, instead of on September 18, when it was originally planned.⁶⁵

- **Seventy-five children and young people released by the Myanmar Armed Forces: UN**

UNICEF says the Myanmar government has released 75 children and young people who were recruited and used by the Armed Forces (also known as ‘Tatmadaw’), according to a report on August 31. As the UN body says, this is the first discharge to take place in 2018, and it underlines the importance of protecting children in the context of armed conflict and within the peace process.⁶⁶

Oceania

- **Australian Foreign Minister’s Visit to Nauru**

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne, and Assistant Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Hon Anne Ruston, will travel to Nauru from 3 to 5 September 2018 to represent Australia at the 49th Pacific Islands Forum. The PIF Leaders' Meeting is the most important forum for high-level discussion of issues facing the region. The meeting will consider current and emerging challenges for the Pacific, and set priorities for future cooperation. Security issues will be at the forefront of the agenda for this year's meeting, and leaders are expected to adopt a new regional security declaration to deepen cooperation. Other major issues on the Forum Leaders' agenda include climate change; sustainable development; fisheries management; and non-communicable diseases. Nauru will take on the role of Chair of the Forum, following Samoa's successful year in that role.⁶⁷

- **Australia-Indonesia conclude Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**

Australia and Indonesia have successfully concluded negotiations on the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), deepening economic and security cooperation with one of Australia’s major trading partners. A passionate commitment to ensuring open trade with the world, through such free trade deals, is one of the key elements in the Morrison Government's plan to keep the country’s economy strong. Indonesia is one of the largest economies in the world, and bolstering the economic ties between two

⁶⁵ “Govt rejects UN fact-finding mission report on Rakhine”, 30 August 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-rejects-un-fact-finding-mission-report-rakhine.html>

⁶⁶ “Seventy-five children and young people released by the Myanmar Armed Forces: UN”, 1st September 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/seventy-five-children-and-young-people1-released-myanmar-armed-forces-un>

⁶⁷ https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/mp_mr_180903.aspx

countries nations will lead to even greater opportunities for Australian businesses. A renewed economic partnership with Indonesia is particularly a major boost for Australian farmers with the grains, live cattle, dairy and horticulture sectors to benefit from greater certainty of access and lower tariffs. The Agreement will also expand the two-way investment relationship. IA-CEPA has attracted strong support from the Australian business community, including the Indonesia-Australia Business Partnership Group. Malcolm Turnbull, Steven Ciobo and Australia's trade negotiators have delivered a landmark advance in Australia's economic partnership with Indonesia, which the Morrison Government will proudly build on.⁶⁸

- **Trump to skip APEC in PNG**

US President Donald Trump will skip summits with Asian leaders in Singapore and Papua New Guinea in November, sending Vice President Mike Pence in his place. Trump had been invited to attend the US-Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit and the East Asia summit in Singapore and also the Asia Pacific Economic co-operation forum in Papua New Guinea. He had attended these events last November. Trump's first visit to Australia since becoming US President was also expected to happen in November after the APEC summit. However, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement on Friday that Trump has asked Pence to represent him at the summits.⁶⁹

- **Fiji President says governments 'Not Ready' for Poland Climate Change Talks**

Governments are unprepared for a crucial climate change meeting in Poland later this year aimed at ensuring the full implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement, Fiji Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama said on Tuesday at the opening of climate talks in Bangkok. The talks in the Thai capital come ahead of a gathering in Katowice, Poland in December. Bainimarama, who is also president of the COP23 of UNFCCC, said that without guidelines countries "risk chaos at Katowice and the possibility of yet another delay in the urgent work of combating climate change."⁷⁰ He urged delegates to come up with clear guidelines. On Sunday, Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, told Reuters governments are not on track to meet a goal of the Paris agreement. Espinosa said she hopes a draft text for negotiation on the "rule book" of the 2015 agreement will emerge at the end of the week-long Bangkok talks.⁷¹

⁶⁸ https://trademinister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/sb_mr_180831.aspx

⁶⁹ <https://www.news.com.au/world/donald-trump-will-skip-apec-in-png-as-well-as-likely-australian-visit/news-story/4cceeabcf122fa33020965d999caf62e>

⁷⁰ <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-09-04/governments-not-ready-for-poland-climate-change-talks-fiji-president>

⁷¹ <https://in.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-climatechange/governments-not-on-track-to-cap-temperatures-at-below-2-degrees-u-n-idINKCN1LI03S>

North America

Canada

- **India takes up denial of entry to 2 MLAs with Canada govt**

India has taken up the issue of the denial entry to two members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly at Ottawa Airport in July with the Canadian authorities. Taking serious note of the letter of Punjab Assembly Speaker Rana KP Singh on the issue of denial entry to two Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) Kultar Singh Sandhwan and Amarjit Singh Sandoa (both Aam Aadmi Party) at Ottawa Airport on 21 July, the Union minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj has responded positively. In the letter to the Speaker, the Union minister said that the Indian High Commission in Ottawa has taken up the matter with the Canadian government seeking the circumstances and reasons for this deplorable action by the Canadian immigration authorities. The Speaker has advised all the MLAs to follow the prescribed procedure for their visit to abroad including obtaining of political clearance from the ministry of external affairs and providing prior information to Indian Missions abroad, even for their private visits. The External Affairs minister also said that Indian diplomats in Canada were unaware of the visit of these two MLAs. Neither was the Indian External Affairs ministry informed of the visit nor the requisite political clearance sought.⁷²

- **Canadian NATO commander wary of ‘underground’ threats ahead of Iraq training mission**

The Canadian commander of NATO’s new mission to train military instructors in Iraq says he has a challenging job on his hands, but one that could be vital to promoting long-lasting stability in the country. Maj.-Gen Dany Fortin will oversee a “train the trainer” mission, the mandate of which will be to teach Iraqi military instructors to impart key skills such as bomb disposal, combat medicine, equipment maintenance and logistics to their trainees. Some 250 Canadians will be among Fortin’s approximately 500-strong contingent in the mission, which Canada committed to leading in its first year. The training mission comes amid what Fortin termed a “turning point” in Iraq, with the Iraqi government keen to consolidate control and build up its military capacity after dealing several defeats to Islamic State militants with the help of Western coalition partners.⁷³

The United States

- **US and India to discuss sale of drones, exchange of satellite data**

⁷² Statesman News Service, “India takes up denial of entry to 2 MLAs with Canada govt,” <https://www.thestatesman.com/cities/india-takes-up-denial-of-entry-to-2-mlas-with-canada-govt-1502679581.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁷³ Rahul Kalvapalle, “Canadian NATO commander wary of ‘underground’ threats ahead of Iraq training mission,” <https://globalnews.ca/news/4417235/iraq-nato-training-mission-canadian-commander/>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

The United States and India will seek to finalise a number of defence agreements during high-level talks this week that aim to draw their two militaries closer and counter-balance China's influence in the region. Officials and experts believe that the meeting is not only symbolically important, but will give the world's two largest democracies a chance to make concrete progress while ironing out significant differences, including over India's ties with Russia and Iran. "The 2+2 presents an historic opportunity to develop our growing partnership and to explore ways of enhancing our security cooperation," the top U.S. military officer, Marine General Joseph Dunford, told reporters travelling with the delegation.⁷⁴

- **U.S., Canada Pass Friday Deadline With No Nafta Deal**

The U.S. and Canada missed a deadline imposed by the Trump administration to revamp the North American Free Trade Agreement, but agreed to extend talks rather than rip up the quarter-century-old treaty. After four days of marathon talks ended with significant differences remaining, President Trump said he still planned to stick with the timetable he laid out earlier to sign a new pact in late November to replace the three-nation accord he has branded "a disaster." But Mr. Trump didn't define the precise shape of that pact, leaving open the possibility of a two-way accord with Nafta's other partner, Mexico, unless Canada adopts his vision of a fairer agreement. Mr. Trump struck a deal with Mexico on a redone Nafta and then pressed Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to join. It's unclear precisely what the new timetable is for Canada to join. The two sides said talks would resume, and people familiar with the process said that new deadline could extend to Sept. 30. That's when, according to U.S. law, the Trump administration would need to make public final text for a trade pact that he could sign by Nov. 30, when Mexico's leader leaves office.⁷⁵

- **Mattis: US support to Saudi coalition in Yemen not unconditional**

American military support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen is dependent on that coalition avoiding civilian casualties, Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters. His comments followed the release of a United Nations report that highlighted deadly coalition airstrikes in Yemen's three year old civil war as potential war crimes because it resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians. The United States provides mid-air refueling tankers to coalition aircraft, as well as intelligence used in the targeting of Iranian-backed Houthi military forces in Yemen. The emphasis of that intelligence sharing for pre-selected targets is to minimize civilian casualties that might result from the airstrikes. The secretary described the American military support for the Saudi-led coalition as driven by

⁷⁴ Reuters, "US and India to discuss sale of drones, exchange of satellite data," <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-and-india-to-discuss-sale-of-drones-exchange-of-satellite-data/articleshow/65669517.cms>, Accessed on 02 September 2018.

