

Weekly Media Updates **(19-25 June, 2017)**

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Africa

- **Germany Touts Africa Investment as Signature Issue at G-20 Meeting¹**

A new approach to foreign investment and aid in Africa by the world's richest nations is being called for by Germany's chancellor, before she hosts a meeting of the world's 20 wealthiest nations next month. The so-called "Merkel plan" calls for more investment in Africa, as a way of stemming African migration to Europe.

German Foreign Minister Gerd Muller had said he fears 100 million African refugees might come to Germany if nothing is done.

So, Chancellor Angela Merkel has vowed to invest some \$335 million to attract foreign investors to Africa, and will try to convince the other 19 nations attending the G-20 summit to show greater commitment to the continent's struggling economies.

Germany has identified four countries as its focus: Ivory Coast, Morocco, Rwanda and Tunisia, but has also had discussions with other African leaders.

Talitha Bertelsmann-Scott heads the Economic Diplomacy Program at the South African Institute of International Affairs said that she has reservations about the plan outlined by Germany's Finance Ministry, as it did not involve consultation with African nations.

- **President Macron says France was wrong in joining the Libyan war²**

France's new President Emmanuel Macron has acknowledged that the "invasions" of foreign forces in Libya to end Colonel Muammar Gadhafi's rule in 2011 was an error. The French President said France was wrong to join the war in Libya.

In an interview for European media, a part of which was published by Il Corriere della Sera newspaper Macron said "[France] was wrong to join the war in Libya. What were the outcomes of these invasions? Destroyed countries in which terrorist groups thrive. I do not want that to happen in Syria,"³

Libya has been suffering from a civil war since 2011 when long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown. The country's eastern regions are governed by the elected parliament headquartered in the city of Tobruk. Besides, the Government of National Accord, formed with the support from the United Nations and Europe and headed by Fayeze Sarraj, operates in the country's west, including the Libyan capital of Tripoli. The eastern authorities act independently from the west, cooperating with the National Army led by Commander Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, which fights against Islamic terrorists.

¹ Voice of America, 21 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706210314.html>

² Africa Updates, June 24 2017, <http://africaupdates.info/libya-crisis-president-macron-says-france-was-wrong-in-joining-the-libyan-war/>

³ World News, 22 June 2017 <https://w-news.info/world/emmanuel-macron-says-france-s-participation-in-2011-libyan-civil-war-mistake.html>

- **East Africa: Milestone for Agriculture in East Africa⁴**

Agriculture will now be placed as number one engine of economic growth in the East African Community (EAC) integration process. This follows last week's signing of the EAC Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact.

The EAC deputy secretary general (Productive and Social Sectors) Christophe Bazivamo said that the Compact is designed to facilitate coordination of regional and cross cutting programmes that complement agricultural programmes and projects at national and regional levels.

The programme details regional development priorities and defines actions, commitments and partnerships required to achieve agricultural transformation in line with the CAADP goals and targets.

Uganda's Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Mr Ssempijja Bamulangaki, reaffirmed the EAC Partner States' commitment to transforming agriculture for inclusive economic growth in the region.

CAADP's overall goal is to use agriculture to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty in Africa. Through the CAADP agenda, African governments have agreed to increase public investment in agriculture to ten per cent of national budgets per year and to raise and maintain agricultural productivity and annual growth by at least six per cent.

The priority and focus areas in the EAC Compact include sustainable natural resource use and management; rural infrastructure, ICT and trade-related capacities for improved market access; food supply and reducing hunger.

Others are agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption; enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems and Management of Risks; institutional and financial Strengthening; and cross cutting issues.

Although considered the backbone of the economies of the EAC states, the agricultural sector is constrained by a number of constraints and challenges, among them being natural factors, weak policies and failure to adopt the appropriate technologies.

Policy makers say the constraints have inhibited the rural economy's potential to alleviate poverty through employment creation and income generation as well as meeting the growing food needs.

Despite the challenges, EA has a significant irrigation potential that remains unexploited. For instance, irrigation is seen to have an important role in increasing agricultural productivity.

⁴ The Citizen, 26 June 2017 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706260123.html>

The Compact was signed by the EAC Partner States, the EAC Secretariat, and the Inter- University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), the East Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) and the East African Business Council (EABC).

Also present were officials of, the East Africa Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOFF), the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

European Union

- **French President Macron's Meeting with Ukrainian President Poroshenko**

President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko met with French President Emmanuel Macron on 26 June 2017 in Paris. They discussed the bilateral issues between two countries and emphasized on expanding economic cooperation between the countries.⁵ After talking to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, French President Macron said, 'France is committed to Ukraine's sovereignty with its recognised borders.'⁶ He also supported the negotiations for ending the conflict in Ukraine through the Minsk agreements.

- **Theresa May's Plan for Rights of EU Nationals in UK**

As negotiation on Brexit has started between the EU and UK, Prime Minister Theresa May said that EU nationals living in the country can stay after the Brexit and announced plan for them. She reassured that no EU citizen currently in the UK lawfully would be asked to leave after the Brexit. Right of the EU nationals in the UK after Brexit is a major issue in the negotiations. The EU wants 'same level of protections as in EU law.'⁷ Prime Minister May has outlined the plan for EU nationals. Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn said that it is 'not generous' and 'too little, too late'.⁸ EU chief negotiator calls for 'more ambition, clarity and guarantees'.

⁵ Meeting between the Presidents of Ukraine and France: We are determined to expand the agenda of our bilateral cooperation, President of Ukraine, June 26, 2017, <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/mi-rishuche-nalashтовani-na-rozshirennya-poryadku-dennogo-na-42066>

⁶ France's Macron refuses to recognise Crimea 'annexation', France 24, June 26, 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20170626-france-macron-refuses-recognise-crimea-annexation-ukraine-poroshenko>

⁷ Elizabeth Piper and David Milliken, May offers to protect benefits of EU citizens living in Britain, Reuters, June 26, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-idUSKBN19H1WQ>

⁸ Theresa May sets out post-Brexit offer on EU citizens, BBC, June 26, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-40403431>

- **"Ganga-Danube: Cultural Festival of India" in Hungary**

The Embassy of India in Hungary hosted a three-day second edition of the "Ganga-Danube: Cultural Festival of India" and Third International Day of Yoga in Hungary from June 23 to June 25, 2017. Several cultural and yoga events were organized in 15 cities of the country. Mr. Peter Cseresznyes, Hungarian Minister of State for Labour Affairs and President of Parliamentary Friendship Group with India and Ambassador of India Rahul Chhabra jointly inaugurated the festival in Budapest on June 23, 2017.⁹

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **North Korea open for Moratorium on nuclear weapon and missile test**

On June 21 in a rare TV interview, North Korean ambassador to India, Kye Chun Yong indicated Pyongyang's willingness to talk to the US regarding freezing of North Korean nuclear and missile test. Ambassador Young said, "'If our demands is met, we can negotiate in terms of the moratorium of such as weapons testing," .¹⁰ Stopping joint US-South Korean military is the key demand according the North Korean diplomat.

