

Weekly Media Updates **(05-11 June, 2017)**

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Africa

- **India's Exim Bank Seeks to Lend to Uganda Government¹**

India's Export and Import Bank (Exim) is looking to expand its influence in Africa. Bank officials were in Uganda courting the government on the possibility of doing business together.

Mr Nadeem Panjetan, the chief general manager, Exim Bank of India last week met with Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda, Finance minister Matia Kasaija, and Education minister Janet Museveni, to state their case on why Uganda would be an important destination for their loans. He stated that they had funds to finance projects in the country ranging from energy, irrigation, healthcare, and agriculture.

He, however, said it was up to the government of Uganda to approach Exim Bank India for the loans on non-concessional terms. In Africa, most of the projects the bank has lent to are in the power sector.

Mr Kasaija was non-committal on securing loans from India at the moment. The government is already engaging China's Exim Bank to secure about Shs8 trillion to finance the Malaba-Kampala route of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).

There were no concluded deals but there was a commitment of about \$150m from companies to set up a pharmaceutical plant, cement production, and power generation.

Uganda is looking to further industrialise in order to create jobs and reach middle-income status by 2020, which explains the need for foreign direct investment. The delegation was presented with investing either in industrial parks or the free zones.

India is Uganda's second largest origin of imports after China. India used to be in the lead until China overtook it in 2016

- **India, Somalia Agree to Prisoner Exchange Deal²**

India and Somalia have agreed to transfer each other's prisoners to jails in their own country. "The agreement will facilitate Indian prisoners in Somalia and vice-versa to be near their families for serving the remaining part of their sentence," an official statement said on Wednesday.

The Union Cabinet gave its approval for the ratification of the agreement on transfer of sentenced persons between India and Somalia. The Cabinet meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India has similar bilateral agreements with several agreements including the United Kingdom, Mauritius, France, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Bangladesh, the UAE and Australia. The transfer of such prisoners shall facilitate their social rehabilitation, Indian officials said.

¹ The Monitor, 8 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706080013.html>

² Shabelle Media Network, 7 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706071123.html>

- **Ivory Scam Claims - China Piles Pressure on Uganda³**

China has piled fresh pressure on Uganda over President Museveni's claims that two of its alleged diplomats were involved in illegal ivory trade.

The Chinese Ambassador to Uganda, Zheng Zhuqiang, told The Observer on Saturday that the embassy has formally sought for a meeting with the Foreign Affairs ministry.

The Observer has also learnt that President Museveni, who is facing the possibility of hurting his close ties to China, has taken steps to thaw the growing diplomatic tensions. According to the senior presidential press Secretary, Don Innocent Wanyama, after China's terse response to the contents of the president's letter last week, Museveni decided to leave the resolution of the now contentious matter at the hands of his foreign relations experts.

On May 2, Museveni wrote to the Inspector General Government Irene Mulyagonja ordering an investigation into the affairs of Uganda Wildlife Authority and two Chinese diplomats, Li Wejin and one Yinzhi, whom he accused of involvement in the illegal sale of ivory smuggled from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Zheng last week said Museveni's claims were based on wrong information.

On the same day that Zheng protested against the contents of the president's letter, the spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Hua Chunying, told journalists in Beijing that Museveni's allegations were "totally unfounded".

Zheng said his interest is in ensuring that the Ugandan government restores his embassy's reputation, which he said was damaged by Museveni's letter. However, the foreign affairs ministry's spokesperson Margaret Awino Kafeero said she hadn't seen any communication from the Chinese embassy.

Uganda is keen to maintain good relations with China as it is one of Uganda's key development and economic partners.

For instance, between 2000 and 2011, there were approximately 54 development projects financed by the People Republic of China.

Among the projects is the construction of the Kampala-Entebbe expressway, e-governance and national backbone infrastructure, construction of Isimba and Karuma hydropower dams and the ongoing expansion works of Entebbe International Airport.

³ The Observer, Kampala, 5 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706050298.html>

- **India Warship Sails Into Nigerian Waters⁴**

Indian Navy Ship (INS) Tarkash (Vanguard of Victory) has berthed at the Tin Can Island Port, Apapa Lagos, for a routine military exercise. The Warship, which was piloted by Capt. Rituraj Sahu, is visiting Nigeria on a routine Military exercise.

The Minister of Defence, Gen Mansur Dan-Ali (Rtd.) accompanied by the Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Hadiza Bala Usman, and the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin, jointly received the visiting warship at the Tin-Can Island Port, Lagos.

Also, aboard the vessel among many other Indian Naval Officers and Ratings is the Head of Mission, Capt. Guatam Marwaha, who said the warship would sail to Angola on June 8th, at the completion of their mission in Nigeria.

North Africa

- **We have no forces in Libya: Hamas⁵**

Palestinian resistance group Hamas denied the recent claims on the part of Haftar group in Libya that it had dispatched fighters to war-torn Libya. The denial on the part of Hamas came one day after a spokesman for Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar accused the Gaza-based resistance group of sending members of its armed wing to fight in Libya on behalf of Qatar, which is currently embroiled in an unprecedented diplomatic row with several other Arab states. A leading member of the Hamas has said in a statement that the group will never send its fighters and weapons abroad. He also added that the weapons of Hamas would remain directed solely at Israel, which the Hamas would continue to resist even if it may require sacrificing leaders' sons and our homes of Palestinians. He made this statement while taking part in the funeral of a recently-deceased Hamas member in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

It is worth mentioning here that Haftar is affiliated with Libya's Tobruk-based parliament and enjoys the support of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Yemen have recently announced to cut their diplomatic ties with Qatar.

⁴ The Guardian, 7 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706071069.html>

⁵ Anadolu Agency http://aa.com.tr/en/africa/hamas-dismisses-claims-it-has-fighters-in-libya/837416?utm_source=Media+Review+for+June+9%2C+2017&utm_campaign=DMR-+EN+-+6%2F9%2F2017&utm_medium=email

- **Egypt-France to Cooperate on Libya⁶**

France's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian told Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry that both Egypt and France should increase their coordination on Libya because terrorists groups who exploit the ongoing instability in the country threaten both Egyptian and European security. He was speaking during a press conference after the two leaders held talks in Cairo on Thursday. The visiting leader of France Le Drian agreed with Shoukry on the need for reaching a political solution in the war-torn country.

The French minister also agreed with Shoukry's statements that an accord between the rival factions should be prioritized over a political agreement at this stage which could be achieved through meetings of those factions hosted by Cairo. Shoukry informed that the meetings held so far with the Libyan parties have demonstrated a desire for solutions that would help the country restore its stability, sovereignty and aspirations, and defeat the terrorist groups that have seized Libyan territory. It must be noted that this is the French minister's first visit in his current post since President Emmanuel Macron was sworn into office in May.

Le Drian visited Egypt before as defense minister during the tenure of Francis Hollande where he met several Egyptian officials including Defense Minister Sedki Sobhi and other top military officials. Shoukry said his discussions with Le Drian focused on relations between Cairo and Paris, and how the two countries could work together to support French investments and consolidate economic gains in Egypt under ongoing economic reforms.

Shoukry said he and his counterpart agreed to deal with issues clearly and through direct talks, in accordance with the strong friendship between their countries. He affirmed Egypt's commitment to working together on several regional and international issues to achieve the interests of both parties. The French minister also met President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Sea of Saint Mark.

- **Egypt Drags UN into Qatar-GCC Crisis⁷**

Egyptian government has urged the United Nations to investigate the past allegations against Qatar saying that it paid a ransom of up to \$1 billion to a terrorist group in Iraq to secure the release of kidnapped members of its royal family. The move at the moment seems to be the part of a coordinated campaign which witnessed Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and others sever diplomatic ties with Qatar on Monday, accusing the country of supporting terrorism.

The four countries issued a joint statement on Friday putting 59 individuals and 12 Qatar based entities or funded by Qatar on a terror list. One of Egyptian diplomat serving in UN said that it

⁶ Ahram online , An Egyptian English Daily <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/270530/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt,-France-should-coordinate-on-Libya-to-stop-t.aspx>

⁷New Arab, an English Daily <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/6/9/egyptian-regime-drags-un-into-feud-with-qatar>

was everywhere in the news that Qatar paid up to \$1 billion to a terrorist group active in Iraq in order to secure the release of the members of its royal family. He also said that the violation of the Security Council resolutions in case of its approval would no doubt have a negative bearing on counterterrorism efforts. One of the opposition members in Egypt said that Egypt is taking advantage of its membership of the Security Council to incite against a sisterly Arab country. A Qatari diplomat said the country abides by all UN Security Council resolutions on countering terrorism, including eradicating sources of financing for terrorism,.

Qatar has always denied paying ransom money to secure the release of 26 Qataris, including prominent members of the royal family, who were kidnapped by Iraqi Shiite militiamen in December 2015 during a hunting trip.

Central Asia

- **PM Modi's visit to Kazakhstan**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kazakhstan on 8-9 June 2017 to attend the 17th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting at Astana. He held meeting with Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev on the issues of mutual significance. He also thanked him for continuous support for India's membership of the SCO. Economic engagement between the two countries and increasing India-Central Asia connectivity were the focus of talks.

In the economic field, energy has become a prominent field of cooperation between the two countries. Kazakhstan has emerged as the top supplier of uranium to India and in last two years, two shipments have been received.⁸ During his July 2015 visit to Kazakhstan, Prime Minister Modi had launched the exploratory drilling in the country's Satpayev block. Next month, second exploratory drilling is expected to begin in the block. To increase cooperation in renewable energy sources, India has invited Kazakhstan to become member of the International Solar Alliance. Kazakhstan has responded positively to the invitation.

Prime Minister Modi and President Nazarbayev also discussed about connectivity through Iran. India has been making investment in Iran's Chabahar port, which provides access to Central Asia, Afghanistan through Indian Ocean. Iran is connected to Central Asia through the Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan railway line, which is in operation since December 2014. India, Iran and Central Asian countries are also working on the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects India to Eurasia.

⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Transcript of Media Briefing in Astana on ongoing visit of Prime Minister to Kazakhstan (June 08, 2017)," 9 June 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/28521/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_in_Astana_on_ongoing_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Kazakhstan_June_08_2017

- **India Joins SCO**

India has been admitted to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a full member of the Eurasian organizations during its 17th Summit at Astana, Kazakhstan, on 8-9 June 2017. Earlier, India was an Observer with the organization. Pakistan has also joined as a full-member. The latest expansion of the SCO makes it a more influential bloc. Before his departure to Astana to attend the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India would become a full Member of the SCO on completion of the process at the meeting, upon which the SCO will represent over 40 per cent of humanity and nearly 20 per cent of global GDP.⁹

India's full SCO membership can help increase the country's connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Trade and economic engagement will improve with the availability of better connectivity as South Asia provides for a big market to the SCO members. SCO will also help deepening energy cooperation, particularly through the upcoming SCO Energy Club, as big energy producers and consumers will be on one platform. The Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS) of the SCO may help formulating region-wide cooperation on counter-terrorism. The Prime Minister said, "I look forward to deepening India's association with the SCO which will help us in economic, connectivity and counter-terrorism cooperation, among other things."¹⁰

India's membership to SCO has been supported by the Central Asian countries as they see it as a big market for goods and energy in South Asia. India has also made significant progress in low-cost and high quality technology in ICT, pharmaceuticals and space. India is also making investment in connectivity projects, for example the INSTC and Chabahar.

China

- **PLA schools to expand recruitment, help China win information war**

Eight new military-affiliated academies will start recruiting high school graduates this fall for the first time following the launch of military academy reforms in 2016, which experts said would help China win the information war.

The eight new academies merged with other universities and academies, with six belonging to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) ground force, the Legal Mirror reported.

For example, the Army Academy of Border and Coastal Defense, the PLA's lone border and coastal defense institute, has merged the PLA Border Defense Academy in Xi'an, Northwest China's Shaanxi Province, the Kunming National Cadres Academy in Southwest China's Yunnan

⁹ PTI, "Look forward to deepening India's ties with SCO: PM," 7 June 2017, http://www.ptinews.com/news/8775644_Look-forward-to-deepening-India-s-ties-with-SCO--PM.html

¹⁰ PTI, "Look forward to deepening India's ties with SCO: PM," 7 June 2017, http://www.ptinews.com/news/8775644_Look-forward-to-deepening-India-s-ties-with-SCO--PM.html

Province and the Urumqi National Cadres Academy in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, according to the Legal Mirror.¹¹

- **Islamic State's claim and China**

Replying to a question, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson on 9 June 2017 noted:

Following the abduction of the two Chinese nationals in Pakistan in late May, relevant departments of the Chinese government and the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan launched the emergency response mechanism immediately. We have stayed in close communication and coordination with Pakistan and spared no effort to rescue them. According to the information offered by the Pakistani side, the two abducted citizens might have been killed. We are highly concerned about that, and are trying to learn more about and verify the relevant information through various channels.

China firmly opposes and strongly condemns all forms of terrorism and supports Pakistan in fighting terrorist forces and safeguarding internal security and stability. China will work with Pakistan and other members of the international community to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation and uphold regional and global peace and security.

To my knowledge, the relevant report is not consistent with the fact. These two people are not a couple and they come from different Chinese provinces. The details are still under investigation.¹²

- **Prime Minister Modi's Meeting with President Xi Jinping in Astana on the sidelines of the SCO Summit**

Replying to a question on Prime Minister Modi's Meeting with President Xi Jinping in Astana, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson on 9 June 2017 noted:

A: President Xi Jinping met with Indian Prime Minister Modi in Astana today. President Xi pointed out that the international environment is undergoing profound and complex changes. China and India, as the two largest developing countries in the world, should focus more on cooperation, advance side by side, lend support to each other's development, uphold world peace and promote common development. China highly values its relations with India and wishes to work with India to enhance political mutual trust, complement development strategies, deepen practical cooperation, maintain coordination and cooperation on major international and regional issues and push for the sustained, steady and sound development of China-India strategic and cooperative partnership. The two sides should work for closer high-level and institutional exchanges, strengthen strategic communication and synergize their policies. The two countries should also enhance trade and investment cooperation for more early harvests in such major projects as production capacity, industrial parks and railway construction. Efforts

¹¹ http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-06/12/content_7635268.htm

¹² http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1469154.shtml

should be made to promote regional connectivity and common development, align development initiatives, push for substantial progress in the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor at an early date and enhance cooperation under the framework of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank. It is also imperative to step up communication in terms of localities, think tanks, culture, media and tourism, strengthen communication and coordination in multilateral field to properly manage and handle differences and sensitive issues.

President Xi congratulated India on its expected official membership of the SCO and stated China's willingness to strengthen cooperation with India under the SCO framework and jointly make positive contribution to the sound and steady development of the SCO.

Prime Minister Modi said that India and China are ancient civilizations with a long-standing friendship. Against the backdrop of complex and volatile international situation, the sound India-China relations can serve as a stabilizer. The two sides should tap into the potential for cooperation, bolster communication and coordination in international affairs, respect each other's core concerns and properly handle differences. India appreciates China's support for its accession to the SCO and wishes to strengthen cooperation with China under the SCO framework.¹³

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Temporary Suspension of THAAD**

On June 7, South Korean Presidential Office made an order to halt the ongoing deployment of THAAD and will remain suspended until a full scale environment assessment is done. However the order will not affect the two already installed launchers. President Moon who assumed took Office on May 10 has expressed reservations on the deployment of THAAD, particularly on the procedural aspect. Experts suggest that it will take at least one year to conduct environmental impact assessment of THAAD deployment and will give enough time for the President to deal with diplomatic fall out especially with China.¹⁴ However the administration has made it clear that it has no intention to reverse the decision. In a media address Chung Eui-yong, head of the National Security Office of the Moon Blue House said, "first of all, the Moon administration has no intention to fundamentally reverse the agreement reached in line with the Korea-U.S. alliance". The move seems to use THAAD as a bargaining chip by Seoul in its relations with US and China.¹⁵

¹³http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1469154.shtml

¹⁴ "Moon halts THAAD deployment Posted", Korea Times, June 7, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/06/356_230763.html (Accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁵ "Seoul reassures deployment of Thaad is certain", Korea Joongang Daily, June 10, 2017, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3034461> (Accessed on June 12, 2017)

- **Japanese Special Envoy Visits South Korea**

On June 10, a special delegation send by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in Seoul. The delegation is headed by Toshihiro Nikai, secretary-general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and consists of 360 people mostly from business sector. On June 12, Nikai is expected meet President Moon and will deliver a letter from Prime Minister Abe. The meeting between Nikai and Moon will decide on the possibility of a summit meet between President Moon and Prime Minister Abe in Germany during the Group of 20 Summit in July. Soon after taking office President Moon send a special envoy to Tokyo to improve relationship between South Korea and Japan, which is going through a difficult phase because of historical and territorial issues. During envoys visit in Tokyo both countries agreed to revive 'shuttle diplomacy. Nikai visit to Seoul is the Japanese attempt to revive Japan-South Korea relations through shuttle diplomacy.¹⁶

- **North Korea Tested a New Anti-Ship Cruise Missile**

On June 8, North Korea conducted a missile test. North Korean media claimed that Pyongyang successfully tested a "new type of anti-ship cruise missile, calling it a "powerful attack means" that was capable of striking enemy warships". According to the South Korean Joint Chief of Staff, the missile "flew about 200 kilometres in a north-easterly direction from the port city at a maximum altitude of about 2 kilometres" and suggested that the missile tested could be short-range surface-to-ship cruise missiles, launched from the vicinity of Wonsan, Gangwon Province. The launch followed a show of force by the US at the waters off the Korean Peninsula by deploying two aircraft carriers after conducting joint exercise with Japanese Self Defense Forces. The launch was North Korea's 4th missile test after the inauguration of President Moon Jae-in.¹⁷

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Phillipines)

- **Kachin State Speculated for Location of the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone**

During the first Belt Road Forum held in the mid of May 2017, Myanmar's State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi signed five memorandums of understanding with China. One of the MoUs was signed between the ministries of commerce for the establishment of China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone. Kanchin State which lies in the northern most frontier of Myanmar is been speculated by Chinese media and researchers to be the location for the establishment of the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone. China's Communist Party-run newspaper quoted that the location for the zone would be ideal as it would link the port at Huoqiao in Western Yunnan's Tengchong County in South Western China to Kan Pike Tee port

¹⁶ Abe's special envoy-cum-seasoned politician visits Korea, Yonhap News Agency, June 10, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2017/06/10/0301000000AEN20170610001700315.html> (Accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁷"North Korea says new anti-ship cruise missile can strike enemy battle groups 'at will'", The Japan Times, June 9, 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/09/national/politics-diplomacy/north-korea-says-new-anti-ship-cruise-missile-can-strike-enemy-battle-groups-will/#.WT4q7mh96M8> (Accessed on June 12, 2017); Jun Ji-hye, "N. Korea claims successful launch of new cruise missiles", Korea Times, June 9, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/06/103_230899.html (Accessed on June 12, 2017)

in Kachin State, about 70 KM east of the State's capital, Myitkyima. Kachin State of Myanmar is an area of unrest where various ethnic groups have been waging war against the State for almost seven decades. The most recent major of which occurred in June 2011 when the 17 year old cease fire collapsed, leading to fighting between the Kachin Independence Army and the State military; displacing 100,000 civilians

- **US reaffirms its continued commitment to ASEAN**

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis held meetings on the sidelines of the Shangri- La Dialogue with defence ministers from the ASEAN nations. This was his first meeting with his ASEAN counterparts since taking charge of the Department of Defence. The US Defence Secretary affirmed the continuation of the US presence in the region, while Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen told reporters after the meeting that the US presence in the region is not only welcomed but also strongly supported.¹⁸ According to Dr Panitan Wattanyagorn, security advisor to Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Gen Prawit Wongsuwan, ASEAN and the US will intensify their anti-terrorism campaign to include intelligence exchanges and surveillance. Further, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia in light of the recent militant assault in the city of Malawi in Mindanao, plan to launch joint air patrols this month at their common boundaries in the Sulu Sea in addition to their already existing programmes.¹⁹

- **ASEAN- Japan Partnership and Revision in Bilateral Free Trade Pact**

ASEAN Secretary General received affirmation from the Japanese Prime Minister whom he met on June 6, 2017, on the sidelines of the 23rd Future of Asia Conference in Tokyo. According to the PM, Japan places great importance on the ASEAN- Japan partnership and emphasised Japan's continued commitment to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN across different areas, including political-security sphere through the promotion of the rule of law in maritime security and cooperation.²⁰ Japan and Thailand are also set to revise their free trade pact under the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA).²¹

- **India-ASEAN seeks to further strengthen their Cooperation**

On June 8, 2017, the annual ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee held on June 8, 2017, at the ASEAN Secretariat. The Indian delegation was led by the Indian Ambassador to ASEAN, Mr Suresh K. Reddy along with Mr Anurag Dhushan, Joint Secretary for ASEAN Affairs at the MEA. India's reaffirmed its strong desire to forge an enduring strategic and economic partnership between India and ASEAN which would ensure mutual benefit and help contribute towards ASEAN community building efforts. The meeting was co-chaired by the India Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Vietnam, Mr Nguyen Hoanh Nam. It was attended by the Permanent Representatives of the ASEAN member states and their representatives as well as from the ASEAN Secretariat. Views were exchanges on how to intensify ASEAN-India

¹⁸"US to ASEAN: We're here for you", *Bangkok Post*, June 5, 2017,

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1262523/us-to-asean-were-here-for-you>, accessed June 7, 2017.