⁷⁵ Jacob M. Schlesinger, "U.S., Canada Pass Friday Deadline With No Nafta Deal," <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-canada-rush-to-hash-out-nafta-compromise-1535724907>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

the effort "to try and keep the human cost of innocents being killed accidentally to the absolute minimum."⁷⁶

- **Imran Khan faces tense meeting with Mike Pompeo as US slashes aid to Pakistan**

Just days before US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is due to meet Pakistan cricket legend and newly minted Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Trump administration has slashed another \$US300 million (\$416m) in aid to Islamabad over the government's apparent failure to crack down on militants. It is the second time in a matter of weeks that the US government financially has punished its long-time frenemy for failing to deal with Afghan terrorist networks that operate on its soil, including Haqqani and the Taliban. Last month the US congress passed a bill capping security-related aid to Pakistan at \$US150m, down from a previous high of \$US1 billion, as punishment for what US President Donald Trump claimed in a New Year's Day tweet was Pakistan's "lies and deceit" in accepting billions in US counter-terrorism funds while providing material support to Afghan militants. The move also relieved Pakistan of fulfilling previous US conditions on aid, including a requirement that it demonstrate action against proscribed groups such as the Afghan Taliban-linked Haqqani and Lashkar-e-Taiba — the militants believed responsible for the deadly 2008 attacks across India's Mumbai. The rhetoric on both sides leading up to Pompeo's visit this week has not been promising.⁷⁷

Mexico

- **Mexico wants Canada in new NAFTA agreement, says president**

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto said on Monday that his country will continue to push for Canada's inclusion in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and sustain its trilateral character. "We are continuing to promote a trilateral agreement, convinced of the need for Canada to remain as a business partner inside the treaty," said Pena Nieto during his final government report delivered at the National Palace. Mexico and the United States reached an agreement in principle on Aug. 27, but Canada is not included yet. The Mexican president, who is due to finish his six-year term on Nov. 30, said that the principled agreement with the United States helped "dispel uncertainties generated in the last few months." He added that the agreement also "gives certainty to the country in its most important trade relationship." The Mexican president went on to declare that Mexico's objectives were achieved, namely, to preserve free trade, not to accept export quotas and to strengthen tools for

⁷⁶ Luis Martinez, "Mattis: US support to Saudi coalition in Yemen not unconditional," <https://abcnews.go.com/International/mattis-us-support-saudi-coalition-yemen-unconditional/story?id=57459659>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁷⁷ Amanda Hodge, "Imran Khan faces tense meeting with Mike Pompeo as US slashes aid to Pakistan," <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/imran-khan-faces-tense-meeting-with-mike-pompeo-as-us-slashes-aid-to-pakistan/news-story/1ced0f7880a20755d1e98e32d61b53d5>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

resolving trade disputes. Talks between Canada and the United States stepped up following the announcement of the agreement between Mexico and the United States, but various issues remain to be overcome.⁷⁸

- **Mexican economy stalls with declines in oil and industry production**

Mexico's economy stalled in the second quarter amid a drop in oil and industrial output and a slowdown in services activity. Gross domestic product declined 0.2% from the previous quarter in seasonally adjusted terms, compared with the preliminary 0.1% contraction estimate and a 1% expansion in the first quarter, Mexico's national statistics institute reported. Non-seasonally adjusted GDP rose 2.6% from a year earlier. While the economy is expected to expand faster this year than in 2017 due to a pickup in spending that preceded the July 1 election, the path ahead is far from smooth. The International Monetary Fund last month cut its forecast for Mexico's 2019 growth, citing trade tensions as well as uncertainty over the North American Free Trade Agreement and the president-elect's policy agenda. Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador spurred concern this month by saying he will hold a public referendum on whether to cancel construction of a \$13bn international airport for Mexico City, the biggest infrastructure work of President Enrique Pena Nieto's administration.⁷⁹

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean

- **Latin America seeks common ground to handle Venezuelan migrants**

Latin American ministers met to end the massive Venezuelan migrant crisis that has jolted the region, as Venezuela's government accused the United Nations of exaggerating the situation to justify "international intervention." The delegates from 13 regional nations were seeking outside funding as they discussed in Quito a common solution to regularise the situation of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who have migrated due to a situation whose very existence Caracas denies. Venezuelans who immigrate "are highly vulnerable to human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, labor exploitation, lack of access to social security, extortion, violence, sexual abuse, recruitment for criminal activities, discrimination and xenophobia," said Ecuadoran Deputy Foreign Minister Andres Teran. The two-day meeting in Quito precedes extraordinary talks at the Organisation of American States set to discuss the same issue. Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said the government had complained to UN Secretary-

⁷⁸ Xinhua, "Mexico wants Canada in new NAFTA agreement, says president," http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/04/c_137443588.htm, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁷⁹ ----, "Mexican economy stalls with declines in oil and industry production," <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/603894/Mexican-economy-stalls-with-declines-in-oil-and-in>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

General Antonio Guterres that “individual officials” have been portraying “a normal migratory flow as a humanitarian crisis to justify an intervention.”⁸⁰

Argentina

- **Argentina Takes Emergency Steps to Shore Up Peso**

Argentina’s president announced emergency measures on Monday to stem concerns from investors about the country’s solvency as it seeks to tap an international credit line. It was the latest move to ease a growing crisis over a plunging currency, just days after the central bank intervened with a drastic increase in interest rates. In a televised address, President Mauricio Macri said he would seek to reduce the government’s budget deficit by imposing a new tax on exports. He also said he would reorganize his cabinet, eliminating around half of the ministries. Despite the announcement, the Argentine peso continued its fall, losing 3 percent against the dollar in thin trading that analysts attributed to the Labor Day holiday in the United States. Stocks in Buenos Aires also fell. Analysts said the government’s credibility was still in question, particularly after a weekend filled with rumors about possible changes in the president’s cabinet.⁸¹

Cuba

- **Cuban scientist rejects microwaves as source of mysterious acoustic attacks on diplomats**

A Cuban government investigator looking into reports of mysterious acoustic attacks on US and Canadian diplomats on the communist-run island dismissed a US government theory that microwave weapons emitting concentrated beams of radiation may have been used in the incidents. Previously, the government not only denied involvement in the attacks but cast doubt on whether they actually occurred. In June, Cuba's Foreign Ministry said "political motivations" drove the United States to withdraw its embassy personnel. Though a March report based on the examinations of 21 diplomats who served in Cuba didn't link the attacks to microwaves, the study's lead author, Douglas Smith, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Brain Injury and Repair, told The New York Times that

⁸⁰ AFP, “Latin America seeks common ground to handle Venezuelan migrants,” <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1794877/3-latin-america-seeks-common-ground-handle-venezuelan-migrants/>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁸¹ Dasniel Poleti, “Argentina Takes Emergency Steps to Shore Up Peso,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/business/argentina-peso-macri.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

US diplomats in Cuba and China likely suffered brain injuries and that microwaves are considered the culprit.⁸²

Nicaragua

- **After months of protests, Nicaragua's government says life has 'normalized.' Many citizens say life is far from normal**

Since April, the Central American nation of Nicaragua has been a country in turmoil.

In just over four months, at least 322 people have been killed, thousands injured and hundreds detained as waves of anti-government protests and ensuing crackdowns have swept Nicaragua, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). A scathing report by UN human rights experts accused the Nicaraguan government of human rights violations in dealing with protestors, saying: "the majority of victims have been young men, under 30 years old, coinciding with the average profile of the protesters, including university students and young professionals." President Daniel Ortega -- a former revolutionary whose Sandinista rebels overthrew Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza in the 1970s -- said the UN report was "nothing more than an instrument of the policy of death, of the policy of terror, of the policy of lying, of the policy of infamy." The government expelled the UN group. IACHR, which is part of the Organization of American States (OAS), says things are far from normal, as the government is "simultaneously stigmatizing demonstrators, dissidents, social leaders and human rights defenders."⁸³

Trinidad

- **Struggling Trinidad closes major oil refinery**

With general elections just two years away, Trinidad's governing People's National Movement (PNM) has ordered the island's largest oil refinery closed almost immediately, directly putting about 1800 workers on the breadline and triggering angst and anger among the country's powerful labor unions. Petrotrin Trinidad will soon cease refining the little oil Trinidad produces on the face of decades of debt, hundreds of millions of unpaid taxes to the state and aging equipment that long should have been replaced. In recent months, authorities were hoping that

⁸² Patrick Oppmann, "Cuban scientist rejects microwaves as source of mysterious acoustic attacks on diplomats," <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/health/cuba-microwaves-attacks-theory/index.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁸³ Natalie Gallón, "After months of protests, Nicaragua's government says life has 'normalized.' Many citizens say life is far from normal.," <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/americas/nicaragua-months-of-turmoil/index.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

the massive oil find in neighboring Guyana would have helped to keep the decades old refinery in business but lukewarm feedback from Georgetown and dwindling daily production of oil have put paid to the island hopes to such an extent that the very unpopular decision was made to cease production while a major reorganization takes place.⁸⁴