- **US student released from North Korea dies**

Otto Warmbier, a US student who was recently released from North Korea died on June 19. Mr. Warmbier was detained in North Korea for the last seventeen months for allegedly stealing a political propaganda from a hotel. North Korean court sentenced him for fifteen years of hard labour. According to North Korea, Mr. Warmbier fell in to coma in March 2017 due to botulism after having sleeping pill.¹¹ The claim is rejected by US officials. The student's death can have a significant impact on US approach to North Korea. In response to the death of Warmbier, Trump administration is considering to ban US citizen's travel to North Korea.¹²

⁹ The Embassy of India, Hungary, Press Release: 2nd edition of "Ganga-Danube: Cultural Festival of India" and 3rd International Day of Yoga in 15 cities of Hungary from 23-25th June, 2017, <http://www.indianembassy.hu/?p=141242>

¹⁰ "N. Korea is open to moratorium on nuclear, missile tests", The Korea Times, June 22, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/06/103_231701.html (Accessed on June 27, 2017)

¹¹ "US student released from N. Korea dies", Korean Times, June 20, 2017 http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/06/103_231539.html (Accessed on June 27, 2017)

¹² "After Warmbier death, U.S. weighs ban on travel to North Korea", The Japan Times, June 21, 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/21/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/warmbier-death-u-s-weighs-ban-travel-north-korea/#.WVIWplh96M8> (Accessed on June 27, 2017)

- **South Korea to revisit Comfort women agreement**

On 20 June South Korean President Moon Jae-in urged Japan to "take legal responsibility for its actions" and "make an official apology" in resolving the comfort woman issue. During his interview with a newspaper Moon said, "The comfort women agreement we made with Japan during the last administration is not accepted by the people of Korea, particularly by the victims". This suggests that the new South Korean President is reviewing the agreement on comfort women signed between South Korea-Japan in 2015 during the previous administration. On its move to revisit the 2015 agreement the new administration is in the process of setting up a task force to look in to the process of negotiation conducted between the two countries from April 2014 and December 2015. Since coming to office in May President Moon has expressed his scepticism over the agreement and has even conveyed this matter to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during their telephonic conversation.¹³

- **More Missile Tests on Korean Peninsula**

On June 23, South Korea successfully tested a short range ballistic missile capable of reaching all parts of North Korea. The missile tested was a type of Hyunmoo-2 and was observed by President Moon Jae-in. Friday launch was the fifth testing of the missile and required two more testing before the missile is deployed according to a statement from South Korean Presidential Office.¹⁴

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Phillipines)

- **The Final onslaught on Marawi, by the Philippines Military**

On June 20, 2017, Philippines's military aircraft bombed rebel positions along with the ground troops launching a renewed offensive against militants who are attempting to capture the southern city of Marawi. The military spokesman said that the aim was to wrap up the fighting before the weekend Eid festival.¹⁵ The Philippines government said on June 18, 2017, that it would suspend offensive against communist guerrillas to reciprocate a similar plan by the insurgents and allow troops to focus on quelling a bloody siege by the Islamic State (IS) group. According to Philippines negotiator Silvestre Bello III, the government's aim is towards fostering talks for a cease-fire accord pact with the New People's Army –

¹³ "Seoul set to review sex slavery deal with Tokyo", The Korean Times, June 23, 2017, http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2017/06/113_231814.html (Accessed on June 27, 2017); "Moon urges Japan to offer apology", The Japan News, June 22, 2017, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003775191> (Accessed on June 27, 2017)

¹⁴ "South Korea Tests Missile Capable of Striking Any Part of the North", New York Times, June 23, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/23/world/asia/south-korea-missile-ballistic.html> (Accessed on June 27, 2017)

¹⁵ "Philippine launches offensive in Marawi, aims to end battle by weekend", The Straits Times, June 20, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-launches-offensive-in-marawi-aims-to-end-battle-by-weekend>, accessed on June 20, 2017.

these communist rebels have been waging one of Asia's longest running Marxist insurgencies – since the troops have been battling communist and militants simultaneously in the country's South.¹⁶

The escalation for the reclamation of Marawi by the Philippines military saw three hundred fighters of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, linked to the ISIS attack a military outpost and later occupying a school in Pigcawayan town, 900 Km south of Manila; in the early hours of June 21, 2017.¹⁷ The Philippines military has claimed that in the ongoing assault to regain the city of Marawi, Mahmud Ahmad – Malaysia's most wanted terrorist – is believed to have been killed. Mahmud Ahmad, is responsible for financing the ongoing siege by channelling more than 30 million pesos from the ISIS group to acquire firearms, food and other supplies for the attack.¹⁸

- **IS seeking control in Southeast and East Asia**

Experts had warned since last year that IS would want to create a 'wilayah' or state in Southeast Asia as it loses territory in West Asia. According to Senior Analyst Jasimder Singh in a paper published by the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore has been identified by supporters of IS group in Iraq and Syria as part of its "East Asia wilayah". The other areas to come under this are Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Southern Thailand, Myanmar and Japan. This could lead other foreign fighters to carry out attacks within Singapore in the future. This development comes as the terrorism threat facing Singapore is at the highest level in recent years and the country has been witnessing a steady rise in the number of self-radicalised individuals. Dr Rohan Gunaratna, head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, however, noted that the exact territorial boundaries of the 'wilayah' in East Asia is still unconfirmed as IS has not made any official declarations. Associate Professor Antonio Rappa, said that Singapore should be more worried about attacks by "lone wolves and small groups of terrorists" who could enter the country from Malaysia or Indonesia. The current siege in Marawi would further increase the confidence level of future terrorist's recruits. Thus, the Singapore's security agencies are closely monitoring the situation in Marawi, as developments there could have serious ramification for Singapore's future safety and security; according to the spokesman from Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs.¹⁹

¹⁶"Philippines eyes truce with Communist rebels amid siege", Borneo Bulletin, June 19, 2017, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/philippines-eyes-truce-communist-rebels/>, accessed on June 23, 2017.

¹⁷"ISIS-linked militants storm another southern Philippine town, take pupils as hostage", The Straits Times, June 21, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/pro-isis-militants-storm-school-in-southern-philippines-police>, accessed on June 21, 2017.

¹⁸ "Malaysia's Most Wanted Militant Mahmud Ahmad, who helped finance Marawi Siege, believed killed in fighting", The Straits Times, June 23, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysian-militant-who-helped-finance-marawi-siege-believed-killed-in-fighting-report>, accessed on June 23, 2017.

¹⁹"Singapore named as part of IS East Asia hub", *The Star Online*, June 23, 2017, <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2017/06/23/singapore-named-as-part-of-is-east-asia-hub-move-sparks-fears-of-influx-of-foreign-fighters/>, accessed on June 23, 2017.

In another instance according to the Director General of Myanmar's State Counsellor's Office, U Zaw Htay, during a military operation on June 21, 2017, a tunnel measuring five feet wide, four feet high, and 80 feet long was uncovered. The operation was conducted on the bases of a tip-off that terrorists were being trained in the Mayu Mountains in the Buthidaung- Maungtaw area of Rakhine State. The terrorist belong to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, formed by merging some faction of Aqua Mul Mujahidan and the Rohingya National Security Committee. The terrorist were engaged in providing training to the villagers and were responsible for the recent killing of 34 civilians, including 100 household and 10 household heads. According to the DG, the method of operation uncovered through the carried action revealed similarities to other terrorist organisations in Pakistan and Afghanistan, who also build tunnels for carrying out their operations.²⁰ Given the evolving security scenario in the region, ASEAN and Australia during their Joint Cooperation Committee Meeting held on June 16, 2017, noted the importance of enhancing cooperation in strategic areas such as counter-terrorism amongst other things.²¹

- **Impact of Qatar Embargo on Indonesia**

The ongoing embargo against Qatar would not have a significant impact on the financial and corporate investment in Indonesia. However, as pointed out by analysis that remain wary of the situation, considering that if the problem facing Qatar continues, Indonesia could lose the potential for greater investments in the future. Qatar presently, has huge financial investments in Indonesia through its state-owned Qatar national Bank (QNB), which controls 82.59% stake in bank QNB Indonesia – with the acquisition being made in 2011. However, QNB Indonesia's assets have been growing and remains stable with Indonesia's credit rating agency Pefindo giving it an id AA rating. In terms of Qatar's other investment such as in telecommunication by Qatar Telecommunication Company in Indosat; now called the Indosat Ooredoo. According to latest results of the company, the ratio of debt to capital remains stable to 1.67%, meaning that so far the company has no problem in paying all its obligations. The crisis however, would affect remittances received by Indonesia's financial system from Indonesian migrant workers in Qatar, who in 2016 provided remittance at the tune of US \$ 74.7 million.²²

²⁰Htoo Thant, "Terrorist Camp, tunnel found in Rakhine", *Myanmar Times*, June 23, 2017, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26515-terrorist-camp-tunnel-found-in-rakhine.html>, accessed on June 23, 2017.