¹⁹"ASEAN, US Pledge to fight IS Extremists", *The Myanmar Times*, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/asean-focus/26281-asean-us-pledge-to-fight-is-extremists.html>, accessed on June 9, 2017.

²⁰"Sec- Gen of ASEAN and PM Abe reaffirm importance of ASEAN-Japan Partnership", *ASEAN*, <http://asean.org/sec-gen-of-asean-and-prime-minister-abe-reaffirm-importance-of-asean-japan-partnership/>, accessed June 7, 2017.

²¹"Japan-Thai Pact Overhaul Eyed", *Bangkok Post*, June 9, 2017,

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/1265327/japan-thai-pact-overhaul-eyed>, accessed June 9, 2017.

cooperation, particularly through the implementation of the 3rd ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2016-2020).²²

Myanmar

- **India hands over relief materials for cyclone victims**

Director General Dr Ko Ko Naing from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement received relief materials handed over by the visiting naval ship and officials from Embassy of India at Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa on June 6. Indian naval ship Sumitra, an offshore patrol vessel arrived on a goodwill visit from June 6-8 to hand over disaster relief material to Myanmar for communities affected by Cyclone Mora. The gesture was a token of solidarity of the people of India with the people of Myanmar and India remains ready to provide additional assistance to the affected communities, whenever required, according to a statement from Indian embassy in Yangon.²³

- **State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Prime Minister Of Canada MR. Justin Trudeau**

Canada pledged US\$ 8.8 million in humanitarian assistance and stability efforts following a meeting on June 7 between Myanmar State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Canadian Prime Minister Mr. Justin Trudeau. The two leaders discussed opportunities to expand their bilateral relations including efforts to improve Myanmar's governance, women's and children's well-being, and economic development, including implementation of agricultural technologies. The pair also discussed Myanmar's national reconciliation and peace process and challenges in Rakhine State.

In the afternoon, the State Counsellor attended a working lunch hosted by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms. Chrystia Freeland in the Canadian parliament building and met separately with Speaker of the House of Commons (Lower House) Mr. Geoff Regan and Speaker of the Senate (Upper House) Mr. George J. Furey.

At these meetings Canadian officials shared their experiences governing in a federal system, and points of potential cooperation in education, health, agriculture, governance and national reconciliation and peace process in Myanmar.²⁴

- **Over 1,000 refugees reportedly stranded during Kachin State operations**

Over 1,000 people were reportedly stranded on the way to Tanai in Kachin State after the Myanmar Army ordered local people to leave during a clearance operation.

²²“ASEAN, India Reaffirms Commitment to Strengthening Cooperation”, *ASEAN*, June 9, 2017, <http://asean.org/asean-india-reaffirm-commitment-to-strengthening-cooperation/>, accessed June 12, 2017.

²³“India hands over relief materials for cyclone victims”, 8 June 2017, (Accessed on 11 June 2017), <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26295-india-hands-over-relief-materials-for-cyclone-victims.html>

²⁴“STATE COUNSELLOR DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI MEETS PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA MR. JUSTIN TRUDEAU”, 9 June 2017, (Accessed on 12 June 2017), <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/923>

Pastor Naw Taung said that religious leaders from all faiths visited the Tanai Administrator's Office and discussed with the administrator, officials of government departments, and representative of Regional Operation Command (ROC) for local people to leave the area but officials would not give permission for those stranded to leave. The government dropped leaflets on gold mines and amber mines in Tanai Township informing miners to leave the mines not later than June 15 as government troops would launch area clearing operations.²⁵

North America

Canada

- **Ottawa lays out \$62-billion in new military spending over 20 years**

Ottawa has unveiled a plan to boost military spending by more than \$30-billion over the next decade – much of it to pay for the ballooning cost of new warships and fighter jets – while leaving the bulk of the new expenditures until after the next election. The blueprint for defence spending includes a more assertive role in protecting Canada's sovereignty in its vast Arctic reaches. The plan is an unexpected pivot for the Liberal Party, which campaigned largely on social spending and infrastructure promises in the last election. The move reflects a desire to demonstrate to the United States and to the world that Canada is making a bigger commitment to defence expenditures. What Mr. Sajjan did not explain is how the government will pay for this expanded military budget, whether through higher deficits or budget cutbacks in other departments. The new military-spending plan would push Canada's defence budget to \$32.7-billion a year in the 10th year of the plan, up from the current level of \$18.9-billion. The expenditures would begin to significantly rise in the next decade, or after the next election scheduled in 2019.²⁶

- **Liberals' citizenship bill to proceed with some Senate amendments**

The Liberal government is prepared to adopt some of the Senate's proposed amendments to its citizenship bill, Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen said. Bill C-6 is designed to repeal many of the previous Conservative government's changes to how people become citizens — and how they can lose that status. Among other things, the legislation would repeal a provision that strips dual citizens of their Canadian status if convicted of terrorism, treason or espionage. It has been applied to one person: Zakaria Amara, convicted for his role in a 2006 terror plot in Toronto. Far more people lose their citizenship because it was obtained fraudulently, and the Senate wants to amend the bill in order to give those people a chance at a court hearing before their status is stripped away. The government will also accept a Senate recommendation that would make it easier for children to obtain citizenship without a Canadian parent. But they are rejecting efforts to raise the upper age for citizenship language and knowledge requirements from 54 to 59,

²⁵ "Over 1,000 refugees reportedly stranded during Kachin State operations", 8 June 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/over-1000-refugees-reportedly-stranded-during-kachin-state-operations>

²⁶ Daniel Leblanc And Steven Chase, "Ottawa lays out \$62-billion in new military spending over 20 years," <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-lays-out-62-billion-in-new-military-spending-over-20-years/article35231311/>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

saying it's out of step with the goal of making citizenship easier to obtain. The current law requires those between the ages of 14 to 64 to pass those tests; the Liberals want it changed to 18 to 54.²⁷

- **Ottawa unveils new feminist foreign-aid policy**

The federal government has unveiled what it is calling “Canada’s first feminist international-assistance policy,” with plans to eventually ensure that at least 95 per cent of the country’s foreign aid helps improve the lives of women and girls. The policy, which comes after more than a year of consultations, allocates \$150-million from the department’s existing budget to establish the Women’s Voice and Leadership Program, which will respond to the needs of local women’s organizations in developing countries. The policy also says that at least 95 per cent of Canada’s international assistance spending will focus on equality and empowerment by 2021-22. But while the government committed to more than \$62-billion in new defence spending over 20 years, there are no plans to increase foreign aid to fund the new feminist policy.²⁸

The United States

- **Trump May Not Visit U.K. This Year as Planned**

Over the past week, Mr. Trump has expressed increasing skepticism to aides about the trip after coming under intense criticism for a misleading charge that he leveled against London’s mayor, Sadiq Khan. A day after terrorists killed eight people in the British capital, Mr. Trump went after Mr. Khan on Twitter, saying the mayor had played down the danger to citizens in the wake of the assault. One other factor leading to his reluctance, said one of the officials, is his preference for having foreign leaders visit him — not the other way around. But optics and politics are major considerations, too. Mr. Trump is deeply unpopular in Britain, and any visit by him — let alone a state visit with all its pomp — would probably be met with wide-scale protests. Recent polls have found that more than half of the British public views Mr. Trump as a threat to global stability.²⁹

- **Trump: Qatar must stop funding terrorism**

President Donald Trump called on Qatar to stop funding terrorism, claiming credit for and endorsing the decision of Gulf nations to ostracize their neighbour. In doing so, the President's tone, if not his message, clashed with his most senior national security officials, highlighting the often mixed messages emerging from his administration since the Qatar crisis began. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, speaking to reporters shortly before Trump's remarks, said the Gulf countries' land and air blockade of Doha is hurting the campaign against ISIS, an assessment Pentagon officials only partially corroborated.³⁰

²⁷ Stephanie Levitz, “Liberals’ citizenship bill to proceed with some Senate amendments,” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-citizenship-bill-to-proceed-with-some-senate-amendments/article35278832/>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

²⁸ Michelle Zilio, “Ottawa unveils new feminist foreign-aid policy,” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-unveils-new-feminism-focused-foreign-aid-policy/article35260311/>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

²⁹ Glenn Thrush, “Trump May Not Visit U.K. This Year as Planned,” https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/11/us/politics/trump-uk-visit.html?_r=0, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

³⁰ Nicole Gaouette, Dan Merica and Ryan Browne, “Trump: Qatar must stop funding terrorism,” <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/09/politics/trump-qatar-saudi-gulf-crisis/index.html>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

- **Trump Says Qatar Funds Terror. Here's His Record Of Trying To Get It To Fund Him.**

