

Weekly Media Updates **(12-18 June, 2017)**

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Africa

- **AU Calls for Calm Amid Djibouti-Eritrea Border Tensions¹**

The African Union (AU) has urged Djibouti and Eritrea to show "restraint" as tensions over a disputed border territory intensified and threatened to revive a longstanding dispute.

Djibouti on Friday accused Eritrean soldiers of occupying territory in the contested Doumeira region following the departure of Qatari peacekeepers from the location earlier this week.

Doumeira is situated northeast of Djibouti and east of Eritrea near the Bab el-Mandeb strait, a strategic waterway at the foot of the Red Sea through which nearly four million barrels of oil are shipped daily to Europe, the United States and Asia.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU commission chairperson, said on Saturday that the union would send a "fact-finding mission to the Djibouti-Eritrea border". He further said that the AU is "ready to assist Djibouti and Eritrea to normalise their relations and promote good neighbourliness within the framework of relevant AU instruments.

Qatar announced that it was pulling its contingent out on June 14, days after the two East African countries sided with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and their allies in a major diplomatic standoff with Doha.

Qatar's foreign ministry did not give a reason for the move.

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssef said on Friday that his country's army was "on alert" and accused Eritrea of "moving its forces" into the Doumeira region where Qatari peacekeepers had been stationed since 2010 as a buffer between the two nations' armies. In a statement issued on Saturday, Eritrea did not address the allegations directly, saying it would not respond to "news - factual and speculative - churned out in the last few days". The statement said "the government of Eritrea will make its views known when it obtains full information of the entire episode."

Djibouti, a close Western ally, has repeatedly clashed with Eritrea over the disputed territory, raising fears that the spat could engulf the entire region.

Clashes broke out between the Horn of Africa countries in June, 2008, which triggered several days of fighting that killed a dozen Djiboutian troops.

Eritrea had initially denied making any incursions, accusing Djibouti of launching unprovoked attacks.

¹ Aljazeera (Doha), 17 June 2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201706180030.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta

The UN Security Council then requested both sides withdraw from the area, before the neighbours accepted a Qatari request to mediate and deploy peacekeepers.

- **Record Hunger in Horn of Africa Pushes Development Banks to Step In²**

With a record-breaking 26.5 million people going hungry in the Horn of Africa, a high level Mission said that development banks are increasing their humanitarian funding to fill a gap left by traditional donors.

Food rations for 7.8 million Ethiopians are due to run out in July due to funding shortages, while neighbouring Somalia is on the verge of its second famine in six years.

In an unprecedented move, the World Bank is giving \$50 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to distribute emergency food, water and cash in Somalia.

Consecutive failed rains have led to widespread crop failures, hurting farmers and livestock herders across the region, many of whom are hungry and on the move in search of grazing, water and work.

The African Development Bank (ADB) has also announced \$1.1 billion to combat drought in six countries, mostly in the Horn of Africa.

The U.N. says the greatest needs are in Ethiopia, where numbers are predicted to rise due to poor spring rains, and South Sudan, where 5.5 million are short of food, with some areas already in famine.

In a "Grand Bargain", struck at last year's World Humanitarian Summit, donors promised to make their funding more flexible to respond to growing humanitarian crises globally.

- **Japan Prepares Grant Aid for Zimbabwe³**

The Government of Japan has started preparing full-scale grant aid for Zimbabwe while also further strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

This follows President Mugabe's historic visit to Japan where he met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In a joint statement the two leaders agreed to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries and Japan pledged to continue supporting Zimbabwe's development efforts.

As a result, Japan has since resumed provision of grant aid to Zimbabwe for the first time in 15 years, funding the Nyakomba Irrigation Project at a cost of \$16 million.

² Thomson Reuters Foundation, 13 June 2017.

http://allafrica.com/stories/201706160795.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt

³ The herald, Zimbabwe, 15 June 2017,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201706150480.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabonoo

Since 2000, the economic co-operation between the two countries declined somewhat. However, the Japanese government resumed aid to Zimbabwe in 2010.

Japan has pledged to continue supporting Zimbabwe's development agenda," Embassy of Japan to Zimbabwe Counsellor Kenji Miyagawa told The Herald Business.

He said since 1980, the Japanese government has provided economic corporation assistance to Zimbabwe and this has included loan assistance, grant aid, technical corporation and food aid. Mr Miyagawa said in providing assistance, the Asian country's goal is to improve the basic infrastructure, including agriculture infrastructure, medical facilities and roads.

He said, from 1980 to 2015, Japan has provided loans to Zimbabwe amounting to \$340 million and grant aid totalling \$540 million. In terms of technical co-operation, Japan has received over 1600 Zimbabwean professionals for training and has dispatched its experts to Zimbabwe.

Furthermore around 500 Japan Overseas Corporation Volunteers have contributed their skills in Zimbabwe. Mr Miyagawa further said that Japan has provided assistance both technical and financial amounting to approximately \$182 million.

The total amount of Japan's assistance to Zimbabwe amounts to over \$1 billion. Mr Miyagawa said Government has also made a proposal for a grant aid for the establishment of the Cyber-Crime Management Centre.

Central Asia

- **Tajikistan President Visits Armenia**

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon paid a two-day visit to Armenia on 14-15 June 2017. He held discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual importance with President Serzh Sargsyan. The two countries are commemorating the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement. In the meeting, greater economic cooperation was suggested through establishing direct links between the economic bodies of Tajikistan and Armenia. The potential areas identified include hydropower, mining, light and food industries, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, transport and communications, and tourism. The leaders urged business communities to avail the free economic zones facilities to set up industrial enterprises in different areas, such as agricultural products, cotton, stones and precious metals, and production of household utensils.⁴ After the talks, the President of Armenia said that Armenian-Tajik relations have reached a new 'historical stage' today.⁵

⁴ President of Tajikistan, "Summit meetings and talks between Tajikistan and Armenia," 14 June 2017, <http://www.president.tj/en/node/15575>

⁵ President of Armenia, "Armenian-Tajik High-Level Talks Held at Ra Presidency," 14 June 2017, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2017/06/14/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-President-Emomali-Rahmon-announcement-for-Mass-Media/>

The two countries signed the following agreements during the visit: agreement on mutual visits of citizens; agreement on air communication; programme of cooperation between the foreign ministries of the two countries; agreement on cooperation in telecommunications and postal communication; agreement on mutual recognition and compatibility of qualifications of education, academic degrees and titles; agreement on cooperation in healthcare; agreement about youth affairs and sports; agreement on prosecutor general's offices of the two countries; agreement between the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan and Academy of Sciences of Armenia.⁶

- **Dubai's DP World and Kazakhstan Sign Deal for Faster Transition of Goods**

The government of Kazakhstan has signed two MoUs with the DP World of Dubai for building 'Port Community System' (PCS) for Eurasian transcontinental trade corridor.⁷ According to the Media Release by the DP World, PCS is an electronic platform for exchanging information between organizations involved in maritime, inland and airport processes. It leads to business ease in ports and free zones by paperless transactions.

Kazakhstan is the largest country in the landlocked Central Asia. It wants to emerge as a corridor for transportation of goods between Asia and Europe. Kazakhstan and India are also members of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The integrated process in Kazakhstan can also help accelerate sending of goods via Kazakhstan through the INSTC as PCS aims to develop the 'Eurasian transcontinental corridor'.

East Asia /South-East Asia

(ASEAN, South East Asia, Vietnam)

- **Partnership for Counter-Terrorist Operations in Southeast Asia**

According to the Indonesia's TNI – its counter terrorism mechanism – radicalism has spread to almost all provinces in Indonesia except for Papua, and the country's military is beefing up security in the Sulawesi border area amid a siege in the Southern Philippine city of Marawi. In all these provinces there exist sleeper cells which till now remain inactive; however, there are possibilities that these sleeper cells may resort to action when triggered. Maj Gen Warsito, a territorial military commander overseeing Sulawesi and the border Philippines, said such citizens may harbour ISIS fighters from the Philippines if any crossed over from Indonesia. He also added that security has been stepped up by setting up more military bases in the outlying areas on the border and reinforcement was sent to all other islands in the area.⁸ According to the Indonesian

⁶ President of Armenia, "Joint Statement on the Results of the Official Visit Paid to the Republic of Armenia by President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan," 14 June 2017, <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2017/06/14/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-President-Emomali-Rahmon-signed-joint-statement/>

⁷ DP World, "DP World and Kazakhstan to Build Port Community System for Eurasian Transcontinental Trade Corridor", 15 June 2017, http://web.dpworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017_06_15_MoU-Signing-Astana-Economic-Forum_PR_ENG-002.pdf

⁸"Terror cells in most Indonesia provinces now: Military", *The Straits Times*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/terror-cells-in-most-indonesian-provinces-now-military>, accessed on June 14, 2017.

Military Chief, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines will start conducting a joint maritime patrol in the Sulu Sea between eastern Malaysia and the Philippines. The move to patrol the waters off the southern Philippines comes amid recent efforts by the three Southeast Asian countries to fight against operation such as cross-border kidnapping for ransom by rebels based in the Southern Philippines. These rebels are linked to the notoriously violent Abu Sayyaf rebel group based in southern Philippines. It borders the three nations and is presumed to promote an independent Islamic State comprising part of Mindanao Island and the Sulu archipelago in the Philippines.⁹

This was also reiterated by Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryawdu. He stated that during his meeting with his counterparts from the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore, next week, would discuss the overall threat from IS to the region. In particular focus would be on finding ways to prevent the IS-linked Maute insurgents holding part of Marawi in the Southern Philippines from crossing over to Indonesia.¹⁰ On June 17, 2017, Philippine troops launched air strikes and artillery at the militant occupied Southern Marawi, taking the death toll to more than 300. Philippines President Duterte, said that the presence of foreign fighters from the Islamic State group among the militants in Marawi has made the fighting more difficult.¹¹

- **ASEAN- China hold first ever Business Forum**

The 1st China-Southeast Asia Business Forum was officially launched on June 13, 2017, in Kunming. The meeting aimed to strengthen the manufacturing sector including cooperation on energy, trade partnership, investment in manufacturing, and cooperation among businesses on information exchange in order to ensure businesses have better access to investment. Chinese investment in for instance in Laos, so far has been limited to manufacturing, agriculture, trade centres, hotels, and tourism. According to Mr Thanongsin Kanlaya, VP of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Laos, there are other potential for investment in sectors such as energy, mining, agriculture, logistics, trade, transnational transport and connectivity.¹² Lao government's strategy is to make Laos the battery of ASEAN, thus it is seeking investment into tapping its energy potential. The government is considering the development of almost twenty hydropower dams in Vientiane province, at an estimated investment of over 9.2 trillion kip or US \$ 1.2 trillion. Presently, five dams are in operation with a total capacity of 315 MW, four are under construction and fifteen are awaiting the signing of MoUs and the documentation process.¹³ Meanwhile, Dr Rebecca Fatima, Senior policy fellow of the Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia

⁹"Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines to begin joint patrol", *Bangkok Post*, June 13, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1267706/indonesia-malaysia-philippines-to-begin-joint-patrol>, accessed on June 13, 2017.