²¹"ASEAN, Australia Reaffirm commitment to Strengthen Strategic Partnership", *ASEAN*, June 19, 2017, <http://asean.org/asean-australia-reaffirm-commitment-to-strengthen-strategic-partnership/>, accessed on June 20, 2017.

²² M.Harris Muhajir, "How embargo affects Qatar investment in Indonesia", *The Jakarta Post*, June 22, 2017, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/06/22/how-embargo-affects-qatar-investment-in-indonesia.html>, accessed on June 23, 2017.

Myanmar

- **India to hand over six vessels worth \$81 million to Myanmar**

India will hand over six cargo vessels worth US\$81.29 million (K110.08 billion) to the Myanmar government in Sittwe under an agreement called the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project. The vessels will be handed over at a ceremony in the Rakhine State capital by Vikram Misri, the ambassador of India in Myanmar, to U Thant Sin Maung, minister of Transport and Communications, a statement from the Indian embassy said.

The project agreement signed between Myanmar and India consists of setting up port facilities at Sittwe terminal (Inland Water Transport, IWT) at Paletwa, dredging of Sittwe port along the Kaladan River channel, providing night navigation facilities along the river, as well as design, construction and supply of six cargo vessels of 300-tonnes capacity each. Work on the port in Sittwe and the IWT in Paletwa, Chin State, is in its final stages, and the six cargo vessels are meant to facilitate transportation of goods from Sittwe to Paletwa. The \$81.29 million cost of the vessels was met through a grant from India.²³

- **Coalition of Kachin political parties say military operations could harm peace efforts**

A coalition of political parties in northern Myanmar's Kachin state said on Wednesday that the national army's offensives in Tanaing township and the Hukong Valley against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) could harm the government's efforts to end decades of ethnic separatist civil wars and forge peace, RFA reported on 21 June. Government troops and the KIA began fighting in the Tanaing gold and amber mining region on June 16.

A statement issued by the Kachin Political Cooperation Committee (KPCC), which includes the Lhaovo National Unity and Development Party, Kachin Democratic Party, and Kachin State Democracy Party, also said that villagers had lost trust in the central government and the local ethnic majority because of land grabs that accompany the hostilities.²⁴

- **Number of refugees from Myanmar rose to 490,300 by the end of last year - UNHCR**

The number of refugees from Myanmar rose to 490,300 by the end of last year, up from 451,800 in the previous year, with Bangladesh hosting the largest number of 276,200, according to the Global Trends report published by UNHCR ahead of World Refugee Day which falls on 20 June. Other countries with large numbers of

²³ "India to hand over six vessels worth \$81 million to Myanmar", 26 June 2017, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26541-india-to-hand-over-six-vessels-worth-81-million-to-myanmar.html> (Accessed on 27 June 2017)

²⁴ "Coalition of Kachin political parties say military operations could harm peace efforts", 22 June 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/coalition-kachin-political-parties-say-military-operations-could-harm-peace-efforts>

Myanmar refugees included Thailand (102,600), Malaysia (87,000), and India (15,600). The report quoted the main reasons for displacement as being war, violence and persecution.²⁵

North America

Canada

- **Canadian defence industry considers increasing its profile in India**
The Ottawa-based Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries is trying to determine how much interest there is among its members to take part in a potential Government of Canada trade mission to India. The trade mission will coincide with DEFEXPO, India's National Defence and Security Trade Show taking place in February/March 2018.²⁶
- **Canada and China sign no-hacking agreement to protect trade secrets**
Canada and China have agreed not to engage in state-sponsored hacking of each other's trade secrets and business information. The two countries reached the agreement during a meeting last week that was part of their new high-level national security dialogue. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang have deepened the political engagement between the two countries with regular "dialogues" such as the security one that took place last week in Ottawa. Cybersecurity was one the many topics on the agenda, along with counter-terrorism, combating organized crime and regional security issues such as the crisis in Syria and North Korea's nuclear sabre-rattling. The government statement says the two sides also discussed "judicial and rule of law issues."²⁷
- **Indian-origin Sikh becomes first turbaned judge in Canada**
Ms. Palbinder Kaur Shergill, an Indian-origin Sikh woman human rights activist, a sole practitioner with Shergill & Company, has extensive trial and appellate experience and has appeared before courts and tribunals across Canada, including the Supreme Court of Canada, has been appointed a judge of the Canadian Supreme Court of British Columbia in New Westminster, the first turbaned Sikh to be appointed to the judiciary of the country. The World Sikh Organisation (WSO) welcomed Ms. Shergill's appointment, calling it a "milestone" for the Sikh community in Canada.²⁸
- **'Before tragedy strikes': Liberals launch centre to prevent homegrown terrorism**
The federal government has launched a new centre tasked with preventing the radicalization of Canadian young people. A special adviser will be named in the

²⁵ "Number of refugees from Myanmar rose to 490,300 by the end of last year – UNHCR", 20 June 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-regional/number-refugees-myanmar-rose-490300-end-last-year-unhcr>

²⁶ David Pugliese, "Canadian defence industry considers increasing its profile in India," <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/canadian-defence-industry-considers-increasing-its-profile-in-india>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

²⁷ The Canada Press, "Canada and China sign no-hacking agreement to protect trade secrets," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-china-no-hacking-agreement-1.4178177>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

²⁸ PTI, "Indian-origin Sikh becomes first turbaned judge in Canada," <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/indian-origin-sikh-becomes-first-turbaned-judge-in-canada/article19140690.ece>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

coming months to oversee the local outreach and research projects funded through the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence. The centre will have dedicated staff, but will be located within the existing Public Safety Canada space. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said Canada must become a world leader in understanding and dealing with radicalization that leads to violence, in order to retain its national character as an open, diverse society that is also safe and secure.²⁹

- **Trudeau government promises to defend lumber industry in face of new U.S. duties**

The Trudeau government says it will vigorously defend the softwood lumber industry, including through litigation, after the U.S. Department of Commerce slapped it with an additional 6.87 per cent in preliminary average anti-dumping tariffs. The new anti-dumping duty will overlap for about two months with average preliminary countervailing duties of 19.88 per cent announced in April that are set to expire on Aug. 27. The industry now faces average duties of about 27 per cent. U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross announced separately that an internal investigation has determined that it was appropriate to exclude the Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador from softwood lumber duties as requested by the U.S. industry and Canadian officials. The government said the U.S. decision to exclude three Atlantic provinces was "significant progress," and they would welcome a commitment to add New Brunswick to that list.³⁰

The United States

- **Supreme Court Takes Up Travel Ban Case, and Allows Parts to Go Ahead**

The Supreme Court cleared the way on Monday for President Trump to prohibit the entry of some people into the United States from countries he deems dangerous, but the justices imposed strict limits on Mr. Trump's travel ban while they examine the scope of presidential power over the border. The court said the ban could not be imposed on anyone who had "a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States." The court's opinion sets up a historic legal clash in which the justices will weigh the president's power to set national security priorities against the need to protect individuals from discrimination based on their religious beliefs or national origin.³¹

- **Where Trump Zigs, Tillerson Zags, Putting Him at Odds With White House**

As a behind-the-scenes mediator in the dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia — Mr. Tillerson is in exactly the place a secretary of state does not want to be: in public disagreement with the president who appointed him. Mr. Tillerson tried to position himself as an intermediary and sought for all sides to put their demands on the table. But President Trump openly sided with the Saudis, first on Twitter,

²⁹ Katharine Harris, "Before tragedy strikes': Liberals launch centre 'to prevent homegrown terrorism,'" Accessed on 27 June 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/terrorism-counter-radicalization-centre-1.4178050>

³⁰ The Canada Press, "Trudeau government promises to defend lumber industry in face of new U.S. duties," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/softwood-lumber-duties-us-dumping-1.4178924>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