President Trump characterized Qatar as “historically” a “funder of terrorism at a high level,” an accusation that came just an hour after his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appealed for “no further escalation” in the Gulf Cooperation Council squabble, urging dialogue to quickly resolve the crisis, which pits Qatar against Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, and Bahrain. Tillerson noted the Qatari emir “made progress in halting financial support and expelling terrorist elements from his country,” comments echoed by the U.S. ambassador to Qatar, Dana Smith, who tweeted “Qatar is a strong partner in combating terrorist financing.” That partnership is not merely rhetorical. Qatar is home to Al-Udeid air base, the regional Central Command headquarters from which American bombers depart on daily missions against ISIS and al Qaeda. Reacting to the GCC dispute, the Defense Department praised Qatar’s commitment to fighting ISIS as its secretary, James Mattis, expressed his confidence that the turmoil would not interrupt Qatar’s contribution to those efforts. Given the weave of interests and close cooperation between the U.S. and Qatar, many are seeking ways to interpret Trump’s abrupt turn against Qatar in the dispute. Some think the answer lies not in the realm of policy but in the history of Trump’s business deals with the various actors in the dispute.³¹

- **After sowing doubts, Trump backs NATO mutual defence under charter**

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that he backs the NATO charter's demand that all members be prepared to defend each other, weeks after jarring allies by not restating U.S. support for the agreement. At a joint news conference with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, Trump said he supports the NATO charter's Article 5, the requirement that each member of the alliance defend each other if they come under attack.³²

- **India Rejects Trump's Paris Accord Charge Ahead of Modi's US Visit**

India has outrightly rejected US President Donald Trump's charge of signing the Paris accord for receiving "billions and billions and billions of dollars in foreign aid from developed countries." External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said Trump's words were not the reality. She said India "neither signed the Paris accord under pressure nor for money". PM Modi will travel to the US to meet President Donald Trump later this month. Sushma Swaraj said that the relationship is one of "mutual benefit".³³

Mexico

- **Meeting with Merkel, Mexican president calls for defense of democracy 'at a crucial time for the world'**

³¹Clayton Swisher, “Trump Says Qatar Funds Terror. Here's His Record Of Trying To Get It To Fund Him,” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-says-qatar-funds-terror-heres-his-record-of-trying-to-get-it-to-fund-him_us_593d6691e4b0c5a35ca06118?ncid=inblnkushpmsg00000009, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

³² Reuters, “After sowing doubts, Trump backs NATO mutual defence under charter,” Read more at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/after-sowing-doubts--trump-backs-nato-mutual-defence-under-charter-8934544>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

³³Maha Siddiqui, “India Rejects Trump's Paris Accord Charge Ahead of Modi's US Visit,” <http://www.news18.com/news/india/india-rejects-trumps-paris-accord-charge-as-modi-prepares-to-meet-us-president-1423151.html>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto called for the defense of free trade, democracy and environmental protections during an appearance Friday with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Though neither Peña Nieto nor Merkel mentioned President Trump by name during their joint news conference in Mexico City, his pugnacious relationship with both countries was the backdrop for much of what they had to say. Peña Nieto said Merkel's two-day state visit comes "at a crucial time for the world." Those values include free trade, a principle at the core of Mexico's relationship with the United States, and one Trump has threatened in an attempt to erase a trade gap of roughly \$60 billion in Mexico's favor. They also include combating climate change, Peña Nieto said. After Trump this month announced he will be withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement, Mexico and Germany both announced they would stay in the accord and press forward. In her remarks, Merkel emphasized the importance of nations having relationships with a wide range of countries instead of relying on alliances with just a few.³⁴

- **Mexico leftist party says will not join other parties in presidential run**

Mexico's leftist National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) party chief Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador ruled out on Sunday aligning with other traditional political parties in the run-up to the 2018 presidential elections. "Those who associate themselves and deal with the mafia of power are nothing more than opportunist mercenaries and politicians ... as such we can't move forward with those parties," Lopez Obrador said in a speech to MORENA party members and supporters in Mexico City. He said he was referring to Mexico's biggest political parties, including President Enrique Pena Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the center-right National Action Party (PAN), and the country's main leftist party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). MORENA party members will have to ratify Lopez Obrador's recommendation.³⁵

- **Mexico state election heads to court amid alleged intimidation and vote-buying**

A hotly contested state election in Mexico is heading to court after the president's cousin was declared the victor amid widespread allegations of voter intimidation, vote buying and misuse of public resources. Alfredo del Mazo Maza, the candidate for the Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI), was declared the winner after early results in the state of Mexico gave him a two-point lead over Delfina Gómez of the leftwing National Regeneration party (Morena). But with the vote so close, Morena – led by the populist firebrand Andres Manuel López Obrador – is refusing to accept the initial results. Both parties simultaneously claimed victory shortly after polling stations closed on Sunday night, and the stage is set for another messy court battle over coming weeks. The outcome will depend on whether other parties join forces with Morena to contest the results, or negotiate with PRI in order to limit the gains of López Obrador, who has emerged as an early favourite in presidential race.³⁶

³⁴ Kate Linticum, "Meeting with Merkel, Mexican president calls for defense of democracy 'at a crucial time for the world'," <http://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-merkel-20170609-story.html>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

³⁵ Reuters, "Mexico leftist party says will not join other parties in presidential run," <https://www.reuters.com/article/mexico-election-int-idUSKBN192174>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

³⁶ Nina Lakhani, "Mexico state election heads to court amid alleged intimidation and vote-buying," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/05/mexico-state-election-court-alfredo-del-mazo-maza-delfina-gomez>, Accessed on 12 June 2017.

Latin American and Caribbean

- **Germany and Argentina pledged to fight protectionism and reach a Mercosur/EU trade deal**

Germany and Argentina voiced hopes on June 8, 2017 for a free trade agreement between the European Union and Mercosur as German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Buenos Aires. In talks with Argentine President Mauricio Macri, Merkel discussed bilateral commerce and efforts to strike a deal with the Mercosur grouping of South American countries. Although disagreements between Mercosur countries had delayed the talks, Macri insisted Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay now agree on the need for a deal. The prospect of a trade partnership between the two blocs raises potentially tricky questions over the competition in the agricultural market. “I am optimistic,” Macri told the news conference. “I think Chancellor Merkel is going to have more work with the protectionists in the EU agricultural sector than we will in Mercosur.” Merkel acknowledged that “when there is a will to reach an accord, compromise solutions will have to be accepted.”

Macri has rolled back the policies of his populist predecessors and opened up Argentina to foreign trade and finance since taking office in December 2015. His moves have been praised by foreign allies but slammed by critics at home who say fiscal cuts are worsening hardship for working families. Similar criticisms were levelled at Merkel over the austerity policies she supported in Europe during its financial crisis. She praised Macri's pro-market reforms during her visit. Merkel's one-day visit also aimed to prepare the handover of the presidency of the G20 diplomatic grouping, which Argentina will take over from Germany in 2018.³⁷

- **Brazil is the ‘worst economy’ in Latin America: World Bank**

In terms of economic growth rates, no country in Latin America is growing slower than Brazil in 2017, 2018 and 2019, according to a World Bank assessment. In real GDP terms, Mexico (EWW) and the tiny Central American states are projected to grow 2.1% in 2017, then 2.4% in 2018 and 2.7% in 2019. Mexico is the growth driver. Even with Trump's border wall and anti-NAFTA rhetoric, Mexico is expected to grow at 1.8%, 2.2% and 2.5%, shows the WB report released on June 4, 2017. Brazil's rival, Argentina, will grow at 2.7%, then 3.2% over the next two years. Within South America, average growth will be 0.3% (thanks to Brazil), then rise to 1.9% in 2018 and 2.3% in 2019. In every year, compared to every country American investors can invest in through pure-play exchange traded funds, Brazil (EWZ) underperforms. Brazil's GDP is forecast to grow just 0.3% in 2017, 1.8% in 2018 and 2.1% in 2019, making it “the biggest...and baddest...economy” in the region.

Rising unemployment, now over 12%, high credit costs and continued political tensions extended deep declines in private consumption and investment over the last two years. Interest rates are coming down, but there is enough political uncertainty out there that not too many investors are

³⁷Mercopress, “Germany and Argentina Pledged to Fight Protectionism and reach a MERCOSUR-EU Trade Deal,” <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/06/09/germany-and-argentina-pledged-to-fight-protectionism-and-reach-a-mercotur-eu-trade-deal>, Accessed on June 12, 2017.

willing to double down. This is particularly true among local corporations. Brazil has a general election in October 2018 that could kill the current reform push favored by the business and investing classes. President Michel Temer may be forced to step down if a recent investigation by a higher court rules that he and his impeached former colleague Dilma Rousseff used undocumented campaign donations, possibly from bribes, to fund their 2014 re-election bid. The medium-term outlook for Brazil is further constrained by the need for private and public sector deleveraging, following a rapid increase in debt prior to the 2015–16 recession.³⁸

- **Bolivia says NO to joint military drills with U.S. in Amazonia**

Bolivia refused to participate in the military maneuvers planned for November 2017 on the triple border of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, with the presence of the United States Army, Defense Minister Reymi Ferreira said on June 9, 2017. The exercises called America Unida (America United) will take place in the Brazilian state of Amazonia and, in addition to the mentioned countries, could involve troops from Argentina, Panama, and Canada. “The Armed Forces of Bolivia will not participate in such maneuvers,” the head of Defense told reporters. Ferreira added that his country received the invitation from Brazil for the exercises, but it did not accept it. In total there will be 10 days of simulations directed from a multinational base in the city of Tabatinga, border with Leticia in Colombia, and Santa Rosa in Peru. The maneuvers will take as reference the operation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) held in Hungary in 2015 and deployed 1,700 soldiers. Political observers fear that the exercise will serve as a pretext for establishing a base in the region, as happened after NATO’s maneuvers in Hungary.³⁹

Russia

- **Russia and Its Economic Vision**

While addressing the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, an annual gathering where investors look to the Kremlin to set the direction of travel for the economy, President Vladimir Putin on June 2 said that Russia’s economy lies in developing the digital economy. But he had few detailed and finalised plans on how to achieve that ambition. His speech apart from this did not include anything new as the other themes on which he spoke—on improving the investment climate, on protection of ownership rights—he had spoke in the previous years. He did not set out what economic strategy he would pursue if, as most people anticipate, he is re-elected in 2018 for another six-year term, though he still had time to formulate his strategy before the election. Alexei Kudrin, a former finance minister, said that between 2008 and 2017, the average economic growth rate was 1 percent. The reasons, he flagged out were the failure to conduct reforms and the state takeover of the economy. The liberal camp’s main prescriptions for the economy involve a privatization program to shrink the state’s role, decisive steps to rein in law enforcement agencies that they say harass businesses, and guarantees that bureaucrats will not

³⁸ Santiago Times, “Brazil is the ‘worst economy’ in Latin America: World Bank,” <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/06/brazil-is-the-worst-economy-in-latin-america-world-bank/>, Accessed on June 12, 2017.