¹⁰"Nations to talk over IS threat", *The Star online*, June 16, 2017, <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2017/06/16/nations-to-talk-over-is-threat-we-can-update-each-other-and-be-ready-if-anything-happens/>, accessed on June 16, 2017.

¹¹"Philippine troops pound militants, toll passes 300", *Borneo Bulletin*, June 18, 2017, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/philippine-troops-pound-militants-toll-passes-300/>, accessed on June 19, 2017.

¹²"China, ASEAN discuss Strengthening Trade and Investment", *Lao News Agency*, June 14, 2017, <http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=25336>, accessed on June 15, 2017.

¹³"Almost 20 hydropower Plants expected to be built in Vientiane", *Lao News Agency*, June 14, 2017, <http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=25329>, accessed on June 15, 2017.

is of the opinion that the successful completion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is the only instrument to improve Asia's economic performance and for demonstrating collective non-hegemonic Asian leadership on global economic openness.¹⁴

- **South China Sea Dispute Addressed by Vietnam**

At the 9th Annual Vietnam-Russia Strategic Dialogue the two sides agreed to address disputes in the East Sea of the South China Sea in a peaceful manner based on respect for international law, first on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea and forge ahead Code of Conduct in the East Sea. The two nations also agreed to foster information exchange, cooperation in the field of security-defence, science and technology, trading-economy, education-training, culture and tourism, and promote close cooperation at multilateral forums especially at UN and ASEAN-Russia framework.¹⁵ Further, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang, while answering a question about reports that China is in the process of militarising islands in the Truong (Spratly) and Hoang Sa (Paracel), stated that China needs to act responsibly and constructively to maintain peace and stability in the region and the East Sea on the bases of international law. She also added that Vietnam has sufficient legal foundation and historical evidence affirming its sovereignty over them.¹⁶ This comes at a time when Philippines Special Envoy for Inter-Cultural Dialogue Jose De Venecia, stated that the Philippines should venture into an oil drilling programme in the South China Sea with other countries in order to prevent war. He stressed that the contested waters are not owned by the Philippines, China or any other claimant country. He noted that other countries have had successful mutual drilling agreements such as the joint operating agreement in the North Sea between Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom. President Rodrigo Duterte, also plans to review its current policy towards China in order to reduce tension in the South China Sea and improve economic cooperation between Manila and Beijing.¹⁷ Last month the head of President Duterte's legal team stated that, under Article 12 Section 2 of the Constitution, the president can enter into international agreements with foreign corporations for the exploration and utilization of mineral resources as provided by the law. Thus, President Duterte's legal team believes that conducting joint exploration between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea is not tantamount to conceding sovereignty.¹⁸

¹⁴"RCEP trade talks the only game in town for ASEAN", *The Myanmar Times*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/asean-focus/26349-rcep-trade-talks-the-only-game-in-town-for-asean.html>, accessed on June 13, 2016.

¹⁵"Vietnam, Russia hold Strategic dialogue and political consultation", *Vietnam News*, June 15, 2017, <http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/378369/viet-nam-russia-hold-strategic-dialogue-and-political-consultation.html#uDmUyLflwez4pmSz.97>, accessed on June 15, 2017.

¹⁶"VN urges China to act responsibly", *Vietnam News*, June 16, 2017, <http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/378438/vn-urges-china-to-act-responsibly.html#FmEUzgmTGfKf7W2.97>, accessed on June 16, 2017.

¹⁷ Patricia Lourdes Viray, "De Venecia pushes joint oil drilling in South China Sea", *Phil Star Global*, June 13, 2017, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/06/13/1709628/de-venecia-pushes-joint-oil-drilling-south-china-sea>, accessed on June 16, 2017.

¹⁸ Alexis Romero, "Joint exploration does not mean conceding SCS claims" *Phil Star Global*, May 19, 2017, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/05/19/1701458/joint-exploration-does-not-mean-conceding-scs-claims>, accessed on June 16, 2017.

North America

Canada

- **Canada's political parties, media vulnerable to foreign hacks, spy agency says**

Canada's Communications Security Establishment said it expects multiple groups will "deploy cyber capabilities" in order to influence the outcome of the next federal election. CSE's assessment is largely an outline of the different types of "cyber threats" to Canada's electoral process — such as distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks that knock down websites or spear-phishing campaigns that dupe people into opening a virus disguised as an email attachment. The good news is Canada's low-tech, largely paper-based electoral system appears to be largely safe from the kind of hacks seen in other countries. Ballots are paper, voter lists at polling stations are paper-based, and CSE officials say the elections agency has strong cyber defences in place. The bad news is that politicians, political parties, and traditional and social media are much more vulnerable to hacking and influence operations.¹⁹

- **Canada may lead regional effort to address Venezuelan crisis**

Canada could lead a regional effort to address the crisis in Venezuela, according to sources with knowledge of the diplomatic efforts in the South American country. Earlier this week, Peru's Foreign Minister Ricardo Luna publicly floated the idea of Justin Trudeau acting as a mediator for the Venezuelan crisis, citing the Prime Minister's "global power role," according to reports out of the country. The proposal comes after Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski recommended an international arbitration process to preserve democracy and avoid a "bloodbath" and refugee crisis in Venezuela. More than 70 people have died in 12 weeks of street protests across the country, which began after Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro attempted to strip the opposition-dominated Congress of its powers. However, experts say Venezuela is unlikely to accept Canada's help – or any foreign government's assistance for that matter – right now. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez tweeted on Tuesday that Venezuela rejects Peru's promotion of an international intervention.²⁰

- **Canada's Cuba Stance Not Changed By Trump Change Of Policy**

It will be business as usual for Canada and Cuba despite a renewed hardening of relations between the communist island nation and the United States, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said. While noting that Canada has long taken a softer line with Cuba than U.S. governments, Trudeau said he doesn't expect the renewed economic and travel restrictions would hurt Canadian business and tourism ties with Cuba. Trudeau said there have been no conversations

¹⁹ The Toronto Star, "Canada's political parties, media vulnerable to foreign hacks, spy agency says," <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/06/16/canadas-political-parties-media-vulnerable-to-foreign-hacks-spy-agency-says.html>, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

²⁰ Michelle Zilio And Stephanie Nolen, "Canada may lead regional effort to address Venezuelan crisis: sources," <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-may-lead-regional-effort-to-address-venezuelan-crisis-sources/article35355244/>, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

with Cuban officials about what role Canada might play in helping to foster a better U.S.-Cuba relationship.²¹

The United States

- **Missing sailors found dead in flooded compartments on US Navy destroyer**

The US navy says seven crew members that were missing have been found dead and at least three injured after a destroyer, the USS Fitzgerald, collided with ACX Crystal, a Philippine-flagged merchant vessel off the coast of Japan. The coastguard said none of the 20 crew members on board the merchant vessel were injured. It was unclear how the collision south of Tokyo Bay happened. There would be multiple investigations into the collision, including one by the Navy's Judge Advocate General and one by the US Coast Guard.

Other investigations could come from the Japanese and Philippine authorities because of where the accident took place and the Philippine registry of the container ship.²²

- **As U.S. Adds Troops in Afghanistan, Trump's Strategy Remains Undefined**

The decision to send additional troops represents at least a temporary victory for Mr. Mattis and Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser, over Mr. Trump's aides, including his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, who had warned that sending more troops was a slippery slope toward nation building, anathema to nationalists like him who reject both the interventionist neoconservatives of the George W. Bush administration and the limited war fought by Mr. Obama. Those objections stymied the troop proposal several weeks ago. But officials said the White House was rattled by a huge truck bomb in Kabul, the Afghan capital, that killed more than 150, as well as by fears that military trends are running against the government of President Ashraf Ghani, an American-friendly former World Bank official, to the point that it might be in danger of collapse. The White House does not plan to complete before mid-July. Among the major questions are how to deal with the sanctuaries that the Taliban and other militants still have in neighboring Pakistan, how to fight Afghanistan's endemic corruption, and how to encourage a political settlement with the Taliban.²³

- **Tillerson Skips Mexico Trip to Focus on Gulf Crisis Talks**

Efforts to end a two-week-old crisis in the Persian Gulf shifted to the U.S., with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson canceling a trip to Mexico to try to end a Saudi-led coalition's isolation of Qatar. The foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, which is part of the coalition, affirmed a need for a strong Western role in resolving the dispute, telling the Guardian newspaper in the U.K. that any agreement would have to be overseen by "Western allies." Kuwait and Turkey have been trying to mediate the dispute, which erupted over Qatar's ties to Iran and Islamist groups, but their attempts stalled as Qatar awaited a list of demands from Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. Tillerson's efforts have been hindered by mixed messages from the administration. The secretary

²¹ Terry Pedwell, "Canada's Cuba Stance Not Changed By Trump Change Of Policy," http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/06/16/canada-cuba_n_17169720.html, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

²² Brad Lendon, Barbara Starr and Steve Almasy, "Missing sailors found dead in flooded compartments on US Navy destroyer," <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/17/us/missing-sailors-found/index.html>, Accessed on 17 June 2017.