³¹ Michael D. Shear and Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Takes Up Travel Ban Case, and Allows Parts to Go Ahead," <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/us/politics/supreme-court-trump-travel-ban-case.html>, Accessed on 27 June 2017

then again at a news conference. Mr. Trump called Qatar a “funder of terrorism at a very high level” just as the State Department was questioning whether the Saudis were using the terrorism charge to cover for “long-simmering grievances” between the Arab nations. But criticism from Mr. Trump’s aides is not Mr. Tillerson’s only problem. In recent days, each of his top priorities has hit a wall. His effort to enlist China to force North Korea to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile programs has gone nowhere, as the president himself acknowledged last week. The Russians, angry about a congressional move to impose new sanctions, disinvited one of his top diplomats — leaving that crucial relationship at its lowest point since the Cold War. And in Congress, where Mr. Tillerson once found members willing to give deference to his efforts to reorganize and shrink the State Department, there is now anger and defiance about the extent of those plans.³²

- **Trump’s tweet on China and North Korea: What did he mean?**

President Trump tweeted about North Korea and generated the usual round of mockery and contempt. “While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi & China to help with North Korea,” the president said, “it has not worked out. At least I know China tried!” It is not clear if Mr. Trump’s statement signals any change in policy toward China or North Korea. The tweet comes one day after 22-year-old Otto Warmbier — whom North Korea held for more than a year — died following his return to the United States. Mr. Trump has tried to leverage China, North Korea’s only major ally, to apply more economic pressure on Pyongyang to help stop its nuclear and missile programs and other acts of defiance against the U.S. and its allies. Shortly before the president tweeted, press secretary Sean Spicer said the White House has seen “positive movement” from China and will “continue to work with them and others to put the appropriate pressure on North Korea.” Mr. Trump has previously said he sought a diplomatic solution to rein in North Korea.³³

- **Senate GOP health-care bill appears in deeper trouble following new CBO report**

Senate Republicans’ bill to erase major parts of the Affordable Care Act would cause an estimated 22 million more Americans to be uninsured by the end of the coming decade, while reducing federal spending by \$321 billion during that time, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The forecast issued by Congress’s nonpartisan budget scorekeepers appeared to rapidly erode Republicans’ confidence in the bill, with at least four GOP lawmakers saying by the evening that they would vote against even starting debate on it.³⁴

³² David E. Sanger, Gardiner Harris and Mark Landler, “Where Trump Zigs, Tillerson Zags, Putting Him at Odds With White House,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/25/world/americas/rex-tillerson-american-diplomacy.html>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

³³ Jacob Pramuk, “Trump: Working with China on North Korea 'has not worked out,’” <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/20/trump-working-with-china-on-north-korea-has-not-worked-out.html>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

³⁴ Amy Goldstein and Kelsey Snell, “Senate GOP health-care bill appears in deeper trouble following new CBO report,” https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/imminent-cbo-report-could-prove-pivotal-for-senate-republicans-health-care-bill/2017/06/26/cb8d61e2-59f7-11e7-a9f6-7c3296387341_story.html?utm_term=.b71bec14f47f, Accessed on 27 June 2017

Mexico

- **Mexico, India to hold disarmament meet**

India and Mexico have agreed to hold an important conference on regional and global Disarmament. The meeting would be headed by the Joint Secretary of the disarmament division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) from the Indian side. It was taken up during the seventh meeting of the Mexico-India Joint Commission (JCM) and the fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations held on June 23 in Mexico City. President Enrique Pena Nieto had declared Mexico's support for India's entry to the Group during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's June 2016 visit to the country. The special disarmament meeting is likely to build on the time-tested India-Mexico collaboration on disarmament starting from the 1980s when both countries led the Group of Six, an anti-proliferation group of six countries that tried to contain cold war nuclear rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR.³⁵

Latin American and Caribbean

Argentina

- **Argentina's ex-president Cristina Fernandez launches new party**

Former president Cristina Fernandez has returned to Argentina's political stage, launching a new party and promising to fight the economic policies of her conservative successor. The woman who governed Argentina from 2007 to 2015 told a rally in Buenos Aires on June 20, 2017 that the party would be called Unidad Ciudadana (Citizens Unity) and would compete in October 2017 midterm elections. This new alliance, formed by Nuevo Encuentro (New Gathering), Frente Amplio (Broad Front), Victory Party (Partido de la Victoria), Compromiso Federal (Federal Commitment) and Kolina — four of which were previously part of Frente para la Victoria (Victory Front), would allow Fernandez to dodge the Peronist Justicialist Party primaries PASO elections, scheduled for August 13, 2017 and run straight for a seat on October 22, 2017. Ms. Fernandez called for a citizen's unity, the unity of all Argentines, who has not confirmed her own candidacy yet, but who is very much in need of parliamentary immunity given the corruption charges against her currently under investigation by various courts, which would

³⁵ Kallol Bhattacharjee, "Mexico, India to hold disarmament meet," <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/mexico-india-to-hold-disarmament-meet/article19150606.ece>, Accessed on 27 June 2017.

presumably lead to her trial and subsequent imprisonment. To that regard, she denies wrongdoing and says the cases are politically motivated. Her final decision on whether to run reportedly could depend on the outcome of strategic negotiations with some of her centrist rivals.³⁶

- **UN C24 calls for negotiations over Falkland Islands sovereignty** President Mauricio Macri's administration on June 23, 2017 renewed Argentina's case before the United Nations' Decolonization Committee in New York to bring the United Kingdom to discuss sovereignty over the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime spaces. It was Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie's first time as head of the Argentine delegation since taking office from Susana Malcorra on June 12, 2017. It was a first for Faurie and a last appearance for Falkland Islands MLA Mike Summers, who is to retire by the end of 2017. He insisted that the islands were not a colony of the United Kingdom but a successful and self-sufficient economy and that the islanders had a right to “self-determination.” Summers said there had been “very welcome progress” and that, among other issues, the return of commercial flights between the islands and the mainland had begun, but after that first progress, everything was now frozen. He also accused Argentina of exercising “economic colonialism” with sanctions to undermine the islanders' economy and pressure them. As is the case each year, the Committee unanimously adopted a resolution reiterating the call for a “peaceful and negotiated solution to the dispute over sovereignty” between Argentina and the United Kingdom. The resolution was presented by Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela.³⁷

Brazil

1) **The U.S. Bans All Fresh Beef Imports from Brazil**

The government of Brazil says it is working towards finding out what is causing irregularities in the quality of meat exported to the U.S. after, the North American

³⁶ “Argentina’s Ex-President Cristina Fernandez Launches New Party,” June 22, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/22/argentinas-ex-president-cristina-fernandez-launches-new-party/>, Accessed on June 27, 2017.

³⁷ “UN C24 Calls for Negotiations Over Falkland Islands Sovereignty Between Argentina UK, Yet Again,” June 24, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/06/24/un-c24-calls-for-negotiations-over-falkland-islands-sovereignty-between-argentina-uk-yet-again>, Accessed on June 27, 2017.

country announced it was suspending all imports of fresh beef coming from Brazil. For Agriculture Defense Director, Luis Eduardo Rangel the irregularities do not constitute a health problem since it does not cause health risks to humans or animals, but is rather a quality issue. According to Rangel the reaction by the United States government was a bit exaggerated. During the interview Rangel hinted that there might also be political-economic elements to the U.S. decision. According to the official, while Asian importers of Brazilian beef remain stable, beef [importers from the U.S. and Europe](#) tend to also take into consideration political and economic factors when it comes to importing Brazilian beef. Since March 2017, the U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service has refused entry to eleven percent of Brazilian fresh meat products, which according to the government entity is ‘substantially higher than the one percent reject rate for remittances from the rest of the world’. Foreseeing problems, Brazil’s Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA) announced on Wednesday (June 21st), they were suspending [beef exports](#) by five meatpackers to the United States after U.S. health officials identified irregularities in the products. According to MAPA the irregularities were caused by the reaction to the vaccines used by the companies.³⁸

Venezuela

- **Venezuelan foreign minister resigns to seek seat in planned Constituent Assembly**

Venezuela’s Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez has stepped down from her post to run for a seat in the controversial new Constituent Assembly. Rodriguez, who tendered her resignation in last week of June 2017, had been the South American country’s foreign minister since December 2014. President Nicolas Maduro was quick to offer words of praise for his close ally. Rodriguez “truly deserves the recognition of the entire country because she has defended Venezuelan sovereignty, peace and independence like a tiger,” Maduro said. The Venezuelan president, in a speech on state television, named the country’s ambassador to the

³⁸ Lise Alves, “The U.S. Bans All Fresh Beef Imports from Brazil,” June 23, 2017, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/u-s-bans-fresh-brazilian-beef-imports/>, Accessed on June 27, 2017.