³⁹ Santiago Times, “Bolivia Says No to Joint Military Drills with US in Amazonia,” <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/09/bolivia-says-no-to-joint-military-drills-with-u-s-in-amazonia/>, Accessed on June 12, 2017.

steal businesses from their owners. This group is countered though by a powerful group with ties to the Kremlin and state-owned business who believe bold reforms could hurt stability, and that the state needs a strong role in the economy to protect national security.⁴⁰

- **Protests within Russia**

Tens of thousands of protesters held anti-corruption rallies across Russia on June 5 in a new show of defiance by an opposition that the Kremlin had once dismissed as ineffectual and marginalized. More than a thousand were arrested — including opposition leader and protest organizer Alexei Navalny. He is sentenced 30 days in jail. The protests coincided with Russia Day.⁴¹

- **Russia and India**

The world's first hybrid "aeroboot" capable of travelling on land, water, snow and sand that has been built by an Indo-Russian joint venture was unveiled in Moscow on June 6 at a start-ups event organised by Russia's state-run Skolkovo Foundation. The aeroboot is designed to access difficult terrain, such as flooded or marshy areas where the use of regular boats is made impossible because of shallow water, patches of dry land or by marine vegetation. It has been designed by IIAAT Holding, a joint venture between the International Institute for Advanced Aerospace Technologies and Indian firm Millennium Aerodynamics.⁴²

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj told a media conference on June 5 that countries friendly to China, including Russia, should persuade it to ensure New Delhi's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). She also spoke on "One Belt, One Road" project and said that India was opposed to the project because on the issue of sovereignty because the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passed through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.⁴³

- **Russia and Macedonia**

According to a leak of classified documents from the country's intelligence agency, the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Russian spies and diplomats have been involved in a nearly decade-long effort to spread propaganda and provoke discord in Macedonia. The documents suggest that Moscow has been seeking to step up its influence all across the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The Kremlin's goal is to stop them from joining Nato and to pry them away from western influence, the reports say. The report also shows efforts by Serbian

⁴⁰Darya Korsunskaya and Andrey Ostroukh, "Putin leaves Russians guessing on economic reform plan", *Reuters*, June 3, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-economic-forum-reform-idUSKBN18U09J> Accessed on June 12, 2017.

⁴¹Jim Heintz, Nataliya Vasilyeva, "Tens of Thousands Protest Against Russian Government", *Times*, June 12, 2017. <http://time.com/4814408/russia-putin-alexi-navalny-arrest-protest/> Accessed on June 13, 2017.

⁴²Biswajit Choudhury, "World's first hybrid 'aeroboot' made by Indo-Russian JV unveiled", *Economic Times*, June 7, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/engineering/worlds-first-hybrid-aeroboot-made-by-indo-russian-jv-unveiled/articleshow/59032621.cms> Accessed on June 12, 2017.

⁴³"Friends should persuade China on India's entry into NSG: Sushma Swaraj", *Economic Times*, June 5, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/friends-should-persuade-china-on-indias-entry-into-nsg-sushma-swaraj/articleshow/59004485.cms> Accessed on June 12, 2017.

intelligence to support pro-Russian and anti-western nationalists in Macedonia. The leak document suggested that Russian and Serbian efforts to push Macedonia away from the west have contributed to the country's long-running political and ethnic crisis. The leaked files also shed light on how the Kremlin conducts espionage. Russia has also drastically stepped up its cultural outreach in Macedonia, pushing an idea of "pan-Slavic" identity and shared Orthodox Christian faith.⁴⁴

- **Russia and Montenegro**

Montenegro formally becomes the 29th member of the Western military alliance at a ceremony in Washington on June 5. Russia's Foreign Ministry said on the same day "Russia reserves the right to take counter-measures on the basis of reciprocity amid the Montenegrin authorities' hostile stance." It did not elaborate, but Russia has threatened economic and political retaliation, including a campaign to undermine the Montenegrin tourism industry, which relies heavily on Russian visitors. Bringing Montenegro into NATO further diminishes Russia's influence in southeast Europe, and blocks it from the so-called "warm seas" in Europe that could be used as staging grounds for military interventions in West Asia. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova recently warned potential Russian tourists that "there is an anti-Russian hysteria in Montenegro." The president of the Russian-speaking diaspora in Montenegro, Alexander Khrgian, dismissed the claim. He said that about 15,000 Russian-speaking people who permanently live in Montenegro feel safe.⁴⁵

- **Russia and the US**

According to US researchers, hackers allied with the Russian government have devised a cyberweapon that has the potential to be the most disruptive yet against electric systems that Americans depend on for daily life. The malware, which researchers have dubbed CrashOverride, is known to have disrupted only one energy system — in Ukraine in December 2016. In that incident, the hackers briefly shut down one-fifth of the electric power generated in Kiev.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Luke Harding, Aubrey Belford and Saska Cvetkovska, "Russia actively stoking discord in Macedonia since 2008, intel files say", *The Guardian*, June 4, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/04/russia-actively-stoking-discord-in-macedonia-since-2008-intel-files-say-leak-kremlin-balkan-nato-west-influence> Accessed on June 12, 2017.

⁴⁵Predrag Milic, "Defying Russia, Montenegro finally joins NATO", *ABC News*, June 5, 2017.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/defying-russia-montenegro-finally-joins-nato-47837516> Accessed on June 12, 2017.

⁴⁶Ellen Nakashima, "Russia has developed a cyberweapon that can disrupt power grids, according to new research", *The Washington Post*, June 12, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/russia-has-developed-a-cyber-weapon-that-can-disrupt-power-grids-according-to-new-research/2017/06/11/b91b773e-4eed-11e7-91eb-9611861a988f_story.html?utm_term=.9f7abad3cd8b Accessed on June 13, 2017.

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Ghani Appoints Khalili As HPC Chief On Eve Of Peace Meeting** - President Ashraf Ghani on last Monday night announced the appointment of Mohammad Karim Khalili, a former vice president, to lead the High Peace Council (HPC). The announcement was made on the eve of the Kabul Process meeting, which was held in the capital on Tuesday. Ghani said that he hopes Khalili takes the political aspects of the peace process into consideration and responds positively to the demands of women and civil society institutions in the process. Meanwhile, a number of politicians have termed Khalili's appointment as new HPC chief a hasty decision ahead of the Kabul Process meeting. Khalili who has been the deputy head of the HPC leads the Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami Afghanistan party. Some HPC members have welcomed Khalili's appointment and say they hope he will open the doors for peace negotiations with the Taliban. However, many politicians say that the HPC is no longer effective in terms of promoting peace talks, saying Ghani wants to keep politicians busy with such tasks. The High Peace Council was initially established by former president Hamid Karzai in 2010.⁴⁷
- **Ghani, World Leaders Discuss Terror, Expansion of Trade Ties** - In his meeting with world leaders on the sidelines of the Shanghai Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, President Ashraf Ghani discussed fighting against terrorism and expansion of Afghanistan's trade ties with regional countries – including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Presidential Palace said in a statement on Friday that Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and President Ghani agreed on establishing a joint committee to seek ways for extension of economic cooperation between the two countries. The Uzbekistan president said a high ranking delegation of his country has prepared a road map for cooperation between the two countries in different levels. He suggested a joint economic team to seek broader ways for Kabul-Astana trade ties. Ghani also met with Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon in Astana city on Thursday evening, discussing economic projects between the two neighboring countries. Rahmon said Tajikistan was ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in transit affairs – particularly in the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Sher Khan Port and China-Iran railways. Also, President Ghani met with Iran Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif where they discussed the Kabul Process meeting, fighting against terrorism and other mutual interest issues.

⁴⁷ "Ghani Appoints Khalili As HPC Chief On Eve Of Peace Meeting", *Tolonews*, 06 June 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ghani-appoints-khalili-hpc-chief-eve-peace-meeting> accessed on 10 June 2017.

The two sides agreed on establishing of a joint committee in order to work on cooperation in different sectors between Afghanistan and Iran.⁴⁸

- **Last Chance for Taliban to Join Peace Talks: Ghani** - Inaugurating the Kabul Process conference here, the president said the aim of the meeting was to strike and show solidarity against terrorism, barbarism and move towards a fair peace. "Finding a roadmap to peace in this complex valley of the world is not a simple job," he said. He said the war in Afghanistan had many dimensions and targeting small parts of terrorism would not work until a specific framework was created for resolving the phenomenon, Ghani said. "The world should support us in responding to this threat, we are gathered here today because the international community has pledged it would not tolerate terrorism and countries supporting it. We today want the world to be committed to its pledges against terrorism," he added.⁴⁹
- **Pakistan's ISI Behind Appointment of New ISIS Chief in Afghanistan: Uzbekistani** - A top leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group in Afghanistan has declared his opposition regarding the appointment of a Pakistani national, Sheikh Aslam Farooqi, as the new leader of the terror group in Afghanistan. He has called the appointment of Farooqi as an attempt by the Pakistani military intelligence, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).

"Even if this information is true, then it's the ISI of Pakistan behind this function and we don't accept it, because we all fight for Allah and his religion," the ISIS leader Moawiya Uzbekistani has said in a letter which has been obtained by the Associated Press. He has also warned regarding against "infidels, intelligence services and the deceitful" acting from "behind the scenes."⁵⁰

- **MPs Warn of Repercussions Amid Growing Jamiat-ARG Tension** - Lawmakers said the continuation of such a rift will further add to the problems the country is currently facing. Lawmaker in the Wolesi Jirga on June 7, 2017, said the growing tension between the Presidential Palace and Jamiat-e-Islami party will have serious repercussions for the country if the problem is not sorted out. They said the continuation of such a rift will further add to the woes of the country and will only benefit the enemies.

On the issue of protests in Kabul, some MPs said that setting up tented sit-in camps in the city has led to major problems for the people. But some MPs voiced support for these protestors.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Ghani, World Leaders Discuss Terror, Expansion Of Trade Ties", *Tolonews*, 09 June 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ghani-world-leaders-discuss-terror-expanding-trade-ties> accessed on 10 June 2017.