²³ Mark Landler and Michael R. Gordon, "As U.S. Adds Troops in Afghanistan, Trump's Strategy Remains Undefined," https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/18/world/asia/us-troops-afghanistan-trump.html?_r=0, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

of state initially called on Saudi Arabia to ease what he called “the blockade” on June 9, only to have Trump, at a White House news conference hours later, say the move had been the right one. The Trump administration’s position was clouded further this week when the Defense Department announced that Qatar would sign a \$12 billion deal to buy as many as 36 F-15 jets from the U.S.²⁴

Mexico

- **Mexico seeks OAS resolution to end violence in Venezuela**

Mexico said that it will push for the Organization of American States (OAS) at an upcoming meeting to call for an end to violence in Venezuela and for a peaceful resolution to a recent wave of protests that has left over 60 people dead. With international pressure mounting on President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government, foreign ministers from the 34-nation OAS bloc met in Washington to debate the situation in Venezuela. The meeting was adjourned after the Bahamas representative on behalf of the Caribbean Community (Caricom) proposed the meeting be suspended and that permanent representatives of the OAS meet again to continue to flesh out proposals. Mexico's Foreign Ministry said it "will work to generate a resolution that will achieve enough votes, at least 24 votes in favor of the 34 member states," when the OAS holds its general assembly on June 19-21 in Mexico's Caribbean resort city of Cancun.²⁵

- **Mexico needs healing’: the first indigenous woman to run for president**

María de Jesús Patricio Martínez has always had a gift for curing people’s ailments, an ability she attributes to her close connection with the Earth. Patricio is renowned for preserving traditional indigenous medicine. But she is about to embark upon a much more ambitious mission: healing a country that has been torn apart by rampant violence, political corruption and economic inequality. Mexico’s National Indigenous Congress – a broad coalition of native ethnic groups – and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) have nominated Patricio to represent them in next year’s presidential election. If they gather enough signatures to ratify her nomination, she will become the first indigenous woman ever to run for president in Mexico.²⁶

Latin American and Caribbean

Argentina

- **Argentina joins Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**

Argentina has joined Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Venezuela to become the sixth Latin American member of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In need of further international financial assistance and under pressure after settling a debt crisis, President Mauricio Macri’s administration made this move to seek renewed channels for funding from the

²⁴ Nick Wadhams and Zainab Fattah, “Tillerson Skips Mexico Trip to Focus on Gulf Crisis Talks,” <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-06-18/gulf-crisis-mediation-shifts-to-u-s-as-tillerson-helms-talks>, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

²⁵ Reuters, “Mexico seeks OAS resolution to end violence in Venezuela,” <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-venezuela-idUSKBN18U013>, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

²⁶ Duncan Tucker, “Mexico needs healing’: the first indigenous woman to run for president,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/12/mexico-maria-de-jesus-patricio-martinez-indigenous-woman-president>, Accessed on 19 June 2017.

one-and-half-year-old multilateral financial institution. The AIIB's growth throughout Latin America shows the region's close relations with Asia as well as its intention to seek bilateral bonds, AIIB Vice President Sir Danny Alexander said on June 16, 2017 at the second annual meeting of AIIB board of governors in Jeju, South Korea. He further said that Latin American countries' intention to take part in the AIIB reflects the fact that AIIB commitments are global. Argentine President Macri had already praised the AIIB during his China trip in May 2017 at the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held, saying the bank serves as a good bond with China in pushing common development, enabling promotion of its infrastructure construction and exchanges.²⁷

Chile

- **U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to visit Chile in August 2017**

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has announced he will be travelling to Colombia, Argentina, Chile, and Panama on August 13-18. The Buenos Aires stop is expected to be particularly significant, with Argentina's hosting the 2018 G-20 Summit topping the agenda. The Trump administration insists it is determined to strengthen its ties with the region, despite a 2018 budget that proposes a significant cut in aid to those countries. Vice president Pence also spoke of US Hopes for "shared partnership" with Central America to halt illegal immigration, defeat gangs and transnational drug cartels, and end corruption. According to Pence, the United States is proud of the strong partnership with nations in the Northern Triangle. The US is committed to strengthening that partnership so that it can continue to address the significant problems facing its neighbourhood. Top US officials said what happens in the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala directly affects the security and economic interests of the US and other countries in the region.²⁸

Venezuela

- **Could Canada's PM Serve as the Next Mediator in Venezuela's Crisis?**

Peru's Foreign Minister Ricardo Luna has suggested that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau serve as a possible "mediator" of the crisis in Venezuela. According to Luna, Trudeau could preside over the international arbitration commission to "preserve democracy" in Venezuela, proposed by President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. According to Luna, the main reason for suggesting Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau is that he is currently holding a "global power role." In addition, the foreign minister said that "it is not necessary to obsess" over the idea that the Venezuelan crisis will be solved by the intervention of the Organization of American States. In Luna's opinion, the idea of creating a "contact group" composed of several countries seeking to resolve the situation could also prove effective. Peru President Kuczynski, also known as PPK, has proposed an arbitration process for the political, economic and social crisis in Venezuela that will avoid a "blood bath." PPK made it clear that it would not be interference but rather "an arbitration mechanism" to preserve democracy, "nothing more." According to the PPK, the priority is to secure the release of all political prisoners in Venezuela. Without that, he said, there is no chance at dialogue. PPK said, "If you do that, which is a very high priority, I think,

²⁷ "Argentina Joins Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank," June 17, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/17/argentina-joins-asian-infrastructure-investment-bank/>, Accessed on June 19, 2017

²⁸ "US Vice President Mike Pence to Visit Chile in August," June 17, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/17/u-s-vice-president-mike-pence-to-visit-chile-in-august/>, Accessed on June 19, 2017.

three countries that are friends of democracy can appoint some advisers and three countries on the other side can also name people. Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Peru, Chile, Colombia or Brazil. And that should be done as an arbitration.”²⁹

Cuba

- **Trump Partially Reverses Obama-Castro Deal, Demands Free Elections in Cuba and Release of Political Prisoners**

Trump demands “free elections” on the island, restrictions for Americans who travel there and suspension of transactions with the Cuban Army. The United States will change its policies toward Cuba, US President Donald Trump announced on June 16, 2017. The US will ask that the oppressive regime first make democratic progress before continuing a process of normalization, which was started by former President Barack Obama during his final months in office. Trump said he was putting the Castro regime “against the wall,” by not only demanding “free elections” on the island, but also the release of political prisoners. He also plans to restrict American travel, demand the release of political and freeze transactions with Cuban military forces. Cuba’s upcoming elections, scheduled for October 2017, are now being overseen by an electoral commission, but it’s still unclear whether they will meet the standards that Trump reportedly expects. Both Trump and Republican Senator Marco Rubio slammed former President Barack Obama for his failure to hold Raúl Castro’s regime to higher democratic standards. Trump said he will ask the Department of Treasury and Department of Commerce to develop regulations to prohibit US transactions with Cuba’s military, intelligence and security services. Transactions related to the operation of the US embassy in Havana, the operation of the Guantánamo naval base, the promotion of Cuban democracy and the expansion of telecommunications access to the Cuban people, will also be exempt from the policy, an unnamed official said. American travel, which has spiked in recent months following Obama’s looser restrictions, will once again become very difficult. It will still be possible to travel to Cuba under the twelve categories of travel allowed by the Treasury, but Americans must keep receipts and travel documents to facilitate government auditing.³⁰

- **Cuba denounces continuation of blockade at UN**

On June 13, 2017, Cuba denounced the continuation of the United States economic, commercial, financial blockade and its extraterritorial reach, an example of which was the fine recently levied against American Honda Finance Corporation’s (AHFC) Canadian subsidiary. Prensa Latina, Cuba’s permanent mission to the United Nations, reported that the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) imposed a fine of 87,255 dollars on the company for violating blockade regulations regarding Cuba. According to the diplomatic delegation, the sanction comes after the subsidiary approved and financed 13 agreements linked to car rentals by the Cuban Embassy in Canada from a Honda dealership in Ottawa, between February 2011 and March 2014. This is the first such a fine has been imposed under the government of Donald Trump who arrived to the White House on January 20, 2017 where his predecessor, Barack Obama previously announced the start of a process of rapprochement between the two

²⁹ <http://todayvenezuela.com/2017/06/14/could-canadas-pm-serve-as-the-next-mediator-in-venezuelas-crisis/>

³⁰ Sabrina Martin, “Trump Partially Reverses Obama-Castro Deal Demands Free Elections in Cuba and Release of Political Prisoners,” June 16, 2017, <https://panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2017/06/16/trump-partially-reverses-obama-castro-deal-demands-free-elections-in-cuba-and-release-of-political-prisoners/>, Accessed on June 19, 2017

countries, in December of 2014. Over the last two and half years, the U.S. government has imposed more than 2,842,000 dollars worth of fines against a total of 11 entities - six from the U.S. and four international - according to the Cuban mission. The delegation also highlighted that the latest fine is another on the long list of unilateral measures applied under the blockade, which after more than 50 years remains in force. Regarding the recent fine, the measure not only impacts the work of Cuban diplomats in third countries but also harms Canadian citizens and companies, noted the mission.³¹

Russia

- **Russia-India-Pakistan**

Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman Nafees Zakaria on June 15 in a statement welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin's reported offer to resolve tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi. He said that Pakistan welcomes Russia's attention and intention to play a role in this long-standing issue on the UNSC agenda. Zakaria said there was a growing realization among countries in the region and the UN that India's "unprovoked hostility" along the Jammu and Kashmir border threatened peace.³² However, India's External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Gopal Baglay on June 16 rejected the claims. He said that Russia has not made any mediation offer to resolve Indo-Pak issues and asserted that Moscow was "well aware" of New Delhi's position of bilateral resolution of all such matters in a terror-free environment. A senior diplomat in the Russian embassy in New Delhi rejected the reports and said it was Pakistan's "wishful thinking". The senior Russian diplomat in the Russian embassy rejected reports of any mediation offer. The diplomat said that "We do not have any information of such an offer made by our president. Russia is clear in its position that Indo-Pak issues need to be resolved, bilaterally, and we will never ever suggest anything contrary to that".³³

- **Russia and New Sanctions**

The US Senate on June 14 voted overwhelmingly to enact new sanctions against Russia and make it difficult for President Donald Trump to lift them. In a rare moment of bipartisan unity, the Senate voted 97 to two to approve the sanctions. The Russia sanctions amendment was added to an Iranian sanctions bill. The new Russia sanctions would create a congressional review process if the executive branch eases current sanctions. It also imposes new sanctions in a number of categories, including those "conducting malicious cyber activity on behalf of the Russian government" and "supplying weapons to the Assad regime." Democrats and many Republicans have been pushing for the Senate to adopt a new Russia sanctions measure in response to Russia's interference in the 2016 US elections and after reports the Trump administration is

³¹ Redaccion Digital, <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2017-06-13/cuba-denounces-continuation-of-blockade-at-un>

³²“Pakistan welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin offer to resolve Delhi-Islamabad tensions”, *Economic Times*, June 15, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pakistan-welcomes-russian-president-vladimir-putin-offer-to-resolve-delhi-islamabad-tensions/articleshow/59163370.cms> Accessed on June 19, 2017.