Venezuela

- **Venezuela to hike fuel prices by October, Maduro says**

Venezuela will hike the price of its heavily subsidized gasoline by October, President Nicolas Maduro said, as the crisis-stricken government seeks to shore up its coffers amid hyperinflation that is accelerating a broad economic collapse. Despite the crisis, fuel prices are set so low that the equivalent of \$1 buys nearly 400,000 gallons of fuel. That cripples the state's hard currency earnings and drives a lucrative smuggling trade. The government will launch a new payment system using a state-backed identification card in Border States to limit smuggling, Maduro said, and will increase prices to international levels once that system is in place.⁸⁵

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **IEC To Print 9.9 Million Ballot Papers Ahead Of Elections**

The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) has decided to print more than 9.9 million ballot papers for the parliamentary elections in October. "Considering the fact that over 9.1 million people have registered to vote, the commission has decided print 9.9 million ballot papers for 35 polling stations countrywide," said Abdul Badi Sayyad, the IEC Chairman during a press conference on August 28. He said that the ballot papers will be printed abroad.¹⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ---, "Struggling Trinidad closes major oil refinery," <https://www.caribbeanlifeneews.com/stories/2018/9/2018-08-31-bw-tt-major-oil-refinery-closed-cl.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁸⁵ Reuters, "Venezuela to hike fuel prices by October, Maduro says," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-economy/venezuela-to-hike-fuel-prices-by-october-maduro-says-idUSKCN1LK026>, Accessed on 04 September 2018.

⁸⁶ Anisa Shaheed, IEC To Print 9.9 Million Ballot Papers Ahead Of Elections, *Tolo News*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/index.php/elections-2018/iec-print-99-million-ballot-papers-ahead-elections>, accessed on August 29, 2018

- **21,000 Displaced after Ghazni Crisis, reports OCHA**

More than 21,000 people were displaced from their homes after the Taliban launched an attack on Ghazni city on August 10, 2018, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a report. It also said OCHA would mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

OCHA stated that the situation in the city has “returned to how it was prior to the attack on 10 August”.⁸⁷

- **Wolesi Jirga Polls in Ghazni will be delayed, IEC**

Wolesi Jirga elections in southern Ghazni province and national-wide district council polls would be held four months after the October 20 elections as per the law, announced the Independent Election Commission (IEC) on August 28. The IEC said it was left with no option but to suggest the delay in the elections in Ghazni and the district council elections after the National Security Council (NSC) failed to take a decision regarding the issue.⁸⁸

- **Afghanistan, Russia To Co-Host Future Moscow Talks, says MoFA**

Afghanistan and Russia are set to co-chair proposed future talks in Moscow on Afghanistan’s peace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said on August 28. Representatives from the two countries are drawing up a schedule for such talks that are aimed at promoting political support for intra-Afghan dialogue, said Nasir Andisha, Acting Deputy Foreign Minister for Management and Resources. “Delegations from Afghanistan, the Russian Federation, the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan’s partners are working on a timeline and agenda for the meeting. We will determine the time based on a consensus,” Andisha said.⁸⁹

This comes after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called up President Ashraf Ghani on August 27 and discussed issues of mutual interest, including the planned peace talks in Moscow – which the two officials agreed to postpone.

The Presidential Palace (ARG) said in a statement that although Afghanistan strongly values the efforts by its regional and international partners towards restoring peace in the country, the Afghan government believes that any efforts for peace must be carried out in complete cooperation and harmony with the Afghan government and the Afghan people. Meanwhile, Lavrov assured Ghani during their conversation that Russia was also in support of an Afghan-owned peace process

⁸⁷ 21,000 Displaced After Ghazni Crisis: OCHA, *Tolo News*, August 27, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/21000-displaced-after-ghazni-crisis-ocha>, accessed on August 30, 2018

⁸⁸ Wolesi Jirga: Polls in Ghazni May be Delayed, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, August 29, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=21689, accessed on August 30, 2018

⁸⁹ Sayed Sharif Arifi, Afghanistan, Russia To Co-Host Future Moscow Talks: MoFA, *Tolo News*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan-russia-co-host-future-moscow-talks-mofa>, accessed on August 29, 2018

and that Moscow was prepared to cooperate with the Afghan government regarding peace.

“In the telephonic conversation, it was decided to postpone the Moscow conference so that the two countries can coordinate on further preparations and effectiveness of the process,” read the statement.⁹⁰

- **Privatizing the war in Afghanistan is probably not a wise idea, says US Defense Secretary James Mattis**

Defense Secretary James Mattis on August 28 pushed back on the idea of privatizing the war in Afghanistan, weeks after President Donald Trump’s National Security Adviser John Bolton appeared to leave the possibility open. “When Americans put their nation’s credibility on the line, privatizing it is probably not a wise idea,” Mattis said at the Pentagon Briefing Room.

President Trump had shown interest in the idea, which had been proposed by Blackwater founder Erik Prince. On August 20, 2018, Prince had said that one year after the launch of the Pentagon’s new strategy for South Asia, the Afghan war “remains a total failure.”⁹¹

- **China building first modern military outpost in Afghanistan to fight terrorism**

China has started building a training camp for Afghan troops in a narrow corridor that connects the two countries – a project Beijing is fully funding to help its neighbour improve counterterrorism efforts, sources close to the military said. Once the camp is completed, the People’s Liberation Army is likely to send hundreds of military personnel – at least one battalion’s worth – to the isolated Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan. A battalion usually has more than 500 troops.

It will be the first time in modern history that China will have a military presence in Afghanistan as the war-torn country has become increasingly important for China’s own security, as well as for the Belt and Road Initiative.⁹²

- **MoFA Reacts To Iran’s Remarks On Water Treaty**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on August 28 reacted to remarks made by the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on August 26 about the Water Treaty between the two nations, saying the 1973 Helmand River Treaty between

⁹⁰ Syed Zabiullah Langari, Russia Calls Off Planned Peace Talks on Afghanistan, *Tolo News*, August 27, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/russia-calls-planned-peace-talks-afghanistan>, accessed on August 29, 2018

⁹¹ Elizabeth McLaughlin, Mattis on Afghan war: 'Privatizing it is probably not a wise idea', *ABC News*, August 28, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/mattis-afghan-war-privatizing-wise-idea/story?id=57450697>, accessed on August 30, 2018

⁹² China building first modern military outpost in Afghanistan to fight terrorism, *South China Morning Post*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2161745/china-building-training-camp-afghanistan-fight>, accessed on August 29, 2018

the two countries is still valid. Zarif had that Iran has many approaches to acquire its water right from Helmand River, adding that continuous talks are underway with Kabul on the issue. Iran has said that Afghanistan is not granting the water right of Hamun Lake which has led to drought and sand and dust storms in the Iranian region.⁹³

Pressure is not the solution and Afghanistan is not in pursuit of tension, said Nasir Andisha, Acting Deputy Foreign Minister for Management and Resources. “There is no need to talk about pressure, because it is an international treaty. Article 9 of the treaty clearly states that whenever there is some kind of differences about the amount of water, you can consult three mechanisms,” said Andisha.⁹⁴

- **Pentagon rules out an ‘enduring,’ large military footprint in Afghanistan**

The United States will maintain a permanent diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, but the Pentagon does not expect an endless large-scale military mission there, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., said on August 28.

He pushed back at the notion that the United States was locked in a never-ending war in Afghanistan, which Washington and allies invaded in 2001 in what was expected to be a brief campaign against extremists. “We have permanent interests in South Asia, diplomatic interests and security interests. And we’re going to maintain a presence to have influence in that region,” Dunford said, adding, “The form of that presence is going to change over time. . . . But I certainly don’t expect that the current forces that we have in Afghanistan represents an enduring large military commitment.”⁹⁵

Bangladesh

- **No election with Khaleda behind bars**

The BNP has demanded that the government release its chief Khaleda Zia before the schedule for the upcoming national election is announced. There will be no polls keeping the BNP chairperson behind bars, said senior leaders at a huge rally in the capital yesterday (September 1) marking the party’s 40th founding anniversary. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina must resign and parliament has to be

⁹³ Afghanistan says there is no dispute with Iran over Helmand, *MEHR News Agency*, August 29, 2018, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/137244/Afghanistan-says-there-is-no-dispute-with-Iran-over-Helmand>, accessed on August 30, 2018

⁹⁴ Shabir Ahmadi, MoFA Reacts To Iran’s Remarks On Water Treaty, *Tolo News*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mofa-reacts-iran%E2%80%99s-remarks-water-treaty>, accessed on August 30, 2018

⁹⁵ Missy Ryan, Pentagon rules out an ‘enduring,’ large military footprint in Afghanistan, *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-rules-out-an-enduring-large-military-footprint-in-afghanistan/2018/08/28/f56d306a-e045-4f7f-9242-b534cc0569c2_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7793a87b070f, accessed on August 29, 2018

dissolved before the election schedule is declared so that a congenial atmosphere for inclusive and meaningful elections could be created, they said.⁹⁶