Organization of American States (OAS), historian Samuel Moncada, as the new foreign minister. The development came as Maduro strives to send more of his allies to the Constituent Assembly, whose election is set for July 30, 2017. First lady Cilia Flores has already announced her own bid to run for a seat in the assembly. Maduro, whose government has faced massive protests in recent months, says the new assembly, a body with powers to rewrite the constitution and override other institutions, is a must to bring back peace to the country. The opposition, however, has already boycotted the vote, arguing that the voting procedures heavily favor the government and are aimed at keeping the ruling Socialist Party in power despite its current unpopularity.³⁹

Russia

BRICS and ‘no terrorism’

- On 19 June, V K Singh, minister of state for external affairs, said at a joint press conference after the meeting of BRICS foreign ministers in Beijing that India has sent out a clear message to the BRICS countries, including China that they should not believe in the Pakistani narrative about making a distinction between "good" and "bad" terrorists. Pakistani leaders have been trying to propagate this theory to protect a section of extremists, and China has shown no signs of discomfort about this narrative. The press conference was also attended by foreign ministers of all BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Pointing out that there was a need to expedite the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations, Singh said all the BRICS countries are supporting this move.⁴⁰
- Addressing the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting on June 19 Minister of State for External Affairs General V K Singh pitched for a greater engagement with BRICS nations which have steadily expanded its agenda from financial matters to security and counter terrorism issues facing the international community. During the BRICS Summit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said after meeting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that China is willing to deepen coordination with Russia to enhance strategic trust, boost economic and financial cooperation, increase cultural and people-to-people exchanges and strengthen the cooperation

³⁹ “Venezuelan Foreign Minister Resigns to Seek Seat in Planned Constituent Assembly,” June 23, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/23/venezuelan-foreign-minister-resigns-to-seek-seat-in-planned-constituent-assembly/>, Accessed on June 27, 2017.

⁴⁰ Saibal Dasgupta, “India at BRICS meet: There’s no ‘good’ terrorist”, *Economic Times*, June 20, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-at-brics-meet-theres-no-good-terrorist/articleshow/59228635.cms> Accessed on June 26, 2017.

mechanism

among

BRICS

countries.⁴¹

Russia and India

- In an address at a leading forum for technological development, Defence Minister Arun Jaitley on June 21 in Moscow invited Russian firms to join hands with Indian companies in developing high-end military platforms and weapons systems. He said that Russian defence majors which already have a long experience of working in India are well placed to take advantage of the policy changes effected to encourage tie-ups between Indian and foreign companies. He asked the Russian companies to come forward with proposals for technology transfer to Indian companies and facilitate manufacturing of advanced military platforms.⁴²
- The decision by India and Russia at the recent (June 1) annual Summit to undertake joint economic projects in third countries including in the area of clean energy have materialised in the form of India and Russia currently fine-tuning their civil nuclear energy partnership in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India with its experience in the civil nuclear industry will train personnel and provide expertise to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India has entered into civilian nuclear partnerships arrangements with both Dhaka and Colombo. Russia is building Bangladesh's maiden nuclear power plant in Roopur. Indo-Russian Strategic Vision document signed in 2014 mentions that the two countries would explore "opportunities for sourcing materials, equipment and services from Indian industry for the construction of the Russian designed nuclear power plants in third countries". The vision document also suggested that the two countries "would examine the possibility of technical cooperation in mining activities within their territories and collaborate in exploration and mining activities in third countries. Rosatom officials said that Indian and Russian civil nuclear partnership could be extended to the area of joint extraction of natural uranium and the production of nuclear fuel and nuclear waste elimination.⁴³
- On June 20, Andrey V Nikipelov, CEO of Atomenergomash, a subsidiary of Atomenergoprom, state owned holding company which owns nuclear enterprises of Russia, said that Russia is looking to expand its civil nuclear partnership with India beyond power generation and may even offer technology for desalination of water if Delhi makes such a request. He said that "Desalination is a new business whose market is increasing. Kazakhstan has one such desalination facility built by Russia. We are now developing integrated nuclear projects that also includes component of desalination. While currently we have no such plans in India if

⁴¹"India pitches for greater engagement with BRICS nations", *Economic Times*, June 19, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-russia-may-join-hands-for-providing-nuclear-energy-to-third-country/articleshow/59221479.cms> Accessed on June 26, 2017.

⁴²"India seeks Russian firms' support in defence manufacturing", *Economic Times*, June 21, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-seeks-russian-firms-support-in-defence-manufacturing/articleshow/59252634.cms> Accessed on June 26, 2017.

⁴³Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, "India, Russia may join hands for providing nuclear energy to third country", *Economic Times*, June 19, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-russia-may-join-hands-for-providing-nuclear-energy-to-third-country/printarticle/59221479.cms> Accessed on June 26, 2017.

Delhi makes such a request we will consider it.”⁴⁴

- Defence Minister Arun Jaitley, who is in Russia this week on his second visit since April, co-chaired the 17th meeting of the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) on June 23 with his Russian counterpart, General Sergei Shoigu. In that meeting India and Russia adopted a roadmap for defence cooperation, which will become the basic document for planning bilateral defence engagements. The two sides have taken forward their defence partnership to concretise deals on frigates, S-400 air defence missile system and Kamov helicopters. “We are determined to go ahead with building cooperation in order to enhance the combat readiness of both countries’ armed forces and to exchange experience in various defence-related matters,” Shoigu said at the meeting.⁴⁵
- On defence, Russian military aviation firm MiG said on June 23 it was ready to deepen its cooperation with India, just days after U.S. arms maker Lockheed Martin Corp ([LMT.N](#)) agreed with Tata Advanced Systems to build F-16 fighters there. MiG General Director Ilia Tarasenko told Reuters in a written interview that his company had been cooperating with India for more than 50 years, providing planes, service and training centers, and remained upbeat about further sales. “We are not afraid of rivalry with the U.S. in this market,” he said. “On the contrary, we believe that attempts by other players to establish cooperation with this country help us to better understand their needs and better meet them.” He conceded that Modi’s “Make in India” initiative required some changes in Moscow’s approach, and said his company was ready to respond.⁴⁶

Russia and NATO

- On June 23, a Polish NATO F-16 fighter jet tried to intercept the plane of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in the Baltic Sea. A NATO official confirmed that three Russian aircraft, including two fighters, were tracked over the Baltic Sea. “As the aircraft did not identify themselves or respond to air traffic control, NATO fighter jets scrambled to identify them, according to standard procedures. NATO has no information as to who was on board. We assess the Russian pilots’ behaviour as safe and professional,” the official said and added that all sides involved acted in a safe and professional manner. The Russian Defense Ministry has not responded. Shoigu was on his way to the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. This encounter with a NATO jet comes just two days after a Russian Su-27 fighter

⁴⁴Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, “Russia looking to expand civil nuclear partnership with India to desalination sector”, *Economic Times*, June 20, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/russia-looking-to-expand-civil-nuclear-partnership-with-india/articleshow/59233211.cms> Accessed on June 26, 2017.

⁴⁵Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, “India, Russia finalise deal on frigates, S-400 missile system & Kamov helicopters”, *Economic Times*, June 23, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-finalise-deal-on-frigates-s-400-missile-system-kamov-helicopters/articleshow/59291809.cms> Accessed on June 27, 2017.