³³“India, Russia reject Pakistan's claim of mediation offer by Vladimir Putin”, *Economic Times*, June 16, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-reject-pakistans-claim-of-mediation-offer-by-vladimir-putin/articleshow/59173096.cms> Accessed on June 19, 2017.

considering easing sanctions on Moscow.³⁴ Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 17 has warned that new U.S. sanctions on Russia will damage ties between the two countries. Putin said that Russia would be forced to make changes because of the sanctions, but they wouldn't lead to a "collapse." The penalties have been criticized by Austria and Germany for promoting U.S. economic interests.³⁵

- **Russia-US-NATO**

Douglas Lute, former U.S. representative to NATO under President Obama, said in an interview on "This Week" on June 18 that the unpredictability of the Trump administration may open opportunities for opponents such as Putin sees the chance to "crack the NATO alliance." "I suspect he sees an opportunity to do what military force alone could never do, and that is crack the NATO alliance. If he can crack it politically or if he can provoke internal fissures inside the alliance, then Putin sees enormous opportunity to achieve a longstanding Russian goal," Lute said.³⁶

- **Russia-US-Cuba**

The Russian Foreign Ministry said on June 18 that "anti-Cuban" actions recently announced by Washington were regrettable and that Moscow confirmed its solidarity with Havana. The ministry also said that the new approach toward Cuba by the US administration resembles a "Cold war rhetoric". US President Donald Trump on June 16 ordered tighter restrictions on Americans travelling to Cuba and a clampdown on US business dealings with the Caribbean island's military, saying he was cancelling former President Barack Obama's "terrible and misguided deal" liberalizing ties with Havana.³⁷

- **Russia and the Arctic**

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. The company has sought tie-ups with several global oil players to develop Russia's offshore regions. But a deal to work in the Kara Sea in the western Arctic with U.S. company Exxon Mobil was suspended in 2014 after the imposition of Western sanctions against Moscow. "The result of the drilling at the Khatanga license block allows

³⁴[Jeremy Herb and Ashley Killough, "Senate approves new Russia sanctions", CNN, June 15, 2017. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/14/politics/senate-new-russia-sanctions/index.html Accessed on June 19, 2017.](http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/14/politics/senate-new-russia-sanctions/index.html)

³⁵["Putin: New sanctions will 'complicate' Russia-US ties", ABC News, June 17, 2017. http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/putin-sanctions-complicate-russia-us-ties-48101139 Accessed on June 19, 2017.](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/putin-sanctions-complicate-russia-us-ties-48101139)

³⁶[Nicki Rossoll, "Putin sees chance under Trump to 'crack the NATO alliance': Former US ambassador to NATO", ABC News, June 18, 2017. http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/putin-sanctions-complicate-russia-us-ties-48101139 Accessed on June 19, 2017.](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/putin-sanctions-complicate-russia-us-ties-48101139)

³⁷["Russia criticizes U.S. for 'anti-Cuban' approach, says it sides with Cuba", Reuters, June 18, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-cuba-idUSKBN1990A3 Accessed on June 19, 2017.](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-cuba-idUSKBN1990A3)

Rosneft to be considered the discoverer of (oil) fields in offshore Eastern Arctic," the company said in a statement. 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. Rosneft owns 28 blocks in the Arctic offshore area with combined estimated resources of 34 billion tonnes of oil equivalent. There is only one offshore platform in the Russian Arctic, Prirazlomnoye, operated by Gazprom Neft, which plans to produce 2.6 million tonnes (52,000 barrels per day) this year. Analysts say oil production in the region - apart from Prirazlomnoye - is years away and may start only in the mid-2020s³⁸

- **Russia and the Qatar Crisis**

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov told Qatar on June 10 of its concern over Arab nations cutting ties with the Gulf state and called for talks to solve the crisis. He told Qatar's foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani at talks in Moscow that "As a matter of policy we do not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or their bilateral relations with each other. But it does not give us joy when relations between our partners deteriorate." Lavrov said Moscow was ready to act "with the consent and the interest of the parties involved" to help resolve the diplomatic row.³⁹

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Saudi and Egypt seeks Hamid Karzai's support against Qatar** - The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt have sought the support of the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai in the stance the coalition of the Arab countries against Qatar. The Office of the former president in a statement said the Ambassador of Egypt and Charge d'Affaires of the Kingdom of Saudi met with Hamid Karzai to discuss the issue surrounding the sanctions imposed on Qatar. The statement further added that the two top diplomats of Saudi Arabia and Egypt demanded from the ex-president to declare his support in the isolation of Qatar. In his turn, Karzai called on unity among the Muslim nations but declared his support against any nation supporting or having links with the terrorism, the statement added. Several Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and some other states have supported the isolation and sanctions imposed by Saudi on

³⁸Vladimir Soldatkin, "Russia's Rosneft Finds Offshore Oilfield in Eastern Arctic", *Fortune*, June 18, 2017. <http://fortune.com/2017/06/18/russia-rosneft-oilfield-offshore-arctic/>
Accessed on June 19, 2017.

³⁹"Russia's Lavrov calls for talks to ease Qatar stand-off", *Reuters*, June 10, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-russia-idUSKBN1910ES>
Accessed on June 19, 2017.

Qatar. Qatar is accused of having links with the terrorist groups and relations with Iran, the two main reasons behind the step taken by certain Arab states to isolate the country and impose sanctions.⁴⁰

- **Afghan commandos deployed to clear the strategic Tora Bora from ISIS: MoD** - The Special Operations forces of the Afghan National Army, Afghan commandos, have been deployed to the strategic Tora Bora, days after the ISIS terrorist group claimed the capture of the area. The acting Afghan defense minister Tariq Shah Bahrami told reporters in Kabul on Saturday that the Afghan commandos have been deployed to Tora Bora area. He said the operations are underway in the area and developments regarding the clearance of the area are expected soon. This comes as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group's offshoot in Afghanistan, ISIS Khurasan, claimed Thursday that Osama Bin Laden's hideout in the remote Tora Bora area in eastern Nangarhar province has been captured. The group's loyalists informed regarding the capture of the mountainous terrain, a claim which was rejected by the Afghan officials. A local security official in Pacher Agam confirmed that the militants of the terror group have gotten closer to Tora and heavy clashes are underway between the terror group and Taliban militants close to the area.⁴¹
- **Afghanistan-India special air freight services to kick off tomorrow** - The special air freight services between India and Afghanistan is expected to kick off from tomorrow, the officials have said. The Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Manpreet Vohra, has said the services will be launched from Sunday, the 18th of June. The India- Afghanistan air corridor project which was initiated by H.E President Ghani last year, entered operationalization stage today with the signing of an MoU between the CEOs of Ariana Airlines and Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) in presence of Ajmal Ahmady, senior economic advisor to the President of Afghanistan and officials and representatives from ACCI, MAIL MoCI and the business community. According to a statement by the Office of Economic Adviser to the President of Afghanistan, based on the terms of the MoU signed between ACCI and Ariana, the traders will only pay \$0.20 per kg for exporting their goods to India while the rest will be paid by the government of Afghanistan as an incentive to promote Afghan exports to India. This program will also considerably reduce the cost of importing goods from India by air to only \$0.40 per kg. Traders from both countries will benefit from this program.⁴²

⁴⁰ "Saudi and Egypt seeks Hamid Karzai's support against Qatar", *Khaama Press*, 18 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/saudi-and-egypt-seeks-hamid-karzais-support-against-qatar-02970> accessed on 19 June 2017.

⁴¹ "Afghan commandos deployed to clear the strategic Tora Bora from ISIS: MoD", *Khaama Press*, 18 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-commandos-deployed-to-clear-the-strategic-tora-bora-from-isis-mod-02966> accessed on 19 June 2017.

⁴² "Afghanistan-India special air freight services to kick off tomorrow", *Khaama Press*, 17 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-india-special-air-freight-services-to-kick-off-tomorrow-02962> accessed on 18 June 2017.

- **Defiant Jamiat Insists On Security Reforms As ARG Urges Restraint** - Members of Jamiat-e-Islami party on Monday reiterated their calls for systematic reforms to be brought in Afghanistan's security institutions, saying the recent suicide attacks at the funeral ceremony that Jamiat leaders were attending had badly damaged trust, among the Afghan public and Jamiat party, in security institutions. This comes a week after acting foreign affairs minister Salahuddin Rabbani, who is also the leader of Jamiat-e-Islami party, said his party was calling for the immediate dismissal of heads of all security institutions including the national security advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar.⁴³
- **China Eyes Mediator Role To Ease Afghan-Pakistani Tensions** - China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi is scheduled to visit Kabul soon where he will meet Afghan officials to discuss ways to improve Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, President Ashraf Ghani's Office said in a statement on 12th June 2017. Wang will work to discuss the possibility of organizing a meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan, U.S and China, according to the statement. The statement was issued after Ghani's meeting with women's rights activists who raised concerns over the security situation in the country. "It is the first time that China wants to be a mediator in Afghanistan's peace process and soon the Chinese Foreign Minister will visit Kabul. Peace with Pakistan was our demand and this must be solved between government and government," Ghani told the participants at this meeting.⁴⁴
- **Pakistani Militias Fighting Alongside ISIS Militants: Nangarhar NDS Chief** - The provincial director of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Nangarhar General Abdul Saboor Sabit said the Pakistani militias are actively participating in the fight alongside the ISIS loyalists in this province. Gen. Sabit was speaking during a press conference after the clearance of Chaparhar district, saying the fighters of the terror group are trained in the neighbor and the Pakistani militias are actively involved in the fight in Nangarahr along with the ISIS militants.⁴⁵
- **US to Send Additional 4,000 Troops to Afghanistan** - The Pentagon may dispatch around 4,000 more American troops to Afghanistan with the hope to break stalemate in US longest war that has now passed to a third US commander, a media report claimed on 16th June 2017. According to the New York Times a Trump administration official said the Pentagon will send almost 4,000 additional American forces to Afghanistan. The deployment will be the largest of American manpower under Donald Trump's young