⁴⁹ "Last Chance for Taliban to Join Peace Talks: Ghani", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 7, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18349 (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁵⁰ "Pakistan's ISI behind appointment of new ISIS chief in Afghanistan: Uzbekistani", *Khaama Press*, June 7, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/pakistans-isi-behind-appointment-of-new-isis-chief-in-afghanistan-uzbekistani-02884> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁵¹ "MPs Warn of Repercussions Amid Growing Jamiat-ARG Tension", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 8, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18361 (accessed on June 12, 2017)

- **NATO Officials Label Corruption As Big Challenge In MoI** - Afghan and foreign officials at a ceremony on June 10, 2017, reviewed the annual report on the implementation of strategic plan of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) where NATO's Resolute Support officials labeled corruption, failures in procurement and management as the issues which "have affected the activities of the interior ministry".

Lieutenant General Jürgen Weigt, Chief of Staff of the Resolute Support mission, said the Afghan people and the international community expect the Interior Ministry to ensure security and obtain people's trust. He said more than 40 contracts of the ministry have remained pending. Meanwhile, the Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Jahid said he believes that corruption is more dangerous than insurgency. He called on the Resolute Support mission to boost its assistance to the Afghan security forces.⁵²

- **President Ghani and Nawaz Sharif Hold Talks on Key Issues on SCO Sidelines** - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said the leaders of the two nations held talks on key issues, including fight against terrorism and Afghan peace efforts during the bilateral meeting.

"In meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, President Ashraf Ghani stressed the urgency for reducing violence against civilians in Afghanistan," a statement by the ARG Palace said. The statement further added that President Ghani agreed to use Quadrilateral Coordination Group with China and US to resolve differences with Pakistan.⁵³

Bangladesh

- **Budget corruption-friendly: TIB** - The Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has said the 'guideless' proposed budget placed for fiscal 2017-18 will institutionalise corruption in the country. The anti-graft agency voiced concern over the proposals of recapitalisation of tax money in corruption-prone banking sector, discriminatory taxation on lower and middle-income people and continuation of the scope of whitening black money in the proposed budget.⁵⁴
- **They will be evicted with the clothes on their backs: Khaleda** - BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Wednesday (June 7) said that people will one day evict ruling party men from their houses the way she and her party's senior leader Moudud Ahmed had been

⁵² Samim Faramarz, "NATO Officials Label Corruption As Big Challenge In MoI", *Tolo News*, June 10, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/nato-officials-label-corruption-big-challenge-moi> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁵³ "President Ghani and Nawaz Sharif hold talks on key issues on SCO sidelines", *Khaama Press*, June 11, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-and-nawaz-sharif-hold-talks-on-key-issues-on-sco-sidelines-02910> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁵⁴ "Budget corruption-friendly," *Prothom Alo*, June 6, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/150353/Budget-corruption-friendly-TIB> (accessed June 6, 2017)

evicted. Earlier in the day, Rajdhahi Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) took over BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed's Gulshan house following a court order.⁵⁵

- **Will we only lament?: Khaleda** - Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Khaleda Zia on Saturday (June 10) called on the people to build peaceful resistance against the Bangladesh Awami League government. "Will we only lament? Everyone should discuss and take a decision. Will the country run in this manner?" Calling on the people to build peaceful resistance, Khaleda said the people will have to take to streets in unison after the Eid-ul Fitr in order to protest against the government's repression and oppression. "If that happens, all will join the protests."⁵⁶
- **AL wants to keep Hefazat in check** - Awami League (AL) wants to maintain its relationship with Hefazat-e-Islam to ensure that the Islamist group is not used by others to create another May 5-like situation ahead of the next general elections. AL does not see the relationship as a political liaison and it will never become that, said the party's policy-level leadership. There is no truth to the speculation that the AL is looking at Hefazat as a possible coalition partner to contest in the next general election, let alone share seats in parliament. However, the ruling party may give nomination to certain candidates for the next election if the Hefazat lobbies for them.⁵⁷
- **No polls without BNP: Khaleda**, June 12 - BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said there would be no election in the country keeping her party away. "The Awami League came to know that if a fair election is held, they will surely be defeated. That's why they want to keep BNP away from the election through various conspiracies. But the election cannot be held without BNP. It will be held under an election-time supportive government, not under Sheikh Hasina," she said.⁵⁸

नेपाल

- देउबा चौथी बार प्रधानमंत्री बने - नेपाली कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष शेर बहादुर देउबा पुष्पकमल दहाल के इस्तीफा देने के बाद नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री चुने गये है 12 वर्ष पहले उन्हें नरेश शानेन्द्र द्वारा प्रधानमंत्री के पद से बर्खास्त किया गया था से में मतों ५९३ में संसद को देउबा ३८८ मत मिले पिछले ने प्रचंड . इस्तीफा उन्होंने मुताबिक जिसके था किया एग्रीमेंट जेंटलमैन एक साथ के देउबा में जुलाई साल

⁵⁵ "They will be evicted with the clothes on their backs'," *Dhaka Tribune*, June 8, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2017/06/07/theyll-evicted-clothes-backs/> (accessed June 8, 2017)

⁵⁶ "Khaleda asks, 'Will we only lament?'," *Prothom Alo*, June 10, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/150689/Khaleda-asks-%E2%80%98Will-we-only-lament%E2%80%99> (accessed June 10, 2017)

⁵⁷ Pavel Haider Chowdhury, "AL wants to keep Hefazat in check ahead of elections," *Dhaka Tribune*, June 11, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2017/06/11/al-wants-to-keep-hefazat-in-check-ahead-of-elections/> (accessed June 11, 2017)

⁵⁸ "No polls without BNP: Khaleda," *Daily Star*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/no-polls-without-bnp-khaleda-1418884> (accessed June 12, 2017)

, (माओवादी) एन पी सी की दहाल बने प्रधानमंत्री देउबा और दियाराष्ट्रीय प्रजातंत्र पार्टी राष्ट्रीय ,
- पार्टी जनतानेपाल फोरम समाजवादी संघीय , नेपाल आदि दलों ने देउबा के पक्ष में वोट दिए .
. रहेंगी प्राथमिकता की देउबा संशोधन संविधान और चुनाव के स्तर तीनों में नेपाल⁵⁹

- भारत और चीन ने बधाई दी - भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने शेर बहादुर देउबा को प्रधानमन्त्री बनने पर फोन द्वारा बधाईयाँ दी इसके अतिरिक्त नेपाल में चीन के राजदूत यू हांग ने देउबा के निवास स्थान पर जाकर उन्हें बधाईयाँ दी.⁶⁰
- कार्की का महाभियोग वापस - नेपाल की संसद ने मुख्य न्यायधीश सुशीला कार्की के विरुद्ध लगाये गए महाभियोग को वापस ले लिया हैथ वाली होने सेवानिवृत्त बाद दिन दो अभी वे .ी.⁶¹
- सरकार ने आरजेपी के चुनाव आगे खिसकाने के प्रस्ताव को ठुकराया - वर्तमान गठबंधन की सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी नेपाल के दूसरे चरण में होने वाले स्थानीय चुनाव के प्रस्ताव को ठुकरा दिया हैचुनाव वे अभी कि कहा से नेताओं के पी जे आर ने देउबा बहादुर शेर . टालने की बात न करें क्योंकि एक चरण पूरा हो गया है और देश दूसरे चरण के लिए तैयार है.⁶²

भूटान

- जापान की राजकुमारी ने भूटान का दौरा किया - जापान की राजकुमारी माको ने भूटान का नो दिवस का राजकीय भ्रमण किया ने पेमा पत्नी उनकी और खेसर जिग्मी रजा के भटन उन्हें . आमंत्रित किया था पर मुद्दे के करने मजबूत को रिश्तों के जापान और भूटान उन्होंने पर मौके इस . की बातचीत⁶³

Pakistan

- **Qatar and Pakistan** - Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, on June 5th cut ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting extremism.⁶⁴ Due to the decision, many Pakistani pilgrims (around 550) got stranded in Doha. All the stranded pilgrims were flown to Saudi Arabia via Muscat in two flights on June 6th. These pilgrims were travelling to Saudi Arabia for Umrah via Qatar.⁶⁵ The National Assembly on June 8th unanimously passed a resolution urging Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia as well as Qatar to show restraint

⁵⁹ Binod Ghimire, "Deuba elected PM for fourth time", The Kathmandu Post, 7 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-07/1>

⁶⁰ "India China extend congratulations, The Kathmandu Post, 7 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-07/1>

⁶¹ "Karki impeachment motion withdrawn", The Kathmandu Post, 7 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-07/1>

⁶² Ruling Alliance rejects RJP-N poll delay call", The Kathmandu Post, 11 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-11/1>

⁶³ "Princess Mako returns from nine-day trip to Bhutan , "the Japan Times, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/08/national/princess-mako-returns-nine-day-trip-bhutan/#.WT51uGiGPIV>

⁶⁴ "S. Arabia, five others sever ties with Qatar in diplomatic crisis", *Dawn*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1337731> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁶⁵ Naveed Siddiqui, "550 Pakistani pilgrims stranded in Qatar flown to Muscat", *Dawn*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1337785> (accessed on June 12, 2017); "Pilgrims stranded in Doha flown to Saudi Arabia", *Dawn*, June 7, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1337911> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

and resolve their differences through dialogue.⁶⁶ It can be noted here that a Turkish news agency reported that a bill seeking the deployment of 20,000 Pakistan troops to Qatar had been presented before the National Assembly and was later approved by house.⁶⁷ However, FO Spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said on June 11th that the foreign media reports were "fabricated and baseless", adding that they were part of a "malicious campaign" seeking to drive a wedge between Pakistan and its Gulf allies.⁶⁸ It has been reported by Pakistani media that a six-member Qatari delegation, headed by businessman Abdulhadi Mana Al Hajri, reportedly visited Pakistan during the past week and relayed a message from the Qatari Emir asking Pakistan to play a positive role in resolving the diplomatic crisis engulfing the Middle East. The FO, however, officially denied having any knowledge of the visit and stressed the need for unity among Muslim countries.⁶⁹