- **Bangladesh-India border talks Monday**

Director general-level border talks between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) will formally begin at BSF Camp Chhawala in New Delhi on Monday (September 3). BGB director general Md Shafeenul Islam will lead a 14-member Bangladesh delegation in the conference, while his counterpart BSF DG KK Sharma will led 20-member Indian delegation. The border conference will conclude through signing a Joint Record of Discussion (JRD) on 7 September, said BGB Headquarters' public relation officer Md Mohsin Reza adding that the Bangladesh delegation will return home on 8 September.⁹⁷

- **Neutral govt a must for credible polls**

Formation of a neutral government dissolving the current parliament before the national polls is a must for a free, fair and credible election, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said yesterday (September 1). For a peaceful voting, the president of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh demanded deployment of army with magistracy power at least for 40 days before and after the election. He also demanded an impartial role from the Election Commission (EC) in the polls, saying the government had no other alternative to ensuring this if it wanted to hold a fair election.⁹⁸

- **Bimstec summit very important for Bangladesh: PM**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday (September 2) described the just-concluded BIMSTEC Summit in Nepal as very important for Bangladesh, saying that all quarters have highly praised her participation as well as Bangladesh's role in the summit. "In overall consideration, the 4th Summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and other related meetings held before it were very important for Bangladesh," she said reading out a written statement at a crowded press conference held at her official Ganabhaban residence.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ "No election with Khaleda behind bars," *Daily Star*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/politics/bnp-40th-anniversary-rally-begins-in-dhaka-1627540>, accessed on September 2, 2018.

⁹⁷ "Bangladesh-India border talks Monday," *Prothom Alo*, September 2, 2018, <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/182706/Bangladesh-India-border-talks-Monday>, accessed on September 2, 2018.

⁹⁸ "Neutral govt a must for credible polls," *Daily Star*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/politics/form-neutral-govt-dissolve-parliament-1627714>, accessed on September 2, 2018.

⁹⁹ "Bimstec summit very important for Bangladesh: PM," *The Independent*, September 3, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/164752>, accessed on September 3, 2018.

- **PM blasts Myanmar for spreading disinformation over Rohingyas**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accused Myanmar of spreading disinformation over their minority Rohingya population through misleading photographs of corpses, calling the act “disgusting”. “This is an act of magical trick...What they are doing is disgusting,” she said as foreign media investigations found Myanmar army used fake photos in their bid to show so-called Rohingya atrocities on Burmese Buddhists decades ago.¹⁰⁰

नेपाल

- बिम्स्टेक शिखर सम्मेलन का आयोजन:

काठमांडू में जिसमें सभी सदस्य ,को बिम्स्टेक का चौथा शिखर सम्मेलन आयोजित हुआ 31 और 30 नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री के .कनेक्टिविटी पर बल दिया जिसमें सभी देशों के प्रमुखों ने .राष्ट्रों ने भाग लिया पी शर्मा ओली ने उद्घाटन सत्र की अध्यक्षता की और कहा कि हमें सभी देशोंसभी समाजों और सभी , .लोगों को जोड़कर इस संगठन को आगे बढ़ाना चाहिए¹⁰¹

- भारत नेपाल रेल मार्ग के सर्वे के लिए राजी:

भारत और नेपाल के मध्य काठमांडू-रक्सौल रेलमार्ग के प्राथमिक सर्वे पर शुक्रवार को एक ज्ञापन - भारत के कोंक .समझौते का आदान प्रदान हुआण रेलवे कोपरेशन को यह कार्य सौंपा गया है.¹⁰²

- बिम्स्टेक सम्मेलन लाभदायक रहाओली :

प्रधानमन्त्री ओली ने कहा कि बिम्स्टेक का आयोजन सफल रहा और इससे नेपाल को लाभ भी मिलेगा . .उन्होंने कहा कि भारत और बांग्लादेश के साथ उर्जा सहयोग और इसके निर्यात पर बातचीत हुई उन्होंने कहा कि उर्जा का निर्यात भारत और बांग्लादेश के अलावा म्यांमार और थाईलैंड को भी किया जायेगा.¹⁰³

- दहाल भारत की यात्रा पर:

नेपाल के पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री और नेपाल साम्यवादी दल के उपाध्यक्ष पुष्प कमल दहाल 6 'प्रचंड'सितम्बर से भारत की .दिवसीय यात्रा पर आ रहे है 6 उन्होंने कहा कि राष्ट्रीय हित और विकास उनकी यात्रा का ध्येय रहेगाइसके .इस दौरान वे प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और साम्यवादी दलों के नेताओं से भी मिलेंगे . .रिक्त विश्व मामलों की भारतीय परिषद के कार्यक्रम में भाग भी लेंगेअति¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ “PM blasts Myanmar for spreading disinformation over Rohingyas,” *The Independent*, September 3, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/164754>, accessed on September 3, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Sanjeev Giri, "Leaders stress connectivity", *The Kathmandu Post*, 31 October 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-08-31>

¹⁰² "Nepal and India agree to survey cross border rail", *The Kathmandu Post*, 1 September 2018, <https://epaper-beta.ekantipur.com/kathmandupost/2018-09-01>

¹⁰³ "BIMSTEC summit fruitful: Oli", *The Himalayan Times*, 3 September 2018, <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/bimstec-summit-fruitful-oli/>

¹⁰⁴ PKD heading India tomorrow", *The Himalayan Times*, 4 September 2018, http://epaper.thehimalayantimes.com/textview_10835_4620_4__1_05-09-2018_71_0.html

Pakistan

- **Pakistan India Water Talks**

Pakistan and India had a two day discussion (29th and 30th August) on the platform of Pakistan-India Permanent Indus Commission. Pakistan urged India to entertain the objections it has raised over the construction of the 1,000MW Pakal Dul and 48MW Lower Kalnal hydropower projects on the River Chenab.¹⁰⁵ India agreed on August 30th to get sites of its two hydropower projects — 1,000MW Pakal Dul and 48MW Lower Kalnal — inspected by Pakistani experts by the end of next month. It also assured Pakistan of taking up its objections/concerns over the two projects seriously by resolving them amicably in the light of technical memorandums to be prepared and exchanged by the two countries in the next meeting to be held in New Delhi.¹⁰⁶ India has also agreed to allow Pakistan to inspect the projects in the Jhelum basin, including Kishanganga hydroelectric project, in the near future and Islamabad will allow New Delhi to carry out inspection of the Kotri barrage over the Indus under Article VIII (4) (c) of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). Decision also reached in recent water talks to let Indian team visit Kotri barrage on Indus.¹⁰⁷

- **Pakistan Assets in UAE**

The Supreme Court was told on September 3RD that Pakistanis own around \$150 billion worth of properties and assets in the UAE alone. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Tariq Bajwa briefed the apex court on measures taken to recover the identified funds. He stated that "Notices have been issued to the 125 people who have assets in the UAE. If they write on affidavits that they do have assets outside of Pakistan, we will interrogate and tax them. But if they deny that, then we can take the help of the UAE government and ask them to take action in accordance with *benami* properties law". The chief justice expressed his dissatisfaction on the progress of the case, remarking that those concealing their assets abroad qualify for money laundering trials.¹⁰⁸

- **Pakistan and Iran**

Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif arrived in Islamabad on August 30th to hold meetings with Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood

¹⁰⁵ Khalid Hasnain, "Pakistan to go for arbitration if India ignores concerns", *Dawn*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1429875> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹⁰⁶ Khalid Hasnain, "Pakistani experts to inspect two Indian hydropower project sites", *Dawn*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430051> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹⁰⁷ Khalid Hasnain, "India agrees to allow Pakistan to inspect Kishanganga project", *Dawn*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430855> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹⁰⁸ Haseeb Bhatti, "Pakistanis own assets worth \$150bn in UAE, SC told", *Dawn*, September 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430725> as accessed on September 5, 2018

Qureshi and other high level officials.¹⁰⁹ Prime Minister Imran Khan on August 31st vowed to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties, the government expressed unequivocal support for Iran's position on its troubled nuclear deal with the West that has been abandoned by the United States and urged the other parties to the agreement to remain committed to it.¹¹⁰

- **Pakistan and Japan**

The Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kazuyuki Nakane and Foreign Minister Qureshi in their meeting agreed to increasing bilateral contacts to revitalise the relationship between the two countries.¹¹¹ Pakistan's weather forecasting capability will get a boost with the installation of a new weather surveillance radar in Multan, using the Japanese grant assistance of Rs2.3 billion for which an agreement was signed here on August 31st. Japan has supported installation of four weather radars in Islamabad, Karachi, Dera Ismail Khan and Rahim Yar Khan, bringing total weather radars operating in Pakistan to eight. Besides this, the Japanese government would provide Rs360 million scholarships for human resource development.¹¹²

Indian Ocean Region

- **US urged IOR Littoral States to reaffirm commitment to global rules and norms**