⁴³ Anisa Shaheed, "Defiant Jamiat Insists On Security Reforms As ARG Urges Restraint", *Tolo News*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/defiant-jamiat-insists-security-reforms-arg-urges-restraint> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁴⁴ "China Eyes Mediator Role To Ease Afghan-Pakistani Tensions", *Tolo News*, June 13, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/china-eyes-mediator-role-ease-afghan-pakistani-tensions> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁴⁵ "Pakistani Militias Fighting Alongside ISIS Militants: Nangarhar NDS Chief", *Khaama Press*, June 16, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-militias-fighting-alongside-isis-militants-nangarhar-nds-chief-02950> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

presidency. The official says the decision by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis could be announced as early as next week.⁴⁶

- **Greater Regional Construct Vital for Lasting Peace in Afghanistan: US** - Weeks ahead of presenting the revised Afghan strategy to the US President Donald Trump, the Defense Secretary James Mattis on 15th June 2017, called for a regional construct to bring lasting peace in this country. “Our military posture is part of a larger regional context in South Asia,” Mattis said before a Congressional subcommittee Thursday morning. “The revised Afghanistan strategy with a new approach will be presented to the president for his approval in the coming weeks,” Mattis said.⁴⁷
- **Stanekzai Dismisses Rumors About A Fifth Pillar Within The System** - The Chairman of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Massoum Stanekzai on 18th June 2017 said rumors about the existence of a fifth pillar within the political system were completely untrue and that these rumors have been fueled by political forces. On 18th June, Meshrano Jirga (the Upper House of Parliament) summoned a number of security officials including the NDS chief to brief senators about the deteriorating security situation - with a special focus on the recent spate of attacks in Kabul city that left over 150 people dead and hundreds wounded. Stanekzai said government will not collapse, but warned that negative propaganda will add to woes of the country.⁴⁸

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh diplomat in US charged with labour trafficking** - Bangladesh's deputy consul general in New York was indicted on Monday (June 13) on charges of labour trafficking and assault for forcing his servant to work without pay through threats and intimidation, a New York City prosecutor said. Mohammed Shaheldul Islam has limited diplomatic immunity and was ordered to surrender his passport when he appeared before Queens Supreme Court Justice Daniel Lewis.⁴⁹
- **Interim deal framework on Teesta water sharing finalized** - A framework of interim agreement on Teesta water sharing has been finalised, Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud told parliament yesterday. The finalisation came as per the directions of the Bangladeshi and Indian prime ministers, he said in a scripted answer. “It is expected

⁴⁶ “US to Send Additional 4,000 Troops to Afghanistan”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 17, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18428 (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁴⁷ “Greater Regional Construct Vital for Lasting Peace in Afghanistan: US”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 17, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18430 (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁴⁸ “Stanekzai Dismisses Rumors About A Fifth Pillar Within The System”, *Tolo News*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/node/48776> (accessed on June 19, 2017).

⁴⁹ “Bangladesh diplomat in US charged with labour trafficking,” Prothom Alo, June 13, 2017 <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/150921/Bangladesh-diplomat-in-US-charged-with-labour> (accessed on June 13, 2017).

that the agreement would be signed soon based on equality, fairness and not harming anyone,” said Anisul while replying to lawmakers' queries.⁵⁰

- **Bangladesh 84th in global peace index** - Bangladesh has been ranked the third most peaceful country in South Asia, faring better than India, Pakistan and Nepal in the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2017. Bangladesh is ranked 84, down a notch from last year, out of 163 countries with a global score of 2.035, according to the latest report published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The Sydney based think tank found that level of peace around the world improved slightly for the first time since the Syrian war began in 2011.⁵¹
- **Peaceful sit-in programmes after Eid: Khaleda** - Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Khaleda Zia on Sunday (June 18) urged people to get ready to take to the streets with 'peaceful sit-in programmes' after Eid-ul-Fitr to save the country from Awami League's grasp, reports UNB. "We call upon people to be aware of Awami League. We all must get united to free the country from their [AL's] clutches," she said. Speaking at an iftar programme, Khaleda further said, that "We'll have to take to the streets, if necessary, with peaceful programmes after the Eid."⁵²
- **Fakhrul 'hurt' as motorcade attacked** - The motorcade of Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir came under attack, allegedly by Awami League men, yesterday when the BNP leader was going to visit the landslide victims in Rangamati. At least seven BNP leaders, including the party secretary general, were hurt and five vehicles vandalised, said party's Standing Committee Member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, who was in the motorcade.⁵³

नेपाल

राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी :करेगी आन्दोलन नेपाल -मधेश के छ दलों से बनी राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी नेपाल ने अपनी मांगों को सरकार द्वारा पूरी न किये जाने के कारण आन्दोलन करने का फैसला लिया है महंत नेता मधेश . नहीं को मांगों हमारी बावजूद के बातचीत लगातार साथ के सरकार द्वारा हमारे कि है कहना का ठाकुर ने पा ज रा .है रहा जा किया मजबूर लिए के करने आन्दोलन जबरदस्ती हमें और है रहा जा माना आन्दोलन के लिए व्यापक योजना तैयार की है जिसके अनुसार ,रैली टोर्च पर मुख्यालय जिला को जून 12 13-16 जून को तराई जिलों में हड़ताल ,16 जून को लाठी रैली तथा .हड़ताल अनिश्चित को जून 24⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "Interim deal framework on Teesta water sharing finalised," Daily Star, June 14, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/interim-deal-framework-teesta-water-sharing-finalised-1419877> (June 14, 2017).

⁵¹ Mohammad Al-Masoom Molla, "Bangladesh 84th in Global peace index," Daily Star, June 17, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/global-peace-index-bangladesh-3rd-peaceful-south-asia-1421335> (accessed on June 17, 2017).

⁵² "Peaceful sit-in programmes after Eid: Khaleda," Prothom Alo, June 18, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/151491/Peaceful-sit-in-programmes-after-Eid-Khaleda> (accessed on June 18, 2017).

⁵³ "Fakhrul 'hurt' as motorcade attacked," Daily Star, June 19, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/fakhrul-hurt-al-men-attack-his-motorcade-1422121> (accessed on June 19, 2017).

⁵⁴ Tika R Pradhan, "RJP-N ups ante, says it will disrupt polls", The Kathmandu Post, 12 June 2017,

शासक दलों ने कहा कि चुनाव :होंगे को जून 28राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी नेपाल द्वारा चुनाव के विरोध में प्रदर्शन करने के एक ही दिन बाद सरकार के मुख्य घटक दलों ने दोहराया कि आगामी स्थानीय चुनाव को जून 28 के दलों मधेश तथा होंगे ही को जून 28 चुनाव कि कहा ने लेखक रमेश नेता के कांग्रेस नेपाली .होंगे ही .पड़ेगा नहीं प्रभाव कोई से लेने न भाग इसमें⁵⁵

प्रांत संख्या :टाले चुनाव ने सरकार में 2नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा ने मधेश दलों के प्रदर्शन को देखते हुए प्रांत संख्या मुख्य से कदम इस के सरकार .है दिए टाल चुनाव स्थानीय तक सितम्बर 18 में 2 किय विरोध इसका उसने ,है नहीं खुश एमाले दल विपक्षीा है से सरकार ने आयोग चुनाव में मामले इस. नेपाल पार्टी जनता राष्ट्रीय तरफ दूसरी वही .है सकता हो पैदा संकट राजनीतिक इससे कि था कहा .है नहीं संतुष्ट भी अभी से सरकार⁵⁶

चुनाव में नामांकन की अंतिम तिथि आज :देश में 1 संख्या प्रांत को जून 28, च स्थानीय में 7 और 5 चुनाव होने जा रहे है के नामांकन ने आयोग चुनाव लिए इसके .था किया नहीं नामांकन ने दलों के मधेश जिसमे , .सके ले भाग दल पर स्तर बड़े में चुनाव जिससे .थी बढ़ाई तिथि लिए⁵⁷

Pakistan

- **Pakistan and Gulf Crisis** - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on June 12th launched a 'mediation effort' to resolve the rift between Qatar and other Gulf states. PM Sharif, who arrived in Jeddah for a one-day trip, met King Salman bin Abdul Aziz. The prime minister was accompanied by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Adviser to the PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa.⁵⁸ President Mamnoon Hussain also met King Salman bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia on June 18th after performing Umrah.⁵⁹
- **Pakistan and China** - As stated by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on June 12th, Pakistan expects China to fund a long-delayed Indus river mega dam project in Gilgit-Baltistan, with work beginning next year. The minister said a Chinese company from a Beijing-picked shortlist and a local partner would build the dam over a 10-year period, and work should begin in the "next financial year", i.e July. The \$12 to 14 billion Diamer-Bhasha dam should generate 4,500 megawatts (MW) of electricity, and a vast new reservoir would

<http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-12/1>

⁵⁵ "Ruling Parties firm on Polls on 28 June", The Kathmandu Post, 13 June 2017,

<http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-13/1>

⁵⁶ "Govt Postpones polls in province 2", The Kathmandu Post, 16 June 2017,

<http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-16/1>

⁵⁷ Prithvi Man Shreshtha, "Nominations for June 28 local elections today", The Kathmandu Post, 18 June 2017,

<http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-18/1>

⁵⁸ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "PM launches Gulf 'mediation effort', meets Salman", *Dawn*, June 13, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339128> (accessed on June 19, 2017).