- **US, China and Pakistan** – A US Defence Department report, titled “Military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China, 2017”, published on June 6th, stated that China will most likely seek to establish a military base in Pakistan. China would build more overseas bases after establishing a facility in the African nation of Djibouti.⁷⁰ China on June 7th dismissed as irresponsible the annual US Defence Department report that predicted China would expand its global military presence. The defence ministry in a statement refuted the US assessment, saying “China is not doing any military expansion and does not seek a sphere of influence”.⁷¹
- **Pakistan and SCO** - Pakistan formally became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) during the 17th meeting of its Heads of the State Council in Astana on June 9th. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev made an announcement to this effect after signing of documents by the founding members at the conclusion of the summit. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif along with a delegation, including Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz, Commerce Minister Khurram Dastagir and Minister of State for Petroleum Jam Kamal, attended the meeting. In his address at the summit, PM Sharif said

⁶⁶ Syed Irfan Raza, “NA urges Arab states to resolve differences through dialogue”, *Dawn*, June 9, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338390> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁶⁷ “Pakistan will send 20 thousand soldiers Qatar”, *TRT Urdu*, June 12, 2016, <http://www.trt.net.tr/urdu/pkhstn/2017/06/09/pkhstn-pny-20-hzr-fwjy-qtr-rwnh-khry-g-749046> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁶⁸ “FO rubbishes reports of Pakistani troop deployment in Qatar”, *Dawn*, June 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338883/fo-rubbishes-reports-of-pakistani-troop-deployment-in-qatar> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁶⁹ “FO rubbishes reports of Pakistani troop deployment in Qatar”, *Dawn*, June 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338883/fo-rubbishes-reports-of-pakistani-troop-deployment-in-qatar> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁷⁰ Anwar Iqbal, “China most likely to establish military base in Pakistan: Pentagon”, *Dawn*, June 8, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338159/china-most-likely-to-establish-military-base-in-pakistan-pentagon> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁷¹ *Beijing dismisses US report as irresponsible*, *Dawn*, June 8, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338153/beijing-dismisses-us-report-as-irresponsible> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

Pakistan, as a full member of the SCO, would strive further to achieve collective objectives of the organisation for regional cooperation, connectivity and economic prosperity.⁷²

- **Pakistan and Chinese Navy** – Three Chinese warships, Chang Chun, Jing Zhou and Chao Hu — which are part of the task group led by Deputy Commander of the East Sea Fleet, Rear Admiral Shen Hao, reached Karachi on June 10th on a goodwill visit. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Zakauallah said that visit by the People’s Liberation Army-Navy task group would enhance interoperability and maritime collaboration between the two navies.⁷³

Indian Ocean Region

- **UN Ocean Conference** - The first ever United Nations Ocean Conference (05-09 June 2017) concluded in New York on June 09, 2017 with a strong commitment to "reverse the decline of Ocean health."⁷⁴ A 14 point Call for Action adopted during the Ocean Conference, indicate strong commitments by participating countries to conserve and sustainable use of oceans, sea and maritime resources.⁷⁵ The Conference was an attempt to raise global awareness on diverse Ocean problems ranging from illegal fishing to issues linked with high seas governance.⁷⁶ According to UN News Centre, about 6000 people from various sections of the society participated in the Ocean Conference to discuss the challenges facing the Oceans.⁷⁷ Fiji and Sweden were the co-host of the conference.
- **India at UN Ocean Conference** - Addressing the UN Ocean Conference in New York on June 08 June 2017, Minister of State for External Affairs, M J Akbar reiterated India's commitments towards sustainable development of the Blue Economy. Minister of State for External Affairs said, "we welcome the comprehensive Call for Action being issued by this landmark conference. We are also happy to note the innovative mechanism of a registry for Voluntary Commitments. India is also engaging actively in this initiative. India remains committed to sustainable development of its Blue Economy and building partnerships for the 2030 Agenda, including the SDG14. "⁷⁸

⁷² "Pakistan joins security bloc led by China, Russia", *Dawn*, June 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338647> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁷³ "PN chief sees extended ties with China", *Dawn*, June 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338801/pn-chief-sees-extended-ties-with-china> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

⁷⁴ UN Ocean Conference wraps up with actions to restore ocean health, protect marine life, June 09 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56947#.WT4irWiGMb4>, Accessed on June 10, 2017.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ocean Conference concludes, June 10, 2017, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1706/S00018/ocean-conference-concludes.htm>, Accessed on June 10, 2017.

⁷⁷ UN Ocean Conference wraps up with actions to restore ocean health, protect marine life, June 09 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56947#.WT4irWiGMb4>, Accessed on June 10, 2017.

⁷⁸ Statement by M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs at UNGA's Ocean Conference, New York, June 08, 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28519/Statement_by_MJ_Akbar_Minister_of_State_for_External_Affairs_at_UNGAs_Ocean_Conference_New_York_June_08_2017, Accessed on June 10, 2017.

"The rapid and sustained economic growth across oceans is proof that the world's economic engines are purring to a new tune in the 21st century. We must turn this into the harmony of a great choir, where each of us is an equal voice. The 21st century will be shaped by the principles of equality and sovereignty. Those who believe in discord have no place in a choir." further he said.⁷⁹ Underlining the importance of secure and open sea lanes, he said, "we cannot allow our seas to turn into zones of contention. An age of shared prosperity demands co-operation. Secure and open sea lanes are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development."⁸⁰

- **Rs 60,000 crore for submarine plan** - As reported by media, the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, is expected to issue expression of interest for Rs. 60,000 crore P-75(I) submarines programme soon.⁸¹ If commenced, the programme will be the first one to be launched under the 'Strategic Partnership' (SP) model finalised by Government of India in May 2017.⁸² The project P-75 (I) will be a follow-on project of Project 75; will invite private players for defence production.⁸³ At present, six scorpion class submarines, designed by a French company are being built at Mazgaon Dock, Mumbai.⁸⁴ Further, there is a plan to build six scorpion submarines under 75 (I) programme.⁸⁵
- **Iran sends naval warships to Oman** - Amid crisis in Gulf, Iran has dispatched the 47th flotilla "comprised of an Alborz destroyer and Bushehr logistic warship" to Oman on 10 June, 2017.⁸⁶ As reported by media, from Oman the ships will further move towards the international water of Gulf of Aden and north of Indian Ocean.⁸⁷ It will replace 46th flotilla which was due to return to Iran on June 10, 2017 after completing two months mission to protect merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden.⁸⁸

Maldives

- **Statement by the Government of Maldives** - The Government of Maldives has decided to sever diplomatic relations with Qatar effective from 5 June 2017. The Maldives took the decision because of its firm opposition to activities that encourage terrorism and extremism. The Maldives has always pursued a policy of promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. The Maldives reiterates its commitment to work with countries that

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rs 60,000 crore P-75i submarine programme likely this week, June 09, 2017, <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/expression-of-interest-for-rs-60000-cr-p-75i-submarine-programme-likely-this-week/708857/>, Accessed on June 11, 2017.

⁸² Govt to kick off Rs 60,000 crore submarine plan, June 12, 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-to-kick-off-rs-60000-crore-submarine-plan/articleshow/59100577.cms>, Accessed on June 11, 2017.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Iran sends warships to Oman amid Gulf dispute, June 10, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/iran-sends-warships-oman-gulf-dispute-170611165049643.html>, Accessed on June 11, 2017.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Iran sends warships to Oman amid Gulf tensions, June 11, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/391855-iran-sends-warships-to-oman/>,

promote peace, stability, and show solidarity in the fight against terrorism. The Maldives established diplomatic relations with Qatar on 26 May 1984.⁸⁹

- **Maldives slams UK-led criticism of human rights situation** - The Maldives has scornfully dismissed calls by more than 30 countries to restore constitutional freedoms, allow space for political opposition, and prevent the intimidation of human rights defenders. The appeals came at the UN Human Rights Council on Wednesday in a statement delivered by the UK on behalf of more than 30 countries including the United States and Germany. The Western countries welcomed the government's avowed commitment to ensure justice for the brutal murder of liberal blogger Yameen Rasheed – whose father was present at the opening of the council's 35th session in Geneva – and called for “steps to prevent the intimidation of human rights defenders including by those promoting violent extremism.”

The statement noted that Yameen had “repeatedly drawn attention to the threats he was facing” and “visited this council to raise awareness of the shrinking space for freedom of expression, as well as the abduction and disappearance of fellow blogger Ahmed Rilwan, whose fate remains unknown.” It also emphasised the importance of allowing space for opposition parties and expressed regret that constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression “is being increasingly curtailed”. “It is equally important that the Maldives enhance the independence of its judiciary and other domestic institutions and ensure that they provide the checks and balances which are essential for any democracy,” the statement added.⁹⁰

Sri Lanka

- **India and Sri Lanka look to break deadlock on fishing issue** - Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake on his first visit overseas as Minister of Foreign Affairs, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and held discussions with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on 6 June 2017. He also met Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar and others.⁹¹ Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake and Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj had talks on the contentious fishing issue. Foreign Ministry sources said that Swaraj had assured the Minister that funds are being allocated to assist Indian fishermen in deep sea fishing so they can avoid Sri Lankan waters. Several rounds of talks between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen have so far failed to result in a final solution to the issue. Swaraj last month held a meeting in New Delhi to discuss the issues on the frequent arrest of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lanka Navy and also alleged confiscation of the boats. A public interest litigation (PIL) petition was filed in the Madras High Court seeking that the issue of alleged attacks

⁸⁹ “Statement by the Government of Maldives”, 5 June 2017, (Accessed on 6 June 2017) <http://www.foreign.gov.mv/index.php/en/mediacentre/news/3905-statement-by-the-government-of-maldives-3>

⁹⁰ “Maldives slams UK-led criticism of human rights situation”, 8 June 2017, (Accessed on 9 June 2017) <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/maldives-slams-uk-led-criticism-of-human-rights-situation-131105>

⁹¹ Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake visits India, 6 June 2017, (Accessed on 7 June 2017) <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/en/media/media-releases/7013-fm-india>

on Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy be referred to International Court of Justice (ICJ).⁹²