The United States has urged Indian Ocean littoral states to "reaffirm their commitments to global rules and norms as challenges to free navigation and consensus-based dispute resolution threaten to undermine international rules."¹¹³ While addressing the third Indian Ocean Conference in Hanoi on 28 August 2018, Alice G Wells, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia said, "we are urging our partners across the Indian Ocean Region to reaffirm their commitment to a world of global rules and norms."¹¹⁴ "Together, we must make clear our determination to create an Indian Ocean Region that respects

¹⁰⁹ Naveed Siddiqui, "Iran's foreign minister arrives in Pakistan to meet PM Khan, others", *Dawn*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1429908> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹¹⁰ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan backs Iran over US nuclear deal row", *Dawn*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430289> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹¹¹ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan backs Iran over US nuclear deal row", *Dawn*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430289> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹¹² Amin Ahmed, "Japan to give Rs2.3bn for weather radar installation in Multan", *Dawn*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430283> as accessed on September 5, 2018

¹¹³ US urges Indian Ocean Region countries to reaffirm commitment to global rules and norms, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/us-urges-indian-ocean-region-countries-to-reaffirm-commitment-to-global-rules-and-norms-5334842/> (Accessed on 03 September, 2018)

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

international law as reflected in the law of the sea convention, that ensures a framework for transparency and the peaceful resolution of disputes, and that supports economic, political, and social linkages with South and East Asia,"¹¹⁵ Wells further said. On Quadrilateral cooperation, she said, "We also look forward to continued momentum in our quadrilateral cooperation with India, Japan and Australia that will contribute to maritime security and domain awareness across the Indian Ocean Region."¹¹⁶

- **Nurturing a climate of peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region is a key priority for our foreign policy: EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj**

Emphasising the importance of peace & stability for economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean region, External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj has said that fostering a climate of peace and stability in the region is a priority for India's foreign policy.¹¹⁷ Addressing the 3rd Indian Ocean Conference in Hanoi on 30 August 2018, she said "We cannot tap the bounty of the Indian Ocean without ensuring maritime peace and stability. Economic prosperity and maritime security go hand-in-hand. Security is an all-encompassing concept and includes traditional, non-traditional and newly emerging threats."¹¹⁸ "With the eastward shift of the engines of the global economy, there can be no doubt that the Indian Ocean is at the centre of the emerging 'Age of Asia'. The economic importance of the Indian Ocean and its vital role in the continued prosperity and development of the littoral nations is well established," further she said.

- **India with 23 nations to participate in Indian Ocean tsunami mock exercise**

India along with 23 other nations, will participate in Indian ocean-wide tsunami mock exercise on 4th and 5th September, 2018.¹¹⁹ The exercise which is also known as IO wave18 is being organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.¹²⁰ The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO coordinated the setting up of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) after the Tsunami of

¹¹⁵ US urges Indian Ocean Region countries to reaffirm commitment to global rules and norms, 31 August, 2018, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2018/sep/01/us-urges-indian-ocean-region-countries-to-reaffirm-commitment-to-global-rules-and-norms-1866005.html>

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Nurturing peace, stability in Indian Ocean priority for India's foreign policy: Sushma Swaraj, 31 August, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/nurturing-peace-stability-in-indian-ocean-priority-for-indias-foreign-policy-sushma-swaraj/articleshow/65573344.cms> (Accessed on 03 September, 2018)

¹¹⁸ Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the 3rd Indian Ocean Conference, Vietnam (August 27, 2018), https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/30327/Remarks_by_External_Affairs_Minister_at_the_3rd_Indian_Ocean_Conference_Vietnam_August_27_2018, (Accessed on 03 September, 2018)

¹¹⁹ Indian ocean-wide tsunami mock exercise, India with 23 nations to participate, 03 September 2018, <https://www.devdiscourse.com/Article/146455-indian-ocean-wide-tsunami-mock-exercise-india-with-23-nations-to-participate>, (Accessed on 03 September, 2018)

¹²⁰ Ibid.

December 26, 2004.¹²¹ "The IOWave18 exercise will simulate Indian Ocean countries being put in a tsunami warning situation and require the National Tsunami Warning Centre (NTWC), i.e., INCOIS in case of India, and the National and Local Disaster Management Offices (NDMO/LDMO) to implement their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs),"¹²² an official release said.

Sri Lanka

- **UN writes to Sri Lanka over failure to meet deadline on torture report**

The United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT) has written to Sri Lanka, after the government failed to respond to a report, which called for information on the "establishment of a judicial mechanism" to investigate torture and information on the role of a former Criminal Investigations Department head.¹²³

- **Military refusing to obey Government on land issue says Zeid**

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who stepped down from his post, said the military is refusing to obey the Government on the land issue. In an article written for the Economist, Hussein said that a fracture within society is often shorthand for human suffering or the existence of burning grievances.¹²⁴

- **BIMSTEC Chairmanship handed over to President**

The Chairmanship of the fifth Summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was handed over to President Maithripala Sirisena by Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli during the conclusion of the fourth BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on 1st September.¹²⁵

- **Japan gifts two new petrol vessels to Sri Lanka Coast Guard**

Two brand new Fast Patrol Vessels (FPV), gifted by Japan joined the Sri Lanka Coast Guard fleet during a Commissioning Ceremony held at the Colombo Port on

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "UN writes to Sri Lanka over failure to meet deadline on torture report", 3rd September 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/09/03/un-writes-to-sri-lanka-over-failure-to-meet-deadline-on-torture-report/>, accessed on 4th September 2018.

¹²⁴ "Military refusing to obey Government on land issue says Zeid", 1 September 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/09/01/military-refusing-to-obey-government-on-land-issue-says-zeid>, accessed on 3rd September 2018.

¹²⁵ "BIMSTEC Chairmanship handed over to President", 2 September 2018, <https://news.lk/news/politics/item/22122-bimstec-chairmanship-handed-over-to-president>, accessed on 3rd September 2018.

29th August with the participation of the Japanese State Minister of Foreign Affairs Kazuyuki Nakane as the Chief Guest. State Minister of Defense Ruwan Wijewardene commissioned the two new FPVs "SLCG Samudra Raksha" and "SLCG Samaraksha" during the ceremony.¹²⁶

- **Saudi Arabia pledges \$300 million assistance to SL**

Saudi Arabia pledged \$ 300 million worth of assistance to Sri Lanka, which will be disbursed to various areas in the country for various development programmes. The Saudi Arabian Ambassador in Sri Lanka Abdul Nazar Al Hardi said during the inauguration of the Badulla-Chenkaldai Road Development project in Padiyatalawa this morning that his government would provide assistance to the tune of US 300 million.¹²⁷

Maldives

- **Corruption and embezzlement behind Yameen's development, alleges Ibu**

The opposition presidential candidate has raised concerns about corruption and embezzlement behind infrastructure projects undertaken by President Abdulla Yameen's government. In an interview with Mihaaru, Ibrahim 'Ibu' Mohamed Solih said that the government was refusing to look at the "dark side" of the development projects. "Whether you look at the IGMH new building, or the bridge or the airport, corruption and embezzlement are behind them," Ibu said.¹²⁸

- **India boycotts inauguration of Maldives-China friendship bridge**

India boycotts the inauguration ceremony of the landmark Sinamale Bridge, representing the friendship between Maldives and China. According to Indian news media 'Times of India', the Indian ambassador to the Maldives Akhilesh Mishra was invited to the inauguration ceremony of the bridge. However, Mishra declined to attend, boycotting the event. Mishra was recently summoned to the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the issue concerning an Indian parliament member that insinuated that India overtake the Maldives, should of voting fraud take place in the upcoming presidential elections.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ "Japan gifts two new petrol vessels to Sri Lanka Coast Guard", 31st August 2018, <https://news.lk/news/political-current-affairs/item/22111-japan-gifts-two-new-petrol-vessels-to-sri-lanka-coast-guard>, accessed on 4rd September 2018.

¹²⁷ " Saudi Arabia pledges \$300 million assistance to SL", 2 September 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Saudi-Arabia-pledges-million-assistance-to-SL-154898.html>, accessed on 3rd September 2018.

¹²⁸ "Corruption and embezzlement behind Yameen's development, alleges Ibu", 2 September 2018, <https://maldivesindependent.com/business/corruption-and-embezzlement-behind-yameens-development-alleges-ibu-140752>, accessed on 3rd September 2018.

¹²⁹ " India boycotts inauguration of Maldives-China friendship bridge", 2nd September 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/7024>, accessed on 3rd September 2018.