⁵⁹ Syed Irfan Raza, "Mamnoon returns from Saudi Arabia", *Dawn*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1340390/mamnoon-returns-from-saudi-arabia> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

regulate the flow of water to farmland that is vulnerable to increasingly erratic weather patterns. The minister said Pakistani and Chinese engineers are also surveying other projects, including the 7,100MW Bunji hydro power project that would be the first in the cascade that stretches down to the Tarbela Dam near Islamabad.⁶⁰

- **Pakistan and Sri Lanka** - Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah, during his visit to Sri Lanka, held meetings with the president, prime minister and military leadership of the friendly country and discussed with them steps to maintain peace in the region, particularly the Indian Ocean on June 14th. Admiral Zakaullah highlighted Pakistan Navy's efforts in pursuance of Pakistan government's policies to maintain peace and security in the Indian Ocean region in collaboration with international community. The admiral reiterated Pakistan's continued support to Sri Lankan armed forces in the field of training, provision of technical manpower and expertise. The dignitaries highly lauded Pakistan Navy's support and assistance to Sri Lankan people during the recent devastating floods.⁶¹

Indian Ocean Region

- **Indian- Australia Bilateral Naval Exercise 'Ausindex 17'** - 'Ausindex 17' five day long India- Australia bilateral naval exercise began off the coast of western Australia on June 13, 2017. This is the second bilateral naval exercise between the two countries; the first 'Ausindex 15' was conducted in the Bay of Bengal from September 11 to September 19, 2015.⁶² The bilateral naval exercise *Ausindex* is aimed to enhance inter-operability and naval cooperation between the two countries.⁶³ India's naval ships *Shivalik*, *Jyoti* and *Kamorta* are on port visit to Fremantle to participate in 'Ausindex 17'.⁶⁴
- **PLA Navy Task Force Concluded Goodwill cum Training Visit to Pakistan** - A task force of China's PLA Navy with three naval warships of - Chang Chun, Jing Zhou and Chao Hu concluded four days goodwill cum training visit to Pakistan (Karachi) on June 14, 2017.⁶⁵ The above mentioned three Chinese ships visited Karachi port under the command

⁶⁰ "China set to fund Diamer-Bhasha dam: Planning minister", *Dawn*, June 13, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339427> (accessed on June 19th 2017)

⁶¹ "Maintenance of peace discussed with Sri Lankan leaders", *Dawn*, June 14, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339658/maintenance-of-peace-discussed-with-sri-lankan-leaders> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁶² India-Australia naval exercise 'AUSINDEX 15' to begin tomorrow, September 11, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Australia-naval-exercise-AUSINDEX-15-to-begin-tomorrow/articleshow/48916443.cms>, Accessed on June 18, 2015,

⁶³ India, Australia to participate in joint maritime exercise, June 13, 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-australia-to-participate-in-joint-maritime-exercise-117061301333_1.html, Accessed on June 19, 2015,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Chinese navy warships return home from Karachi Port, June 16, 2017, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/chinese-navy-warships-return-home-from-karachi-port/1/980009.html>, Accessed on June 19, 2015.

of mission commander Rear Admiral Shen Hao, Deputy Commander East Sea Fleet.⁶⁶ During the visit these three warships took part in "operational activities, joint interactive sessions and table top discussions with their Pakistani counterparts."⁶⁷ Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) of Pakistani Navy, Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah also visited at Chinese warships.⁶⁸

- **India Israel Sign White Shipping Pact** - On 12 June 2017, India and Israel signed a white shipping agreement to "improve data sharing on non classified merchant navy ships or cargo ships."⁶⁹ The agreement was signed between visiting Indian Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba and Chief of the General Staff of Israeli Defence Force Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot.⁷⁰ During the talk, "they deliberated on overall security situation in the region and deliberated on various aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries."⁷¹
- **Iran China Naval Exercise in Starit of Hormuz** - Iranian and Chinese warships held a joint naval exercise on 18 June 2017 in the eastern part of Starit of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman.⁷² According to Tehran Times, an Iranian destroyer and two Chinese destroyers which include a support vessel and a helicopter participated in the naval exercise.⁷³ 700 navy personnel from both sides participated in the exercise.⁷⁴ Tension between the Iranian and US military in the Gulf has grown recently.

West Asia

Saudi Arabia and GCC

- **A New Twist in Qatar Crisis**

On 15 June 2017, Qatar crisis took a new twist. Washington signed a US\$12 billion arms deal with Doha. Washington agreed to supply dozens of F-15 jet to Qatari Air Force.⁷⁵ Besides, its Navy also reached to the Qatari water for joint exercise.⁷⁶ While a week earlier, President Trump owned the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Four-day Pak-China Naval exercises concludes, June 14, 2017, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/210570-Four-day-Pak-China-Naval-exercises-concludes>, Accessed on June 19, 2015.

⁶⁹ India, Israel sign 'white shipping' pact to share info on navy, cargo ships, June 13, 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-israel-sign-white-shipping-pact-to-share-info-on-navy-cargo-ships-117061300252_1.html, Accessed on June 19, 2015.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Iran, China hold joint naval exercise Politics, June 19, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/414393/Iran-China-hold-joint-naval-exercise>, Accessed on June 19, 2015,

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/15/us-signs-deal-to-supply-f-15-jets-to-qatar-after-trump-terror-claims>

⁷⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-diplomatic-crisis-latest-updates-170605105550769.html>

entire credit what Saudi-Emeriti axis did with Qatar. President Trump tweeted that his visit to Saudi Arabia has started 'paying off' and he appreciates Saudi Arabia and UAE for taking firm action against the countries, especially Qatar involved in funding and backing of terrorist and extremist organizations.

Although global leaders have offered to mediate and resolve the crisis peacefully, Qatar is waiting for the outcome of the Kuwaiti mediation efforts. Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammad Abdurahaman Al Thani is on a mission mode to put its side of argument and strongly denied the charges put on it by the Gulf Arab axis. He said that it is still unknown to them why they have cut off their diplomatic and transport relations with Doha. He also reiterated that though Qatar believes in resolving the crisis peacefully but it will not compromise with its sovereignty, including freedom of media.⁷⁷ While Qatar says it is waiting for the list from Saudi-Abu Dhabi to be the basis of resolving the standoff.⁷⁸

The dual role of US in Qatar crisis is seen as hunting with hounds running with hire. However, experts believe that Qatar is too important for US to abandon. Doha plays significant role in US security plan in the region. It hosts the largest Middle Air base at Al Udied, which provides base to the Central Command (CENTCOMD), which help the US not only in covering Iraq and Afghanistan but also helps in combating the ISIS. At a time, the al Udied can host 120 jets and already 10,000 Su forces are stationed there. During war on Terror, Al Udied Air Base was shifted from Saudi Arabia's Sultan Prince Air Base in 2003.

The arms deal also shows another facet of the US policy in the region in general and Qatar in particular. Though it wants Doha to stop backing Hamas and unwanted proxies and supported the Saudi action against it, but by looking at the response of Iran, Turkey and even Russia, Washington does not want Qatar to go to their side completely. As a result, the Trump administration has adopted a stick and carrot policy towards Qatar. It has engaged Doha through defense deal and sent a discouraging signal to its rival powers that Doha has a special place in Washington's regional policy.

Besides security, Qatar is also important to US for economic reasons. With a population not more than 2,50,000, and the highest per capita income in the world, around US\$1,39,000 and the third largest gas deposits, which is a clean fuel, promises a lot to Washington. Qatar is the only outperforming economy in the region, while Saudi Arabia, the largest in Middle East, UAE has suffered from low oil prices. Qatar has also a strong Sovereign Wealth Fund of US\$335 billion, which the US can rope in easily and generate employment in its homeland.

Therefore, it is important for Saudi Arabia to understand all these nuances and seek ways to amicably resolve the crisis earlier. The sanction imposed by four Arab countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt and later on joined by half a dozen more countries, is likely to fizzle out soon. Countries like Morocco, Somalia, which are totally dependent on Saudi help, have refused to join the sanction. Morocco even supplied food to Qatar. While President Erdogan termed the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-list-grievances-saudi-arabia-170618044036581.html>

sanction as ‘inhumane’ and ‘anti to the Islamic values’. Iran has already supplied food and water and also has opened three of its ports for Qatari maritime trade and energy businesses. Resolving the crisis earlier is also important to maintain the unity and trust among the GCC members. Otherwise, GCC formed 25 years ago, will develop cracks and Iran will benefit most from this fracas. Another angle, which may potentially eat out the Saudi Arabia’s popularity, is its demand from Qatar to ban and oust Hamas, which is seen as a resistance movement globally, including Muslims. Declaring Yusuf al Qaradawi may prove another foreign policy *faux pas*. Therefore, it is important for Riyadh-Abu Dhabi to become flexible and help resolve the crisis. For this, GCC should take the lead. Being the eldest, King Salman should come forward and take unilateral decision to end the crisis immediately.

Israel

- **Gaza Power Crisis** - Israel has known for several months now about PA President Mahmoud Abbas’ intention to hurt Hamas by stopping payments for the electricity Israel provides to the Gaza Strip. As far as is known at this time, though, it was not a joint Israeli-Palestinian move, but rather a decision at the political level in Jerusalem (to which the army and Shin Bet security service agreed) not to interfere with the PA’s move. Israeli assessments are based on the hope that Egypt will intervene in the crisis. Over the past few days, Hamas officials – headed by the organization’s new leader in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sanwar – have been in Cairo. The London-based daily Asharq Al-Awsat reported Tuesday that Egypt is prepared to solve the Gaza Strip’s electricity problems if Hamas agrees to hand over 17 wanted men living in the Strip and to tighten its oversight of the border with Egypt at Rafah. Sources in Israel confirm that talks with both Egypt and European countries are underway on the matter of electricity to Gaza.⁷⁹ Hamas played down on June 18th the possibility that the energy crisis in the Gaza Strip would lead to renewed hostilities with Israel and said relations between the Islamist group and Egypt were improving.⁸⁰
- **Israel Funds to Syrian Rebels** - Israel has been providing Syrian rebels near its border in the Golan Heights with a steady flow of funds, medical supplies and humanitarian assistance, with one group receiving roughly \$5,000 per month, according to rebel fighters, as per a *Wall Street Journal* report published June 18th. It cited interviews with half a dozen rebel leaders and three persons familiar Israel’s undeclared policy, that the Jewish state is helping these forces, who are opposed to the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad and his Iranian, Lebanese and Russian allies in an effort to help set up a buffer zone on its border with forces friendly to Israel.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Amos Harel, “Israel in Talks With Egypt, Europeans in Bid to Solve Gaza Electricity Crisis”, *Haaretz*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.795567> (accessed on June 19, 2017); Kifah Ziboun, “Hamas Delegation Returns to Gaza”, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, June 13, 2017, <https://english.aawsat.com/kifah-ziboun/news-middle-east/hamas-delegation-returns-gaza> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁸⁰ “Amid Warming Ties With Egypt, Hamas Downplays Likelihood of War With Israel”, *Haaretz*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/1.796384> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁸¹ “Israel provides steady flow of cash, aid to Syrian rebels — report”, *The Times of Israel*, June 19, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-provides-steady-flow-of-cash-aid-to-syrian-rebels-report/> (accessed on June 19,

Turkey

- **Russia names new ambassador to Turkey**⁸²

Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed Aleksey Yerkhov as Russia's ambassador to Turkey Monday.

The decree signed by Putin was published on the official internet-portal of legal information for the Russian government.

The Russian State Duma's International Relations Committee pledged support in May for the appointment of former Consul General in Istanbul Aleksey Yerkhov as the new Russian ambassador to Turkey.