⁴⁶[Andrea Shalal](#), “Russia’s fighter jet makers ‘not afraid’ of U.S. competition in India”, *Reuters*, June 23, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-airshow-paris-russia-mig-idUSKBN19E24H> Accessed on June 27, 2017.

jet flew within five feet of a US Air Force RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft in the skies above the Baltic Sea.⁴⁷

Russia and the Arctic Region

- The Russian Defence Ministry on June 26 said that a submarine of the Northern Fleet Project 955 "Yury Dolgoruky" made a successful launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile "Bulava" from the Barents Sea, successfully hitting the target set at the Kura test site in Kamchatka. The launch was carried out from an underwater position in accordance with the combat readiness plan.⁴⁸
- Russia's largest [oil](#) producer Rosneft said on June 18 it had found its first oilfield in the Laptev Sea in the eastern Arctic, making a breakthrough in the search for hydrocarbons in the harsh and far-flung region despite Western sanctions. Rosneft and its partners plan to invest 480 billion roubles (6.57 billion pounds) in developing Russia's offshore energy industry in the next five years, part of a drive to boost output from new areas. Most Russian oil output comes from western Siberia, where fields are depleting, pushing producers to look for new regions. Sanctions complicate the process, barring Western companies from helping with Arctic offshore, deepwater and shale oil projects. The Arctic offshore area is expected to account for between 20 and 30 percent of Russian production, one of the world's largest, by 2050. Analysts say oil production in the region - apart from Prirazlomnoye - is years away and may start only in the mid-2020s.⁴⁹

Russia and the Sanctions

- Andrey Kostin, president and chairman of Russia's second-largest bank by assets, VTB Bank, said on June 20 that the European Union has achieved nothing with sanctions against Russia and any extension to such measures from the bloc's foreign ministers could lead to a new arms race.⁵⁰
- On June 21, Russia has cancelled a planned meeting between its deputy foreign minister, Sergey Rybakov, and U.S. Under Secretary of State Tom Shannon in response to a new round of sanctions imposed by the U.S.⁵¹

⁴⁷[Zachary Cohen and Pamela Boykoff, "NATO jet intercepts Russian minister's plane", CNN, June 23, 2017. <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/21/politics/nato-jet-russian-defense-minister-aircraft/index.html> Accessed on June 27, 2017.](http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/21/politics/nato-jet-russian-defense-minister-aircraft/index.html)

⁴⁸["Yury Dolgoruky' successfully hit the 'Bulava' all targets on the Kamchatka Kura test site," TASS, June 26, 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4366775> Accessed on June 27, 2017.](http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4366775)

⁴⁹["Russia's Rosneft Finds First Oilfield Offshore Eastern Arctic", The New York Times, June 18, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2017/06/18/business/18reuters-russia-rosneft-arctic.html> Accessed on June 24, 2017.](https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2017/06/18/business/18reuters-russia-rosneft-arctic.html)

⁵⁰["Europe achieves nothing but a new arms race with further sanctions against Russia, says VTB Bank CEO", CNBC, June 20, 2017. <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/20/europe-new-arms-race-with-further-sanctions-against-russia-says-vtb-bank-ceo.html> Accessed on June 26, 2017.](http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/20/europe-new-arms-race-with-further-sanctions-against-russia-says-vtb-bank-ceo.html)

⁵¹["Russia Cancels Meeting With U.S. Over Increased Sanctions", The Atlantic, June 21, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/06/russia-cancels-planned-meeting-with-the-us/531213/> Accessed on June 27, 2017.](https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/06/russia-cancels-planned-meeting-with-the-us/531213/)

Russia and Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights on June 20 has ruled that Russia's so-called "gay propaganda law" is discriminatory, promotes homophobia and violates the European Convention on Human Rights. The law bans "[propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations around minors](#)" and was justified by Russia's Duma as a necessary measure to protect children from homosexual influence. France found that three gay Russian activists were discriminated against and their right to freedom of expression violated when they were fined for protesting against the law. Russia's Justice Ministry denied the law was discriminatory or that it restricted freedom of speech, and said it would appeal the ruling within three months. The law is just one of many that the Duma has passed in the name of upholding what it sees as traditional family values. In January, it [decriminalized some cases of domestic violence](#) as part of this drive. The court found that the law "served no legitimate public interest," rejecting suggestions that public debate on LGBT issues could influence children to become homosexual, or that it threatened public morals. "Above all, by adopting such laws the court found that the authorities had reinforced stigma and prejudice and encouraged homophobia, which was incompatible with the values -- of equality, pluralism and tolerance -- of a democratic society," the court document said.

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Militants planning suicide attack on Afghan parliament with some MPs support** - The anti-government armed militants are planning to carry out a suicide attack on the parliament building with the support of some lawmakers. The issue was shared by certain lawmakers in the Lower House of the Parliament, Wolesi Jirga, during the general session of the parliament. An MP Nilofar Ibrahim said they have been informed regarding the possible attack by the security sources and the intelligence reports shared with the parliament indicates that two lawmakers are attempting to assist in bring the suicide bombers to the parliament building. According to MP Ibrahim, the two lawmakers either belonging to the Lower House or Upper House of the Parliament. The Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Rauf Ibrahim also said he has been informed regarding the plan allegedly involving lawmakers. He said the issue has been shared with the security institutions to take steps in a bid to foil the attack plan. This comes as capital Kabul witnessed growing instability, mainly due to insurgency led by the

militants and several attacks were carried out late last month and earlier this month, leaving hundreds of people dead or wounded.⁵²

- Afghanistan and US hold talks regarding the framework of new bilateral cooperation - The top Afghan and US officials have held talks regarding the framework of the new bilateral cooperation between Kabul and Washington. The Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) in a statement said Afghanistan's national security adviser and his US counterpart General Herbert McMaster discussed the current situation through a video conference on Wednesday evening. The statement further added that the two sides held talks regarding the political and security situation of the country and the region. Reaffirming the support of US and the American people to the Afghan nation, Gen. McMaster said Washington is committed to a long term support to Afghanistan. According to ONSC, the two sides also discussed the agenda and other issues related to the meeting between the countries which is expected to be held in the near future. The two sides also reached to some agreements in this regard, the statement said, adding that Mr. Atmar his American counterpart discussed the framework of the new political and security cooperation between the two countries. The statement also added that Gen. McMaster has said the negotiations will continue so that necessary support can be utilized to Afghanistan in a bid to help with the stability and peace in the country.⁵³
- Trump administration to close special envoy's office for Afghanistan and Pakistan - The President Donald Trump administration will close the office of the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, it has been reported. According to the Wall Street Journal, quoting informed US sources, the office will be absorbed into the larger State Department division responsible for South and Central Asia. This comes as the Afghan and US officials are focusing to expand bilateral political and economic cooperation in the framework of the new bilateral cooperation between

⁵² "Militants planning suicide attack on Afghan parliament with some MPs support", *Khaama Press*, 20 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/militants-planning-suicide-attack-on-afghan-parliament-with-some-mps-support-02982> accessed on 22 June 2017.

⁵³ "Afghanistan and US hold talks regarding the framework of new bilateral cooperation", *Khaama Press*, 22 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-and-us-hold-talks-regarding-the-framework-of-new-bilateral-cooperation-03001> accessed on 23 June 2017.

the two countries, according to office of the national security council of Afghanistan.⁵⁴

- **China's FM Meets Rabbani In Follow Up Of Shanghai Summit** - China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi arrived in Kabul on Sunday morning for scheduled talks with a number of high-ranking government officials. On arrival, he met with Afghan acting foreign minister Salahuddin Rabbani and number of other officials where they discussed the agreements forged between the Afghan and Chinese presidents at Shanghai Summit in Astana earlier this month. At the time, President Ashraf Ghani and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to the need for a joint fight against terrorism and extremism, to expand both regional cooperation and China's support in the Afghan peace process. According to the statement, Wang assured the Afghan foreign minister that China will support the Kabul Process so as to make the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process a success. Rabbani meanwhile said that in order to have peace and stability in Afghanistan, regional cooperation and consensus was needed. He said China has played a good role in regional cooperation in this regard.⁵⁵
- **Ghani Inaugurates First Air Corridor with India** - The much-anticipated Afghanistan-India Air Corridor was inaugurated by President Ashraf Ghani on June 19, 2017, when the first Delhi-bound cargo plane with 60 tonnes of medicinal plants left Kabul. During the inaugural ceremony at the Presidential Palace, Ghani underlined the importance of the project. Top government officials, the Indian ambassador, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce (ACCI) representatives and some businessmen were in attendance. Ghani said the corridor was aimed to create more opportunities and make Afghanistan an exporter. As long as Afghanistan was not transformed into an exporter, people's poverty could not be mitigated, the president believed. "The temporary solution couldn't meet fundamental issues of the country

⁵⁴ "Trump administration to close special envoy's office for Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Khaama Press*, 24 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/trump-administration-to-close-special-envoys-office-for-afghanistan-and-pakistan-03016> accessed on 25 June 2017.