- **Monumental Sinamale bridge inaugurated**

The landmark Sinamale Bridge, representing the friendship between Maldives and China, has been officially inaugurated on 30th August following an extravagant display of fireworks. President Yameen thanked the Chinese government for transforming what was a distant dream to reality, describing the bridge as a beach of hope for the youth of the country. The 432 hectares of Hulhumale is planned to be developed into a city that will host over 240,000 people. According to the President, the citizens of this country are eager to cross the "bridge of hope".¹³⁰

West Asia

Iraq and GCC

- **Military War on Iraq unlikely, Armed forces must boost capabilities: Ayatollah Khamenei**

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says there is no possibility of a military war on Iran given the ongoing political considerations, but the country's Armed Forces must continue to upgrade their human and military hardware capabilities. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with commanders and officials of Iranian Army's Air Defense Base in Tehran on Sunday. "The Armed Forces must upgrade their human and military hardware capabilities on a daily basis through vigilance as well as efficient and dynamic management," Ayatollah Khamenei stated. The Leader added that every step that is taken to boost the preparedness of Iran's Armed Forces amounts to an act of worship before the Almighty God. Stressing the importance of increasing preparedness and capabilities of the Air Defense Base and its staff, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that the Army's Air Defense Base is a very sensitive part of the Armed Forces, which is on the frontline of the confrontation with Iran's enemies. During the meeting, the new commander of Iranian Army's Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base, Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard, presented a report on the base's measures and future plans.¹³¹

- **Iran asks Britain to commit to buying its oil as Trump sanctions threaten price**

Junior Foreign Minister Alistair Burt travelled to Iran for talks with Tehran as European signatories to the nuclear deal try to keep it alive. State news agency IRNA quoted Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as telling reporters: "It is time for the Europeans to act in addition to voicing their political commitment. "These measures may be costly, but if countries want to reap

¹³⁰ "Monumental Sinamale bridge inaugurated", 31st August 2018, <https://edition.mv/news/7011>

¹³¹ September 2, 2018, <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/09/02/572968/Khamenei-Leader-war-Air-defense>

benefits and if they believe the nuclear accord is an international achievement, they should be ready to keep these achievements."

Mr Burt earlier met Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Iran's state television reported. Mr Zarif said the talks with Burt had involved "access to banking resources and the sale of oil." Iran has been seeking commitment from European signatories of the nuclear deal that it will be able to access the Western banking system and continue to sell oil despite U.S. sanctions. In a statement before his visit, Burt said: "As long as Iran meets its commitments under the deal, we remain committed to it as we believe it is the best way to ensure a safe, secure future for the region."

Mr Zarif later spoke by telephone with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian, state media reported, saying they discussed bilateral ties, the nuclear deal and regional developments. A day earlier, Iran dismissed a call by Mr Le Drian for negotiations on Tehran's future nuclear plans, its ballistic missile arsenal and its role in wars in Syria and Yemen.¹³²

- **India allows refiners to use Iran tankers, insurance for oil imports**

India is allowing state refiners to import Iranian oil with Tehran arranging tankers and insurance after firms including the country's top shipper Shipping Corp of India (SCI) halted voyages to Iran due to US sanctions, sources said. "We have the same situation (as most Western shippers) because there is no cover, so we cannot go (to Iran)," an SCI official told. New Delhi turned to the NITC fleet after most insurers and reinsurers had begun winding down services for Iran, wanting to avoid falling foul of the sanctions given their large exposure to the United States. New Delhi's attempt to keep Iranian oil flowing mirrors a step by China, where buyers are shifting nearly all their Iranian oil imports to vessels owned by National Iranian Tanker Co (NITC). The moves by the two top buyers of Iranian crude indicate that the Islamic Republic may not be fully cut off from global oil markets from November, when US sanctions against Tehran's petroleum sector are due to start.¹³³

- **Iraq: Reuters report of Iran moving missiles to Baghdad 'without evidence'**

Iraq's Foreign Ministry says it was "astonished" at a Reuters report, which claimed that Iran had moved missiles to Iraq, saying the claim lacked any "tangible evidence." "Iraq is not obliged to respond to media reports that lack tangible evidence backing up their claims and allegations," the ministry said in a statement on Sunday (September 2), adding, "All state institutions in Iraq uphold Article 7 of the constitution, which prohibits the use of Iraqi land as a base or passage to be used in operations targeting the security of other states." According to the

¹³² September 1, 2018, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1011759/oil-price-latest-iran-news-nuclear-deal-donald-trump-uk-eu>

¹³³ September 3, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/137427/India-allows-refiners-to-use-iran-tankers-insurance-for-oil>

statement, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry said it was "astonished at the allegations" contained in the Reuters article. In an exclusive report on August 31, Reuters quoted unnamed sources as claiming that Iran has given ballistic missiles to Shia fighters in Iraq and is developing the capability to build more there to deter attacks on its interests in the Middle East. The report alleged that Iran had transferred short-range ballistic missiles to its allies in Iraq over the last few months.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday (September 1) vehemently rejected as "false, meaningless and ludicrous" the missile claim, saying it aimed to stoke Iranophobia in the region.¹³⁴

- **Largest parliamentary bloc announced ahead of Iraq's first parliament session**

Sadr's Sairoon Coalition and Abadi's al-Nasr Coalition on Sunday (September 2) announced the largest parliamentary bloc with over 162 MPs to form the new Iraqi government. Principal signatories of the bloc are Sairoon with 54 MPs, al-Nasr Coalition with 42 MPs, Ayad Allawi's al-Wataniya Coalition with 21 MPs, Ammar al-Hakim's al-Hikma Coalition with 19 MPs, Usama al-Nujaifi's Iraqi Qarar (Decision) with 16 MPs. The other signatories included six MPs from Anbar Our Identity, three each from Baghdad Coalition, Nineveh Our Identity Coalition, and Turkmen Front, two MPs each from Abiroun and Bayariq al-Khair, one MP from Salahudin Our Identity Coalition, and three MPs from the other components. Bakhtiyar Shaways, a Kurdish MP in the Iraqi Parliament, told Kurdistan 24 the largest parliamentary bloc is final. Shaways noted that it could change at any moment even before tomorrow's session at 11:00 a.m. The Kurdish factions have not taken sides between the coalitions, he added. The Kurdish MP also said the Kurds want guarantees of the implementation of the constitution and agreements such as the Kurdistan Region's share of the national budget and the payment of Peshmerga salaries.¹³⁵

- **Fatih chief Amiri accuses US of 'pressuring, threatening' Iraqi parties**

Hadi al-Amiri, head of the pro-Iran Fatih (Conquest) alliance, lashed out at the US on Monday, accusing it of "pressuring" and "threatening" Iraqi parties as next Iraqi government takes shape. "Very unfortunately, this is the first time that such a giant meddling has happened in Iraq. America is opposing the democratic parties of Iraq," Amiri told reporters, adding "very frankly the mother of democracy, the USA, has trespassed all the limits in the sense that it is threatening one side and pressuring on the other side." Amiri did not explain who had been threatened by the USA to take one side against the other for the creation of the largest parliamentary bloc in Iraq and the next government.

¹³⁴ September 2, 2018, <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/09/02/572975/Missile-Iraq-Iran-US-Reuters-Foreign-Ministry-Pompeo>

¹³⁵ September 2, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/747b0359-e231-4e5b-9b03-03b9a4cc0580>

Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law and Amiri's Fatih claimed to have the biggest parliamentary bloc earlier on Monday with 145 signatures.

Following the ratification of the May 12 election results by the Iraqi Federal Court two weeks ago, the US special presidential envoy to the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Bret McGurk, held a string of talks with almost all of the Iraqi and Kurdish parties, urging them to ramp up efforts to create the next Iraqi government. "The Iraqis must themselves decide there is no problem with who is the biggest bloc and who is the smallest, what matters the decision must come from the Iraqis," Amiri said. "The next prime minister must be chosen by the Iraqis, not any other side," he added, referring to the US.

- **Concern over 'UAE use of Israeli firms to spy on Qatar'**

An official source at Qatar's Ministry of the Foreign Affairs has stressed that the ministry is following with great concern media reports that talked about the use of Israeli companies and their technologies by high-level government bodies and personalities in the United Arab Emirates to spy on states and personalities, including Qatari government figures by hacking their mobile phones. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the source said that it is clear from the reports that the evidences were attached to judicial files and that this reveals that the problem facing those in charge of Abu Dhabi's foreign policy is deep and old. It also raises a number of questions about the root of the current Gulf crisis and how long it took those who fabricated this crisis to plan and tear apart the bonds of co-operation and fraternity at a time when the people of the Gulf look forward to more integration. The source added the current Gulf crisis was ignited by an electronic terrorism and hacking of the website of the Qatar News Agency.