Prior to his appointment, Yerkhov served as Director of the Situation and Crisis Center of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The previous Russian ambassador to Ankara, Andrey Karlov, was killed in December following an attack by a gunman during the opening of an art exhibition in the Turkish capital.

22-year-old off-duty policeman Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş shot the ambassador nine times in the back while he was delivering a speech. The assailant, who had managed to circumvent the metal detectors by flashing his police credentials, was killed in a subsequent shootout with Turkish guards.

The murder continues to be investigated by a joint group of Russian and Turkish experts.

- **Rosatom to sell Akkuyu project stake to Turkish conglomerate**⁸³

Russia's Rosatom plans to sell a 49 percent stake in the Akkuyu nuclear power plant project to Turkish conglomerate Cengiz-Kolin-Kalyon and will sign a preliminary deal on June 19, the head of Rosatom Energy International said.

Last week, Rosatom won approval from Turkey's energy watchdog to go ahead with building the \$20 billion Akkuyu project.

It is expected to be completed by 2023 and meet 6-7 percent of Turkey's electricity demand.

Anastasia Zoteyeva, head of Rosatom Energy International, speaking on the sidelines of a nuclear

2017); Rory Jones, "Israel Gives Secret Aid to Syrian Rebels", *The Wall Street Journal*, June 18, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-gives-secret-aid-to-syrian-rebels-1497813430> (accessed on June 19, 2017)

⁸² <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/06/19/putin-appoints-aleksey-yerkhov-as-new-ambassador-to-turkey>

⁸³ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/rosatom-to-sell-akkuyu-project-stake-to-turkish-conglomerate.aspx?pageID=238&nID=114485&NewsCatID=348>

conference in Moscow, said that an agreement with Turkish investors should be signed by the end of year.

She did not reveal the size of the investment, which should help to meet part of Turkey's energy demand, among the fastest-growing in Europe.

The project will be financed by Rosatom and its partners and will involve loans from export-import agencies and banks, Anastasia Polovinkina, director of Rosatom's finance and investment analysis department told the conference.

Power from the project's four 1,200 megawatt reactors will be sold mostly to the state with a small amount to be offered on the open market, Polovinkina said.

Rosatom's overseas order book stands at \$133 billion for the next 10 years, with almost three times more foreign orders than in 2011, Rosatom first deputy CEO Kirill Komarov told the conference.

Rosatom is increasing its overseas order book faster than expected and is confident it can continue to expand abroad, Komarov said.

- **Turkish troops arrive in Qatar for joint military drills⁸⁴**

Turkish troops have arrived in Qatar for long-planned joint military exercises, Qatari defense ministry said Sunday.

The deployment made possible by legislation fast-tracked by Turkey following a diplomatic rift between Doha and four other Arab states.

Turkey's parliament on June 7 fast-tracked legislation to allow troops to be deployed to a military base in Qatar, two days after the worst diplomatic crisis in the region in years has started. Turkey has a military base in Qatar that currently houses about 90 Turkish soldiers.

The Turkish forces conducted their first training at Tariq bin Ziyad military base on Sunday, the Qatari defense ministry said, adding that the drills had been long planned.

The exercises are part of a mutual agreement aimed at strengthening the defense capabilities of both countries, as well as boosting efforts to combat armed groups and maintaining stability in the region.

Starting from June 5, Bahrain, Comoros, Egypt, Maldives, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen's internationally backed government and one of Libya's three governments have cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar over accusations that the Gulf nation funds militant groups – charges Doha calls baseless.

⁸⁴ <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2017/06/19/turkish-troops-arrive-in-qatar-for-joint-military-drills>

Several other Muslim nations also downgraded their diplomatic ties with Qatar.

- **PM Yıldırım emphasizes solidarity in meeting with Greek PM in Athens**⁸⁵

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım met with his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras in Athens Monday, during which the two leaders emphasized solidarity, and mutual dialogue in solving issues in the region.

Tsipras stated that it was important to solve challenges in a constructive manner, noting before the meeting that he "wished to maintain this good relationship."

Yıldırım said, "We are neighbors...we share the same geography, we share the same destiny, we can have our problems from time to time, but a solution can be reached through mutual dialogue."

Touching upon the difficulties in the region, including security along Turkey's southern borders and the violence in Syria and Iraq, Yıldırım said, "I believe that we can solve these difficulties with mutual good faith, understanding and solidarity."

Tsipras said that he believed the visit was important for both bilateral and regional developments, emphasizing that his country wished to continue on a path of good relations with Turkey.

- **President Erdoğan to visit Germany in July**⁸⁶

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will visit Germany on July 7-8, presidential sources said Monday, as Germany is preparing to withdraw its troops from Incirlik airbase.

Turkey has been reluctant to give permission for German lawmakers to visit their soldiers stationed in Incirlik, due to controversial statements, mostly made by lawmakers from the socialist Die Linke party (The Left) who publicly announced their support to the PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, Germany and other NATO countries.

- **Saudis 'reject' Turkey offer to build base in kingdom**⁸⁷

Saudi Arabia has rejected an offer from Turkey to build a military base in the kingdom, saying it "cannot allow" Ankara to establish such a facility on its territories, according to state-run media. The official SPA news agency reported on Saturday that the kingdom would not be welcoming a Turkish military base similar to that built in neighbouring Qatar since its "armed forces and military capabilities are at the best level".

Quoting an unnamed official, the statement said: "Saudi Arabia can not allow Turkey to establish military bases on its territories," before adding that Saudi armed forces were participating

⁸⁵ <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/06/19/pm-yildirim-emphasizes-solidarity-in-meeting-with-greek-pm-in-athens>

⁸⁶ <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/06/19/president-erdogan-to-visit-germany-in-july>

⁸⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/saudi-rejects-turkey-offer-build-base-kingdom-170617130342162.html>

abroad, including from Turkey's Incirlik base, "in the fight against terrorism and protecting security and stability in the region".

The statement came days after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Portuguese broadcaster RTP that he had offered to build a military base in Saudi Arabia shortly after work began on Turkey's facility in Qatar in 2014.

"I made the same offer to King Salman ... and said that if it's appropriate we could also establish a base in Saudi Arabia. They said they would look into it but since that day nothing more came," he said.

Cyber Security

- **EU considers sanctions to respond to cyberattacks⁸⁸**

European Union foreign ministers have agreed to prepare a joint response to cyberattacks in the 28-nation bloc, including imposing sanctions on offenders.

The ministers said in a statement Monday that they would develop a "cyber-diplomacy toolbox" to respond to malicious activities online.

They expressed concern at the "increased ability and willingness of state and non-state actors to pursue their objectives" through cyberattacks, and pledged a united response.

While the ministers said they prefer to settle cyberspace disputes peacefully, they stand ready to make full use of the means at their disposal "including, if necessary, restrictive measures."

EU sanctions usually target people, groups, companies or organizations with asset freezes, travel bans and economic measures like import or export restrictions.

- **British Cyber-Security Blames North Korea For NHS Cyber Attacks⁸⁹**

British security officials said that hackers in North Korea were behind the cyber-attack that crippled parts of the National Health Services (NHS) and other organisations around the world last month, the media reported.

Officials from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) told the BBC on Thursday that they believe that the North Korea-based hacking group known as Lazarus launched the attack. It is also believed to have targeted Sony Pictures in 2014.

The Sony hack came as the company planned to release the movie "The Interview", a satire about an assassination attempt on North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The movie was eventually given a limited release after an initial delay.

⁸⁸ <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/eu-considers-sanctions-respond-cyberattacks-48127508>

⁸⁹ <http://www.news18.com/news/tech/british-cyber-security-blames-north-korea-for-nhs-cyber-attacks-1434665.html>

The Lazarus group has also been linked to the use of ransomware - including against a South Korean supermarket chain.

In May, ransomware called WannaCry swept across the world, locking computers and demanding payment for them to be unlocked. The NHS in the UK was particularly badly hit. NCSC officials began their own investigation and concluded their assessment, reports the BBC. The ransomware did not target Britain or the NHS specifically, and may well have been a money-making scheme that got out of control, particularly since the hackers do not appear to have retrieved any of the ransom money as yet.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 15	Peshawar / KP	At least three police officials were killed when unidentified armed assailants opened fire at their vehicle during their routine patrol in Chamkani area of Peshawar. The Police retaliated and killed one of the militant's on the spot. ⁹⁰	4	1
2	June 14	Karachi / Sindh	Two high-profile militants, belonging to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) escaped from Karachi's central prison. ⁹¹	Jail break	
3	June 13	Quetta / Balochistan	During a press conference at Madadgar Centre of Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti dispelled "the impression of the presence of Islamic State (IS) in Balochistan" and said that the crackdown against terrorist is	Statement	

⁹⁰ Ali Akbar, 3 policemen lose lives as militants open fire on police van in Peshawar, *Dawn*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339713/3-policemen-lose-lives-as-militants-open-fire-on-police-van-in-peshawar>, accessed on June 16, 2017

⁹¹ Imtiaz Ali, Two Lashkar-i-Jhangvi militants escape from Karachi Central Jail, *Dawn*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339502/two-lashkar-i-jhangvi-militants-escape-from-karachi-central-jail>, accessed on June 16, 2017

			in full swing under Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad. ⁹²		
4	June 12	Hangu / KP	Haqqani Network 'commander' and his accomplice were killed in a drone strike that fired two missiles at his house in Speen Tal area of Hangu District. The drone strike completely destroyed the suspected militant's house. ⁹³	2	0
5	June 12	Quetta / Balochistan	FC personnel killed two Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) militants during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in provincial capital Quetta. ⁹⁴	2	0

Afghanistan

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 18	Paktia	At least six Policemen were killed and dozens of people were injured when six Taliban militants and a suicide bomber attacked a Police headquarters in Paktia Province. The attack, claimed by the Taliban, began around 6:30 a.m. (0200 GMT) when one bomber detonated a car packed with explosives at the gate of the Police headquarters in provincial capital Gardez. ⁹⁵	6	12+
2	June 18	Kabul	An American national was kidnapped by unidentified militants in Karte Char area of Kabul. According to reports, the American national was working with the	Abduction	

⁹² Mohammad Zafar, No Islamic State existence in Balochistan, claims Bugti, *The Express Tribune*, June 14, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1434924/no-islamic-state-existence-balochistan-claims-bugti/>, accessed on June 15, 2017