⁵⁵ "China's FM Meets Rabbani In Follow Up Of Shanghai Summit", *Tolo News*, 24 June 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/china%E2%80%99s-fm-meets-rabbani-follow-shanghai-summit> accessed on 25 June 2017.

in this regard; therefore, steps were taken to implement the Afghan-Indian Air Corridor scheme.”⁵⁶

- **MPs Worried About ‘Infiltrators’ In Parliament** - A number of lawmakers on June 20, 2017, asked the administrative board of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) and security agencies to identify and disclose enemy-affiliated individuals in parliament. On 19th June, Nilofar Ibrahim, an MP, claimed that one member of the Wolesi Jirga and a member of the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of the Parliament) are suspected of cooperating with insurgents. “The names of a lawmaker and a senator have been taken and it’s said that they have brought suicide bombers. This issue must be clarified whether it is investigated by the National Directorate of Security or the administrative board (of the Wolesi Jirga),” said Lalai Hamidzai, an MP from Kandahar.⁵⁷
- **Afghanistan Announces Parliament Elections Date Scheduled for 7 July 2018** - The Afghanistan Independent Elections Commission (IEC) announced the date for the long waited parliamentary elections. IEC chief Najibullah Ahmadzai said the parliamentary elections date has been set for the July 7th of 2018. He made the announcement during a press conference in Kabul this evening, urging the government to assist with the arrangement funds for the elections. This comes as the government has stepped up efforts to organize the long-delayed parliamentary and district council’s elections. In a major move to pave the way for a fair and transparent election, the Afghan government modified the census law in a bid to help distribution of the electronic ID cards to ensure a transparent election.⁵⁸
- **Pakistan Affecting Afghanistan Stability: Pentagon** - The Pentagon on June 20, 2017, said Pakistan was ‘the most influential’ external actor affecting Afghan stability and the military alliance’s mission. “Pakistan views the outcome of Afghanistan to be in its vital national interest and thus remains driven by its India-centric regional

⁵⁶ “Ghani Inaugurates First Air Corridor with India”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 20, 2017. http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18460 (accessed on 27 June 2017)

⁵⁷ Massoud Ansar, “MPs Worried About ‘Infiltrators’ In Parliament”, *Tolo News*, June 21, 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mps-worried-about-%E2%80%98infiltrators%E2%80%99-parliament> (accessed on 27 June 2017)

⁵⁸ “Afghanistan Announces Parliament Elections Date Scheduled for 7 July 2018”, *Khaama Press*, June 22, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-announces-parliament-elections-date-scheduled-for-7-july-2018-03005> (accessed on 27 June 2017)

policy objectives,” the Pentagon said in its six monthly report to the Congress. It said the Afghan-oriented militant groups, including the Taliban and Haqqani Network, retained freedom of action inside Pakistani territory and benefited from support from elements of the Pakistani government. “Although Pakistani military operations have disrupted some militant sanctuaries, certain extremist groups --- such as the Taliban and the Haqqani Network -- were able to relocate and continue to operate in and from Pakistan.”⁵⁹

- **China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Agree To Dialogue Mechanism** - China, Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to form a foreign minister’s dialogue mechanism, said a joint statement issued by the three foreign ministries. This comes after China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Afghanistan and Pakistan over the weekend. During this visit the three sides held in-depth discussions on the situation in Afghanistan, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan and China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral cooperation.⁶⁰

Bangladesh

- **World Bank for VAT law implementation** - The World Bank on Tuesday (June 20) said it believes implementation of the VAT law will not push up inflation rates in Bangladesh. However, it also heavily criticised the finance minister’s proposal of imposing excise duty on bank deposit, saying such move will discourage people to use the banking channel. During a briefing in Dhaka, Qimiao Fan, country director of the global lender, also warned the government by saying that the implementation of the VAT Act 2012 was absolutely critical to meet the very ambitious fiscal targets set in the proposed budget.⁶¹

⁵⁹ “Pakistan Affecting Afghanistan Stability: Pentagon”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 22, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18481 (accessed on 27 June 2017)

⁶⁰ “China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Agree To Dialogue Mechanism”, *Tolo News*, June 26, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/china-afghanistan-pakistan-agree-dialogue-mechanism> (accessed on 27 June 2017).

⁶¹ Ibrahim Hossain Ovi, “World Bank for VAT law implementation, slams excise duty on deposit,” *Dhaka Tribune*, June 20, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2017/06/20/wb-vat-law-excise-duty/> (accessed on June 20, 2017)

- **Hasan Mahmud attacked Fakhrul's motorcade: BNP** - Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Tuesday (June 20) alleged that Awami League leader Hasan Mahmud attacked its secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's motorcade in Chittagong at the behest of Sheikh Hasina. Speaking at a human-chain programme, BNP's Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said that Hasan Mahmud was making comments over the incidents like a professional.⁶²
- **Bangladeshi UN official charged with fraud, underpaying worker** - Prosecutors have accused a United Nations employee in New York of committing visa fraud by bringing into the country a domestic worker from Bangladesh and then failing to pay her a lawful wage. Hamidur Rashid, a Bangladeshi national, was charged with visa fraud, fraud in foreign labour contracting and aggravated identity theft in a criminal complaint unsealed on Tuesday (June 20) in Manhattan federal court. Hamidur Rashid, 50, appeared at a brief court hearing on Tuesday afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge James Cott, and was released on bail.⁶³
- **BEZA plans 1,000MW solar power zone** - Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has planned to set up a solar power zone for generating at least 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity, official sources said. "The authority has started the process of acquiring around 4,000 acres of land at Baher Char in Chandpur district to develop the solar zone, which will be the country's biggest hub for solar power."⁶⁴
- **Khaleda calls for polls under supportive govt** - BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia on Monday (June 26) said the next national election must be held under a supportive government with army deployment, to install a pro-people administration to end public sufferings and ensure good governance. She observed that people are celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr this time without any festivity and zeal due to the

⁶² Hasan Mahmud attacked Fakhrul's motorcade: BNP," *Prothom Alo*, June 20, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/151675/Hasan-Mahmud-attacked-Fakhrul-s-motorcade-BNPv> (accessed on June 20, 2017)

⁶³ "Bangladeshi UN official in NY charged with visa fraud, underpaying worker," *Prothom Alo*, June 21, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/151711/Another-Bangladesh-official-in-NY-charged-with> (accessed on June 21, 2017)

⁶⁴ "BEZA plans 1,000MW solar power zone," *The Daily Star*, June 24, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/beza-plans-solar-zone-1000mw-electricity-1424575> (accessed on June 24, 2017)

government's misrule, repression and failure to arrest the soaring prices of essentials and deliver.⁶⁵

Pakistan

- **Iranian Drone in Pakistan** - Foreign Office confirmed on June 21st that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had downed an 'unmarked' Iranian drone that had intruded into its airspace on June 19th in Panjgur sector of Balochistan on the Pak-Iran border. Iran was intimidated about the downed drone.⁶⁶
- **Pakistan and the Gulf Crisis** - Acting Saudi ambassador Marwan bin Radwan Mirdad has denied that Pakistan is mediating between Saudi Arabia and Qatar over their diplomatic row. Speaking at a press conference at the Saudi embassy on June 22nd, the Saudi charge d'affaires said Pakistani "prime minister did not say he was mediating". The acting ambassador's statement puts the prime minister in a potentially embarrassing position. The PM's Office had, in a statement before Mr Sharif's departure on the mediation mission, said: "Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will visit Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today in context of the emergent situation among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries." It has been noted that the prime minister's mediation effort was not encouraged by the Saudi royal family. Saudi king Salman bin Abdul Aziz had told Mr Sharif that "the fight against extremism and terrorism is in the interest of all Muslims and the Ummah".⁶⁷
- **Yadav appeals to Pak Army Chief** - Convicted Kulbhushan Jadhav has filed a mercy petition with Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa. Seeking forgiveness for his actions he has requested the Chief of Army Staff to spare his life on compassionate grounds. Jadhav had 40 days to appeal before an army court before the conviction