Today, these media reports indicate that the series of violations predated the hacking crime and it seemed to continue, the source said.¹³⁶

Turkey

- **Turkey minister sees 'no economic risk' amid row with US**

Turkey's Finance Minister Berat Albayrak said his government does not see a big risk to the country's economy and financial system, amid a diplomatic fall-out with the United States. Albayrak's comments, published by Hurriyet newspaper on 29 August, came after credit rating agency Moody's downgraded 20 Turkish financial institutions on 28 August 2018.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ September 1, 2018, <https://www2.gulf-times.com/story/604533/Concern-over-UAE-use-of-Israeli-firms-to-spy-on-Qa>

¹³⁷ "Turkey minister sees 'no economic risk' amid row with US", Al Jazeera.com, 29 August 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/turkey-minister-sees-economic-risk-row-180829072428353.html>

- **Turkey's Erdogan denounces dollar; US acting like 'wild wolves'**

Turkey will pursue non-dollar transactions in trade and investment with other countries, its president said on Sunday, adding recent US sanctions showed Washington was behaving like "wild wolves". Negotiations between Turkey and Russia are under way on not using American dollars in bilateral trade, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a business forum during a visit to Kyrgyzstan.¹³⁸

- **Turkey's foreign trade deficit narrows 58 pct in August**

Turkey's foreign trade deficit in August fell 58 percent on a yearly basis, according to the trade ministry's preliminary data on Sept 1. Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said in a statement that the trade deficit of \$2.48 billion in August was the lowest monthly figure in the last nine years. "In the same month, exports coverage ratio to imports reached 83.3 percent," Pekcan said. "It is also the highest level over the past nine years."¹³⁹

- **Albayrak: No crisis expected in Turkish banking sector**

Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak has said he does not expect any problems in the banking sector, in stark contrast to recent warnings from ratings agencies that the lira sell-off could weaken lenders' assets. In the event of a problem at banks, Ankara would be willing to step in with support, he told Reuters in an interview late on Sept. 2.¹⁴⁰

- **Turkey imposes new rules on transiting Turkish straits**

Turkey has imposed new rules for vessels transiting through the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul and the Dardanelles Strait in the northwestern province of Canakkale, local media reported Monday. The rules were introduced given increased risks associated with transit passages from the straits, CNNTurk reported. Under new regulations, captains have to submit a safety list to the Turkish authorities 3.2 km before entering the straits.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ "Turkey's Erdogan denounces dollar; US acting like 'wild wolves'", Al Jazeera.com, 02 September 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/turkey-erdogan-denounces-dollar-acting-wild-wolves-180902112548821.html>

¹³⁹ "Turkey's foreign trade deficit narrows 58 pct in August", Hurriyet Daily News, 02 September 2018, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-foreign-trade-deficit-narrows-58-pct-in-august-136396>

¹⁴⁰ "Albayrak: No crisis expected in Turkish banking sector", Hurriyet Daily News, 03 September 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-expects-no-fine-for-halkbank-albayrak-136420>

¹⁴¹ "Turkey imposes new rules on transiting Turkish straits", Indian Express, 04 September 2018, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2018/sep/04/turkey-imposes-new-rules-on-transiting-turkish-straits-1867350.html>

Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi students to make asylum claims in Canada amid diplomatic feud**

Around 20 Saudi students are set to make asylum claims in Canada so that they can continue studying and living here, amid a diplomatic spat between the two countries. The order came amid a diplomatic spat set off by the Canadian government's criticism of the arrest of human rights activists in the conservative kingdom.¹⁴²

- **Improved Economic Outlook in Saudi Arabia**

The latest data released by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) points to an improving economic outlook according to analysts at Al-Rajhi Capital. The data showed that credit to the private sector climbed for the fourth consecutive month in July while consumers also spent more, with point of sale transactions up by about a quarter on a year earlier. Cash withdrawals from ATM machines also rose more than 12 percent on a year earlier.¹⁴³

- **Saudi Arabia pledges \$300m in aid to Sri Lanka**

Saudi Arabia has reportedly pledged \$300 million in aid to Sri Lanka for water supply projects and agricultural, education and health sector development, according to Sri Lankan media outlets. Saudi ambassador Abdul Nazar Al Hardi announced the assistance project to reporters during a visit to a road development project in Padiyatalawa in eastern Sri Lanka on Sunday. "We are happy to assist Sri Lanka and look forward to strengthening bilateral ties with Sri Lanka," he said.¹⁴⁴

- **Saudi Arabia prepares to extend oil pipeline through Yemen to Arabian Sea**

Saudi Arabia has started to implement precautions against Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz and stop the Gulf oil exports by building an alternative oil pipeline from its borders passing through the Yemeni district of Al-Mahrah to the Arabian Sea. Local sources in Al-Mahrah Governorate told *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed* that the arrival of Saudi forces' to the city earlier this year was surprising.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² "Saudi students to make asylum claims in Canada amid diplomatic feud", Global News, 02 September 2018. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4423979/saudi-students-canada-asylum/>

¹⁴³ "Improved Economic Outlook in Saudi Arabia", AlBawaba Business, 03 September 2018. <https://www.albawaba.com/business/improved-economic-outlook-saudi-arabia-1180616>

¹⁴⁴ "Saudi Arabia pledges \$300m in aid to Sri Lanka", Arabian Business, 03 September 2018. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/403631-saudi-arabia-pledges-300m-in-aid-to-sri-lanka>

¹⁴⁵ "Saudi Arabia prepares to extend oil pipeline through Yemen to Arabian Sea", Middle East Monitor, 03 September 2018. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180903-saudi-arabia-prepares-to-extend-oil-pipeline-through-yemen-to-arabian-sea/>

- **Saudi Arabia Pledges \$300 Million To Sri Lanka For Development Programs**

Saudi Arabia on Monday pledged \$ 300 million worth of assistance to Sri Lanka, which will be disbursed to various areas in the country for various development programs. The Saudi Arabian Ambassador in Sri Lanka Abdul Nazar Al Hardi said during the inauguration of the Badulla-Chenkalldai Road Development project in Padiyatalawa this morning that his government would provide assistance to the tune of US 300 million.¹⁴⁶

Israel

- **Nikki Haley on Palestinian Right of Return and UNWRA funding**

US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley questioned on August 28th the credibility of Palestinian claims to a “right of return” to lands in modern-day Israel, touching on one of the most sensitive topics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “UNRWA can stay there, and we can be a donor if they reform,” Haley continued, declining to endorse a proposal to wrap UNRWA – a refugee body devoted exclusively to the Palestinian cause – into the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR. “We will look back at partnering them.” “I absolutely think we have to look at right of return,” she added.¹⁴⁷ The Trump administration announced August 31st it is cutting nearly \$300 million in planned funding for the UN agency that aids Palestinian refugees, and that it would no longer fund the agency after decades of support. Instead, it said it would seek other channels by which to aid the Palestinians. Israel welcomed September 1st the US decision to end funding for the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), accusing the organization which supports some 5 million Palestinians of perpetuating the Middle East conflict.¹⁴⁸ A spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas assailed the US for announcing August 31st that it will end all funding to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, calling the move a “flagrant assault” against all Palestinians.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ “Saudi Arabia Pledges \$300 Million To Sri Lanka For Development Programs”, Eurasia Review, 04 September 2018. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/04092018-saudi-arabia-pledges-300-million-to-sri-lanka-for-development-programs/>

¹⁴⁷ Michael Wilner, “Nikki Haley calls for examination on Palestinian right of return”, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 29, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/We-have-to-look-at-right-of-return-Haley-says-566020?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=20-2-2018&utm_content=we-have-to-look-at-right-of-return-haley-says-566020 as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁴⁸ “Israel welcomes end of US funding for UN Palestinian refugee agency”, *The Times of Israel*, September 1, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-welcomes-end-of-us-funding-for-un-palestinian-refugee-agency/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=469fb0f82c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_01_12_31&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-469fb0f82c-55556173 as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁴⁹ “Palestinians slam ending of US aid to UNRWA as a ‘flagrant assault’ against them”, *The Times of Israel*, September 1, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-slam-ending-of-us-aid-to-unrwa-as-a-flagrant-assault-against-them/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=469fb0f82c-

- **The 44th International Congress of Military History**

More than 150 guests from Israel and abroad representing 27 defense ministries are expected at the 44th International Congress of Military History, being held September 2-9 at West Jerusalem. This is the first time that an academic conference of this magnitude has been held in Israel by representatives of security institutions from around the world. The conference, which marks the centenary of the armistice ending World War One and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel and the IDF, will examine the creation of new states and the collapse of old empires.¹⁵⁰

- **US and Israel on Economic Sanctions on Iran**

Israeli Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon and US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin agreed to set up a joint team for the enforcement of economic sanctions against Iran during their meeting in Washington on August 28th. Most of the meeting focused on the issue of Iran, concluding with the decision which pertains in particular to sanctions in the high-tech sector. Responsibility for economical sanctions rests with the ministries of finance of both countries. The joint team will count with staff from both Israeli and US ministries.¹⁵¹ It can be stated here that, as per Western media, Iran is using a civilian airline to smuggle arms to the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah, Fox News reported on September 3rd, citing Western intelligence officials who tracked two unscheduled flights in recent months.¹⁵²

- **Duterte on Israel**

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte thanked Israel on September 3rd for providing “critical help” to his country when “we needed it most,” an apparent reference to unspecified assistance Jerusalem provided Manila in fighting Islamic radicals while being on his first visit to Israel. Duterte, who did not go into detail, said this “very substantial and critical” assistance was “an important help to preserve the republic”.¹⁵³

EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_09_01_12_31&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-469fb0f82c-55556173

as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵⁰ Anna Ahronheim, “Israel to host 44th International Congress of Military History”, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 27, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-to-host-44th-International-Congress-of-Military-History-565881?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=19-2-2018&utm_content=israel-to-host-44th-international-congress-of-military-history-565881 as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵¹ Cassandra Gomes-Hochberg, “Kahlon and Mnuchin form joint U.S.-Israel team to enforce Iran sanctions”, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 27, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/Kahlon-and-Mnuchin-to-set-up-a-team-for-enforcement-of-Iran-sanctions-566036?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=20-2-2018&utm_content=kahlon-and-mnuchin-to-set-up-a-team-for-enforcement-of-iran-sanctions-566036 as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵² “Iran using civilian flights to smuggle arms to Hezbollah – report”, *The Times of Israel*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-using-civilian-flights-to-smuggle-arms-to-hezbollah-report/> as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵³ Herb Keinon, “Duterte thanks Israel for unspecified ‘critical’ help”, *The Jerusalem Post*, September 3, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Duterte-thanks-Israel-for-unspecified-critical-help->

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

PAKISTAN

- One security force official was killed and another was injured in a cross-border attack at a checkpoint located in Kurram Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The incident of cross-border firing originated from Khost province in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁴
- A local school teacher, identified as Abdul Rauf, was killed and another person was injured in a remote-controlled bomb blast in Kandawa area of Mastung district.¹⁵⁵

AFGHANISTAN

- The Governor of Faryab, Naqibullah Fayiq, said that Taliban militants are posing a serious threat to the province and that Maimana City is surrounded by militants. “The majority of areas are under control of the Taliban,” Fayiq said adding that “only Bilchiragh (district) is fully under Taliban control – and they do not have full control over any other district in Faryab.” He also said that development projects have stopped in the province.¹⁵⁶
- Afghanistan’s Ministry of Interior (MoI) said that Pakistan’s military provided the sufficient aid to Taliban militants and plotted the attack in Ghazni on August 10, which claimed over 100 lives. “Pakistan and Pakistan’s military were involved in the plan to attack Ghazni. Pakistan provided all sufficient aid to them and it’s very clear,” said MoI spokesperson Najib Danish.¹⁵⁷
- At least four Taliban militants were killed in an airstrike by foreign forces. According to local officials, the Taliban had planned to target Bagram airbase but

[566389?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=19-2-2018&utm_content=duterte-thanks-israel-for-unspecified-critical-help-566389](https://www.dawn.com/news/1430543/fc-personnel-martyred-in-cross-border-attack-in-kurram-sources) as accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵⁴ Javid Hussain, FC personnel martyred in cross-border attack in Kurram: sources, *Dawn*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430543/fc-personnel-martyred-in-cross-border-attack-in-kurram-sources>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵⁵ Local teacher dead, one injured in Mastung IED blast, *Daily Pakistan*, September 4, 2018, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/local-teacher-dead-one-injured-in-mastung-ied-blast/>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵⁶ Aref Musawi, Faryab’s Center Under Taliban Threat: Governor, *Tolo News*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/faryab%E2%80%99s-center-under-taliban-threat-governor>, accessed on August 30, 2018

¹⁵⁷ Pak behind deadly Ghazni attack: Afghanistan, *Business Standard*, August 29, 2018, https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/pak-behind-deadly-ghazni-attack-afghanistan-118082901433_1.html, accessed on August 30, 2018

before the group could launch its attack the foreign forces carried out an airstrike.¹⁵⁸

- The head of ISIS in Afghanistan, identified as Abu Sayed Orakzai, was killed in an airstrike in the eastern area of Nangarhar province. Moreover, the following day, Taliban 'commander' Mullah Sher Agha told CNN's Sam Kiley that Taliban commanders inside the country are willing to begin peace talks. "Peace negotiations should be among Afghans and for Afghans," Agha told CNN. "We should not wait for Pakistan, Iran, Russia or America to bring peace to Afghanistan," Agha said.¹⁵⁹
- Jalaluddin Haqqani, the founder of the Haqqani Network, has died after a long illness, the Afghan Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, calling him one of the "great distinguished Jihadi personalities of this era."¹⁶⁰

IRAQ

- At least 11 Islamic State militants were killed in airstrikes targeting their hideouts in Makhmour town. The Peshmerga field commander said that no joint operations are currently held with the Iraqi forces against ISIS, but affirmed that a considerable level of cooperation exists.¹⁶¹
- At least 11 Islamic State (IS) militants were killed in Makhmur region, a Peshmerga official said. Sirwan Barzani, in-charge of the Peshmerga in Kuwait-Makhmur region said, "Islamic State actions are ongoing at regions controlled by the Iraqi forces. The Coalition jets are covering the region, in cooperation with Peshmerga."¹⁶²
- At least eight people were killed and 12 wounded in a suicide car bombing at a checkpoint in al-Qaim district, which was jointly manned by the Iraqi army and

¹⁵⁸ Four Insurgents Killed In Foreign Forces Airstrike, *Tolo News*, September 1, 2018,

<https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/four-insurgents-killed-foreign-forces-airstrike>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁵⁹ Ryan Browne, Eli Watkins & Sam Kiley, US confirms death of ISIS leader in Afghanistan, *CNN*, September 3, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/02/politics/isis-leader-killed-afghanistan/index.html>, accessed on September 3, 2018

¹⁶⁰ Jalaluddin Haqqani, founder of militant Haqqani network, dead: Afghan Taliban, *The Indian Express*, September 4, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/haqqani-network-founder-jalaluddin-haqqani-dead-afghan-taliban-5338477/>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁶¹ Zen Adra, Coalition airstrikes kill 11 ISIS militants in Iraq's Makhmour. *Al Masdar News*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/coalition-airstrikes-kill-11-isis-militants-in-iraqs-makhmour/>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁶² Nehal Mostafa, Eleven Islamic State members killed in operation by Peshmerga in Nineveh, *Iraqi News*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/eleven-islamic-state-members-killed-in-operation-by-peshmerga-in-nineveh/>, accessed on August 30, 2019

Shia militias. The town's mayor, Ahmed al-Mehlawy, said five militiamen and three civilians were killed in the attack.¹⁶³

- According to five US officials and two European diplomats, “The Trump administration is weighing a plan to send hundreds of captured ISIS fighters to an Iraqi prison after other countries refused to take them, and to send several of the highest-value fighters to the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay.”¹⁶⁴
- Under the plan, possibly hundreds of less notorious ISIS detainees would be remanded to a prison in Iraq, becoming first new prisoners in more than 10 years.¹⁶⁵

SYRIA

- The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has offered to travel to the country's last opposition stronghold - Idlib - in an attempt to negotiate a ceasefire. Mistura called for all sides to allow time for humanitarian corridors to be set up, amid signs that the Syrian Army, backed by the Russian air force, is preparing to mount a major attack on Idlib. De Mistura acknowledged there was a high concentration of foreign fighters in Idlib, including an estimated 10,000 terrorists, but said it would be better to set up humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians than rush into a battle that could prove to be a “perfect storm”.¹⁶⁶
- Following this, US President Donald Trump warned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his allies Iran and Russia not to “recklessly attack” the rebel-held Idlib province, warning that hundreds of thousands of people could be killed.¹⁶⁷
- Amid declining profits, the Daesh has reportedly started to invest in legal businesses to keep on financing its activity, said the head of the Federal Security Service's (FSB) intelligence information and international relations service, Sergey Beseda. Profits of the ISIS in Russia have gone down 90 percent since 2014 to USD 200 million — USD 300 million a year, Beseda said.

¹⁶³ Iraq: Eight killed in Anbar province suicide bombing, *Al Jazeera*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/iraq-killed-anbar-province-suicide-bombing-180829072538649.html>, accessed on August 30, 2018

¹⁶⁴ Courtney Kube, Dan De Luce & Josh Lederman, Trump admin may send captured ISIS fighters to Iraq prison, Guantanamo, *NBC News*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/trump-admin-may-send-captured-isis-fighters-iraq-prison-guantanamo-n905066>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁶⁵ Ryan Grenoble, ISIS Militants Likely To End Up In Iraqi Prison, Guantanamo: Reports, *Huffington Post*, August 31, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/isis-prisoners-guantanamo-bay_us_5b883d9ce4b0162f4720f0e1, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁶⁶ Patrick Wintour, UN Syria envoy offers to negotiate ceasefire in last rebel stronghold, *The Guardian*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/30/syrian-war-un-warns-russia-iran-and-turkey-against-battle-in-idlib>, accessed on September 4, 2018

¹⁶⁷ David Shephardson, Trump warns Syria not to 'recklessly attack' Idlib province, *Reuters*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-trump/trump-warns-syria-not-to-recklessly-attack-idlib-province-idUSKCN1LJ252>, accessed on September 4, 2018

- “If we compare those financial receipts that were in 2014 and were estimated at about USD 3 billion, then now ISIL [Daesh] militants manage to get USD 200-300 million a year,” Beseda said at an international conference on efforts to counter illegal arms supply in the context of the fight against international terrorism.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Daesh loses 90% of its revenue in four years – Russia’s security service, *Al Masdar News*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/daesh-loses-90-of-its-revenue-in-four-years-russias-security-service/>, accessed on September 4, 2018