⁹³ Ali Akbar, Drone strike kills Haqqani network commander in Hangu, *Dawn*, June 13, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339293/drone-strike-kills-haqqani-network-commander-in-hangu>, accessed on June 14, 2017

⁹⁴ Security forces kill two BLA militants in Quetta operation: ISPR, *Dawn*, June 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339084/security-forces-kill-two-bla-militants-in-quetta-operation-ispr>, accessed on June 14, 2017

⁹⁵ Samihullah Paiwand, Six police killed in attack on Afghanistan police headquarters, *Reuters*, June 18, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-security-police-idUSKBN19905G>, accessed on June 18, 2017

			Ministry Agriculture of Afghanistan on a World Bank project. No outfit claimed responsibility for the abduction. ⁹⁶		
3	June 18	Nangarhar	A former Taliban ‘commander’, Abdul Wahab, who has joined peace process in eastern Nangarhar province, admitted that the group’s leaders are based in the neighbouring Pakistan. ⁹⁷	Statement	
4	June 17	Kabul	The Special Operations forces of the Afghan National Army, Afghan commandos, have been deployed to the strategic Tora Bora, days after the ISIS claimed the capture of the area, the acting Afghan Defense Minister Tariq Shah Bahrami said. ⁹⁸ On June 15, 2017, it was reported that the ISIS had captured parts of Tora Bora on June 13, 2017, following days of heavy fighting with Taliban and pro-Government militias. ⁹⁹	Statement	
5	June 14	Kapisa	At least 11 Taliban militants, including the group’s three ‘commanders’, were killed in a clash on the outskirts of Babakhel locality in Tagab District. Police Chief Muhammad Razzaq Yaqubi said that the clash took place between	11	---

⁹⁶ American national kidnapped in Kabul city, *Khaama Press*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/american-national-kidnapped-in-kabul-city-02971>, accessed on June 18, 2017

⁹⁷ Ex-Taliban commander admits the group’s leaders are in Pakistan, *Khaama Press*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/ex-taliban-commander-admits-the-groups-leaders-are-in-pakistan-02969>, accessed on June 18, 2017

⁹⁸ Afghan commandos deployed to clear the strategic Tora Bora from ISIS: MoD, *Khaama Press*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-commandos-deployed-to-clear-the-strategic-tora-bora-from-isis-mod-02966#>, accessed on June 18, 2017

⁹⁹ Islamic State Militants Capture Tora Bora, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 15, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2015,%202017/Front%20page.pdf>, accessed on June 15, 2017

			Afghan Local Police (ALP) and the Taliban after the Taliban wanted to storm ALP personnel check-post. ¹⁰⁰		
6	June 14	Helmand	At least 43 Taliban militants were killed during an airstrike in Marja District of Helmand province. ¹⁰¹	43	NS
7	June 13	Nangarhar	At least 38 militants, belonging to the Taliban (11) and ISIS (27), were killed in the latest airstrikes and infightings in Chaparhar District of Nangarhar Province. ¹⁰²	38	NS

Iraq

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 18	Mosul	<p>Iraqi forces began their offensive in the besieged Mosul city, the last enclave of the Islamic State in Iraq's most important city to fall into the hands of the terror group.</p> <p>The Iraqi forces called on ISIS militants to surrender. For the last five days, Iraqi forces have been sending messages out over west Mosul via loud speakers urging ISIS militants to surrender. The Iraqi Joint Command published a video of a message being read out over loud speaker to the people in west Mosul. "The enemy is losing its positions.</p>		

¹⁰⁰ 11 Taliban Killed in Kapisa Overnight Clash, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 15, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2015,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 15, 2017

¹⁰¹ AAF Targets Taliban Safe Havens in Helmand, Kill 43, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 17, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2017,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 17, 2017

¹⁰² 38 Taliban and ISIS Militants Killed in Airstrikes and Infightings, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 14, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2014,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 15, 2017

			The enemy is losing its positions, one after the other.” ¹⁰³		
2	June 17	Belgium	Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel announced that his country decided to extend its mission within the US-led international coalition fighting the IS in Iraq and Syria. ¹⁰⁴	Belgian extends mission	
3	June 17	Anbar	A military operation was launched to drive Islamic State militants out of western regions in Anbar province. “Military offensive was launched on Saturday to clear Annah and Rawa cities, west of Anbar. Eight IS militants were killed after troops invaded these regions and destroyed three booby-trapped vehicles,” said Major General Noaman al-Wube’y, commander of the seventh division of the Iraqi army in Anbar. ¹⁰⁵	Statement	
4	June 13	Kirkuk	Five infants died of various health complications as Islamic State militants continue to deny food and medicine to families opposing its rule in Kirkuk. Jabbar al-Maamouri, a senior leader at the Popular Mobilization Forces, said that a <i>fatwa</i> issued by the group prohibited food and medicine supply to families which oppose the group or had one of their members executed by it. ¹⁰⁶	5	0

Syria

¹⁰³ Iraqi army enters Old Mosul district from two sides, *Rudaw*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/18062017>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹⁰⁴ Loaa Adel, Belgium extends its mission against IS in Iraq and Syria, *Iraqi News*, June 17, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/belgium-extends-mission-iraq-syria/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹⁰⁵ Nehal Mostafa, Iraqi army launches operation to clear western Anbar regions from IS, *Iraqi News*, June 17, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-army-launches-operation-clear-western-anbar-regions/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹⁰⁶ Mohamed Mostafa, Five infants die as IS maintains medicine embargo on opponents in Hawija, *Iraqi News*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/five-infants-die-maintains-medicine-embargo-opponents-hawija/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 18	Deir al Zour	Iranian Revolutionary Guards launched the mid-range ground-to-ground missiles from western Iran into the Deir al Zour region, killing a “large number” of terrorists and destroying their equipment and weapons. Iran fired missiles, aiming at the bases of militant groups it holds responsible for attacks in Tehran. ¹⁰⁷	NS	NS
2	June 18	Raqqqa	The US-led international coalition shot down a Su-22M4 fighter jet belonging to Syrian Arab Air Force (SyAAF) near Rusafa town in Raqqqa. Syrian aircraft was conducting an air raid on positions held by the “Islamic State” when the airbase lost contact with the pilot. ¹⁰⁸	US fires Syrian jet	
3	June 18	Syria-Iraq border	Syrian troops and allied militias met up with Iraqi forces at one crossing point along their shared border for the first time in years, in a step described as a major achievement by the Syrian military in their fight against the Islamic State group. The development comes a day after Iraqi forces captured a border crossing point with Syria, al-Waleed, from the IS militants. ¹⁰⁹	Syrian troops ally with Iraqi forces	
4	June 17	Deir al-Zor	The Russian Defense Ministry said that it had killed two Islamic State field commanders, named as Abu Omar al-Beljiki and Abu Yassin al-Masri, in air strikes near the eastern Syrian city of Deir al-Zor on June 6 and June 8, respectively. ¹¹⁰	2	0

¹⁰⁷ Loaa Adel, Iran fires missiles at militant groups in eastern Syria, *Iraqi News*, June 19, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/iran-fires-missiles-militant-groups-eastern-syria/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹⁰⁸ Ivan Castro, U.S. coalition shoots down Syrian fighter jet over southwestern Raqqqa, *Al Masdar News*, June 18, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/u-s-coalition-shoots-syrian-fighter-jet-southwestern-raqqqa/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹⁰⁹ Sarah El Deeb, Syria, Iraq troops link at border for first time in years, *CTV News*, June 18, 2017, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/syria-iraq-troops-link-at-border-for-first-time-in-years-1.3464998>, accessed on June 19, 2017

¹¹⁰ Loaa Adel, Russia claims it killed two more Islamic State commanders in Syria: Ifax, *Iraqi News*, June 17, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/russia-claims-killed-two-islamic-state-commanders-syria-ifax/>, accessed on June 19, 2017

International Economic Issues

- **India flags errors in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report**

The *Economic Times* on June 12, 2017 reported that India has written to the World Bank (WB) pointing out factual errors in its assessment of the country's current laws in last year's Ease of Doing Business report. Contrary to expectations of a big improvement, India saw only a one position rise in its last ranking — to 130 out of 190 countries. The government wants the Bank to correct its findings related to arbitration and settlement of commercial disputes in the country following substantial changes to the framework for such redressal. It also wants corrections on items such as attorney fees, which range between 8 per cent and 10 per cent of the claim value instead of the 30.6 per cent estimated in last year's study. Similarly, it wants the provisions for availability of financial incentives for parties to attempt mediation or conciliation such as refunds of court filing fees to be recognised in the assessment.¹¹¹

- **AIIB adds more members, approves new lending**

At the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on June 16, 2017, three new members were admitted. The latest to join the bank are Argentina, Tonga and Madagascar. With the latest admission the membership of the bank has reached 80. The meeting also saw the approval of three new finance-related projects worth \$324 million in lending and investment. This included a capital contribution to an Indian infrastructure fund and two syndicated loans arranged by other multilateral lenders.¹¹²

- **China eases foreign investment restrictions in free-trade zones**

On June 17, 2017, China updated its rules on foreign investment in its free-trade zones (FTZ), cutting 27 restrictions across eight sectors to boost the inflow of foreign capital. Under this new move, banking, manufacturing and mining sectors are among the sectors that will be affected. Banks will now be allowed to underwrite government bonds and will no longer have to wait for a minimum period of operation to launch Yuan services. As per the new rules, the manufacturing sector will benefit foreign manufacturers of electric vehicles and rail transport equipment, desiring to set up their own facilities instead of entering into joint ventures with local firms. The original list of measures for China's FTZs was published in 2013 with a total of 190 restrictions and has since been revised to 139 restrictions in 2014, 122 in 2015 and 95 in the latest amendment.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ruchika Chitravanshi, "India flags errors in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report", *The Economic Times*, June 12, 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-flags-errors-in-world-banks-ease-of-doing-business-report/printarticle/59100158.cms> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹¹² Kenichi Yamada And Issaku Harada, "AIIB adds more members, approves new lending at the annual meeting", *Nikkei Asian Review*, June 17, 2017, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/AIIB-adds-members-approves-new-lending-at-annual-meeting> (accessed on June 17, 2017)

¹¹³ "China eases foreign investment restrictions in free-trade zones", *Business Standard*, June 17, 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/china-eases-foreign-investment-restrictions-in-free-trade-zones-117061700314_1.html (accessed on June 17, 2017)