⁶⁵ "Khaleda calls for polls under supportive govt," *Prothom Alo*, June 26, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/152157/Khaleda-calls-for-polls-under-supportive-govt> (accessed on June 26, 2017)

⁶⁶ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "FO confirms downing of Iran's drone in Panjgur", *Dawn*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1340956> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁶⁷ "Saudi envoy denies Pakistani mediation in Gulf row", *Dawn*, June 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341217> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

was awarded. Now, if Gen Bajwa does not accept his appeal, he will have another 90 days to seek clemency from the president of Pakistan.⁶⁸

- **Visa for Chinese Nationals** - In order to regulate the process of issuing visas to Chinese nationals, the Ministry of Interior on June 21st decided to tighten the relaxed visa regime, especially for Chinese citizens visiting Pakistan on business or work-related visas. The strict visa policy has been introduced not only to plug loopholes, but also to ensure maximum security to Chinese citizens visiting Pakistan on various visa categories. Taking note of a few incidents where forged documents of ghost companies were presented to embassies, the ministry decided that in the future, business visas and visas-upon-arrival would only be granted to those Chinese nationals who could produce invitations or assignment letters. The letters would have to be certified and endorsed by a recognised chamber of commerce and industry, and accompanied by a letter from commercial attachés and other designated officers of Pakistan posted abroad for the promotion of business activities. The powers of regional passport offices to grant visa extension would be immediately withdrawn, and in the future, all cases regarding a grant of extension to business visas would be dealt with at the IMPASS (Immigration and Passport) headquarters in Islamabad.⁶⁹
- **Gen Bajwa on Terrorism** – In view of the terrorist attacks in Quetta, Parachinar and Karachi, Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa defended on June 24th the performance of the military and other law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism and also hit out at the international critics of Pakistani counterterrorism effort, saying others — not Pakistan — needed to do more against terrorism. The Quetta attack was claimed by militant Islamic State ground, whereas IS-affiliated Lashkar-i-Jhangvi accepted responsibility for the other two strikes.⁷⁰

⁶⁸BaqirSajjad Syed, “Convicted Indian spy petitions army chief for mercy”, *Dawn*, June 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341219> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁶⁹“Pakistan to tighten visa regime with China”, *Dawn*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1340965> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷⁰BaqirSajjad Syed, “COAS defends efforts in fight against terrorism”, *Dawn*, June 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341607> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

West Asia

Israel

- **Israel and Syria** - Several mortar shells exploded in an open area in the Golan Heights near the border with Syria on June 24th, the Israeli army said, leading to retaliatory air strikes. The army said the mortars appeared to be errant fire from Syrian factions fighting each other across the border. Around 10 impacts were identified in Israeli territory, around the Quneitra area.⁷¹ Israel carried on a second attack on Syrian army units in the northern Golan Heights on June 25th as well when mortar shells fell in Israeli territory. The Israeli army struck a Syrian army ammunition truck and two artillery guns in the Syrian Golan.⁷² The Israel military declared a border-adjacent area in the Golan Heights temporarily off-limits to civilians on June 26th. Defense Minister Avidgor Liberman said on June 26th that Israel has “no intention of launching a military operation” against Syria or rebel groups operating within it even as tensions have spiraled in recent days.⁷³
- **New West Bank Settlement after 25 Years** - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced June 20th that ground had been broken for the construction of the first Israeli West Bank settlement in 25 years. The new settlement, to be known as Amichai, is to accommodate residents of the illegal Amona outpost, which was evacuated in February in line with court orders because it was built on private Palestinian land. The new settlement — which will be located near the settlements of Shiloh and Eli, north of Ramallah — will be the first of its kind to be constructed since the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo peace accords were signed in 1993. Netanyahu is treading a fine line between US President Donald Trump’s request in February to “hold back” on settlement activity so as not to jeopardize peace moves and constant pressure from right-wing members of his party and

⁷¹ “Syrian shells land in Golan Heights, sparking IDF strikes”, *The Times of Israel*, June 24, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/shells-from-syria-land-in-golan-heights-no-injuries/> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷² Noa Shpigel and Jack Houry, “Israel Strikes Syrian Army in Second Flare-up in Two Days”, *Haaretz*, June 25, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.797734> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷³ “Restive border area in Golan Heights closed off to civilians”, *The Times of Israel*, June 27, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/restive-border-area-in-golan-heights-closed-off-to-civilians/> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

coalition to expand settlement building and even to annex sections of the West Bank.⁷⁴

- **Israel and Hamas** - The Israeli Air Force targeted Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip on June 26th following an earlier rocket attack from the Hamas-controlled territory, according to a statement released by the IDF. The airstrikes targeted two military facilities belonging to Hamas in the north and south of the Gaza Strip.⁷⁵ Islamic State-affiliated group Ahfad al-Sahaba claimed responsibility for the firing of a rocket.⁷⁶

International Economic Issues

- **World Bank, AIIB to grant \$380 million to Andhra Pradesh power project**
On June 22, 2017, the World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) have together agreed to extend \$380 million of loan to Andhra Pradesh to build a reliable, quality and affordable power supply to citizens. In this direction, two grants amounting to \$240 million and \$140 million have been granted by the World Bank and the AIIB respectively. First, the Government of India (GoI), the World Bank and the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) signed a \$240 million loan agreement in New Delhi supporting the GoAP in supplying reliable, quality and affordable power 24X7 to its consumers. Second, the Asian AIIB also signed a \$140 million loan agreement with the GoAP for the project, which is the first in India being co-financed by the bank. The World Bank and AIIB will provide loans in the 60:40 ratio. This project is expected to improve operational efficiency in the transmission and distribution sector through modern technology such as automated substations and network analysis, and focus on demonstrating the deployment of smart grids in selected towns.⁷⁷
- **Prime Minister Modi calls for investment from top US companies**
On June 25, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a roundtable meeting with top US companies, which included CEO's from Apple, Google, Cisco and Amazon, pitched India as an investment platform. He said that India has emerged as a business-friendly destination, particularly with the forthcoming implementation of the landmark Goods

⁷⁴ Sue Surkes & Jacob Magid, "Ground broken for first new West Bank settlement in 25 years", *The Times of Israel*, June 20, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/ground-broken-for-first-new-west-bank-settlement-in-25-years/> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷⁵ "Israel Strikes Hamas Targets Following Gaza Rocket Attack", *The Jerusalem Post*, June 27, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Israel-strikes-Hamas-targets-following-Gaza-rocket-attack-498019> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷⁶ "Islamic State-Affiliated Group Claims Gaza Rocket Attack On Israel", *The Jerusalem Post*, June 27, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/IS-affiliated-group-claim-rocket-attack-on-Israel-498006> (accessed on June 27, 2017)

⁷⁷ "World Bank, AIIB to grant \$380 million to Andhra Pradesh power project", *The Economic Times*, June 23, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/world-bank-aiib-to-grant-380-million-to-andhra-pradesh-power-project/printarticle/59281266.cms>

and Services Tax (GST).⁷⁸ On this occasion, Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, expressing his gratitude for cooperation, briefed Prime Minister Modi on the manufacture of the iPhone SE in India and development of an app accelerator, for which 100,000 app creators are in India.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ “Modi Gets down to business in the US”, *Mint*, June 27, 2017.

⁷⁹ Shubhajit Roy, “No one else would have done it: Apple CEO to PM on note ban”, *The Indian Express*, June 27, 2017.