- **ADB provides USD 2 million for disaster relief efforts** - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to provide USD 2 million for disaster relief efforts in Sri Lanka. An agreement in this regard was signed at the Ministry of Finance today (9th June) by Dr. R.H.S. Samarathunga, Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Mass Media and Tadateru Hayashi, Senior Country Economist / Officer-in-Charge of the Sri Lanka Resident Mission of the ADB. This USD 2 million is provided to the government of Sri Lanka as a grant under ADB's Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund to purchase emergency relief materials and help restore community services.⁹³
- **Negotiations still ongoing on Hambantota port deal** - An agreement is yet to be reached between the government and a Chinese company on the Hambantota port. Ports and Shipping Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said that talks on the port are still ongoing. The Chinese company and the government have been in talks for several months on operating the port but no deal has been reached yet. A deal was to be reached in January. However pressure from the opposition led to the signing of the deal being postponed. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament later that discussions on the port agreement are still ongoing and that no agreement had been reached. He said the final draft agreement will be submitted to Parliament before it is signed. The Prime Minister said that the Government is facing a severe financial loss as a result of the port and the losses need to be recovered.⁹⁴
- **Sri Lanka defends China's Belt and Road project** - Chinese investment in Sri Lanka is reviving a "3,000-5,000-year-old shipping route", said Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake, defending his Government's decision to join the Belt and Road Initiative. "The fact is that regional trade needs to move forward. If one country is doing a project, that is not against another country," Karunanayake told journalists in India at the end of his two-day visit to New Delhi. "Like Hong Kong was a launching pad for China, Sri Lanka would like to be a hub of economic activity for India," he added. Karunanayake said Colombo hoped for similar investments from India and Japan, and would welcome Indian investment in the "East Terminal" of the Colombo Port, one of two new container terminals to be built in the next phase of the Chinese-built harbour project. Five

⁹² India and Sri Lanka look to break deadlock on fishing issue, 11 June 2017, (Accessed on 12 June 2017) <http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/11/india-and-sri-lanka-look-to-break-deadlock-in-fishing-issue/>

⁹³ ADB provides USD 2 million for disaster relief efforts , 9 June 2017, (Accessed on 12 June 2017) <https://news.lk/news/political-current-affairs/item/17072-adb-provides-usd-2-million-for-disaster-relief-efforts>

⁹⁴ "Negotiations still ongoing on Hambantota port deal", 11 June 2017, (Accessed on 12 June 2017) <http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/11/negotiations-still-ongoing-on-hambantota-port-deal/>

consortiums including two with Indian companies, Container Corporation of India and Shapoorji Pallonji Limited, are reported to have filed bids for the project in 2016.⁹⁵

- **Malaysia denies entry to Vaiko for alleged LTTE link** - Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) Chief Vaiko was denied entry into Malaysia on 9th June due to his alleged links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The MDMK Chief was stopped at the Kuala Lumpur Airport and questioned for several hours on his alleged links with the Tamil rebel group and later denied permission to enter the country. ANI reported that Vaiko was identified as a member of the LTTE and revealed that his name also figured in the list of persons who were dangerous.⁹⁶

West Asia

Saudi Arabia and GCC

- **Sanction on Qatar: Real or Motivated**

On Monday 5 June 2017, four powerful Arab countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt snapped their full diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar.⁹⁷ They slapped Doha for funding Islamists and keeping pro-Iran sentiments, which are against both the objectives of the Gulf unity and fighting against terrorism. The list of countries against Qatar is growing. Now, Yemen, Eastern Libya, Mauritania, Nigeria and to some extent Jordan have also joined the sanction cavalcade.⁹⁸ The Qatari Emir has denied these charges; its cabinet termed the action as “unjustified” and their allegation reached to the point of “fabrication”.⁹⁹ Although, Qatar is ready to resolve the crisis and has trusted the task to Kuwait, its foreign ministry has politely refused to compromise with the independence of its foreign policy.¹⁰⁰

It is true that Doha has been quite active in engaging everyone, including Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, Hamas, backing Islamists in Libya, Al Qaeda’s hardline Al Nusra in Syria, mediating between Taliban and Kabul for reconciliation, mediating between Hamas and Fatah Group; signing strategic and military agreement with Turkey for stationing its troops in Doha and keeping both Israel and Iran happy. However, funding, backing and supporting of proxy groups and Islamists and having a working relation with Iran and Israel has neither been unique nor exclusive to Qatar. Kuwait, Oman and even the UAE have also balanced their diplomatic

⁹⁵“ Sri Lanka defends China’s Belt and Road project”, 8 June 2017, (Accessed on 11 June 2017) <http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/08/sri-lanka-defends-chinas-belt-and-road-project/>

⁹⁶“Malaysia denies entry to Vaiko for alleged LTTE link”, 9 June 2017, (Accessed on 11 June 2017) <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Malaysia-denies-entry-to-Vaiko-for-alleged-LTTE-link->

⁹⁷<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/05/saudi-arabia-and-bahrain-break-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar-over-terrorism>

⁹⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/qatar-diplomatic-crisis-latest-updates-170605105550769.html>

⁹⁹

¹⁰⁰ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/09/middleeast/qatar-diplomatic-crisis/index.html>

relations with Iran. Recent news confirm that UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt too have improved their relations with Israel. These countries have also been involved in funding, backing and using Islamists and proxy groups to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Saudi Arabia has been widely seen as spreading hardline Islam across the world. As a result, the action Qatar is also not seen as a fair and justified one. Rather it seems motivated and fabricated to many in the world.

- **Factors that made Arab countries to impose sanction on Qatar**

The main reason that provoked the four Gulf powers to take action against Qatar has been seen in political and strategic developments, which took place after the visit of President Trump to Saudi Arabia. The twin objectives of President Trump were to combat the radical elements of Islam and roll back Iran and for this, he chose Saudi Arabia as its regional military ally. The two countries signed huge arms deals, approximately of US\$100 billion, which would increase to US\$350 billion in the next ten years. The sole aim of the big arms deal was told to strengthen Saudi Arabia's security and defense capabilities and prepare Riyadh to share the US security burden in the region. However, the obverse side of the event says a different story. It was President Trump, who needed money to achieve the objectives of AMERICA FIRST POLICY and Saudi Arabia, as Iran calls, is the "milching cow". Whatever might be the story behind the visit of President Trump and addressing of 55 Muslim leaders and head of states, the net result is sanction over Qatar.

- **Qatar' activities annoying the big Gulf powers**

In the last two decades, Qatar has been hectic in punching above its weight. It has invested massive diplomatic capital in building its own political and strategic circle; its relation with Turkey is seen as a defense partner, which would help it in the time of crisis. This has proved true. Just after two days of sanction, the Turkish Parliament has ratified the deal signed between the two countries in 2014 and has allowed Istanbul to station troops in Doha. Experts believe that Turkish move is not inspired with anti-Riyadh sentiments but certainly it is aimed to deter any potential forces to engineer coup or regime change in the tiny but rich statelet. Looking at the precedence, coup or regime change has usually been common in Qatar except Emir Tamim, whose father Emir Hamad voluntarily abdicated in his favor.

- **Real motives of sanction on Qatar**

Although Qatar has been active in its "flying carpet diplomacy", it is beyond Doha's capacity to discredit or replace the big powerful Gulf Arab countries. Experts accuse Saudis for controlling Qatar's foreign policy and making it another Bahrain. The Gulf-Arab-Axis does not want Qatar to develop an independent foreign policy; provide alternative Muslim leadership and challenge the centrality and unity of Riyadh in the region and the Sunni Muslim world. Riyadh in alliance with the White House is working in this direction, especially after Trump came to power.

Saudi Arabia needs to assess Qatar's position well. Doha has its own limitation of balancing its diplomatic relations with Iran. Both countries share the same well of the natural gas in the Persian Gulf. The Qatari side is known as North Dome, while the Iranian side, South Pars. Doha

has been drawing more gas than Tehran as it has involved international firms in the process, while Iran's has been delayed due slow progress, primarily caused by sanctions. Iran has offered to supply food, water and open its three ports but till date Qatar has shown less inclination in accepting the Iranian offer.¹⁰¹

Therefore, it is important to both countries to understand each other's objectives, ambitions and limitations. Saudi Arabia wants centrality and unity of Gulf against Iran, while Doha has to maintain a working relation with Tehran. It is a matter of economic interest between Qatar and Iran. As a result, Riyadh should not draw any redline; rather it should develop a balanced regional policy that can ensure and protect the interest of all stakeholders without jeopardizing Riyadh's interest.

After all, Qatar cannot be isolated for long; its one of the members of GCC, Arab League and OIC and moreover, the 200,000 Qataris have filial ties with Saudis, which forms unbreakable relations between the two countries. The good point of the entire controversy is the cool-mindedness of Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who has ruled out any confrontation. He has put his trust in Kuwait to mediate and resolve the standoff and prevent the widening of the Gulf, which only serve the Iranian will interest.

Israel

- **Qatar and Israel**

Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, on June 5th cut ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting extremism.¹⁰² Israel, which used to have ties with Qatar and used the emirate to convey messages to Hamas, views the new crisis with mixed feelings. If the Saudi and Egyptian pressure leads Qatar to stop supporting Hamas, this could worsen the economic distress in Gaza as well as the military tension with Israel. On the other hand, the provocative influence of Al Jazeera broadcasts (whose main studios are in the Qatari capital Doha) on the Palestinian front and the discrete ties Qatar maintained with Iran also angered Israel. Hamas, which is worried about losing Qatari support, reestablished ties last year with Iran, which renewed its limited economic support to the military wing in Gaza. The leadership of the Palestinian organization continues to change patrons and supporters, as part of its survival efforts.¹⁰³ Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani insisted on June 11th that Palestinian terror group Hamas is "a legitimate resistance movement." Al-Thani noted that the movement's leadership "is currently in Palestine" and no longer in his country, since Khaled Mashaal was replaced by Gazan Ismail Haniyeh as head of the group's political bureau.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/iran-qatar-food_us_593d9435e4b02402687a5b8a

¹⁰² "S. Arabia, five others sever ties with Qatar in diplomatic crisis", *Dawn*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1337731> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁰³ Amos Harel, "Qatar Crisis Took U.S. by Surprise. Israel Is Concerned", *Haaretz*, June 11, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.794714> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁰⁴ "Qatari FM insists Hamas 'a legitimate resistance movement'", *The Times of Israel*, June 10, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/qatari-fm-insists-hamas-a-legitimate-resistance-movement/> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

- **Israel, Palestinian Authority and Hamas**

Israel has reportedly decided on June 11th to heed a Palestinian Authority request to cut electricity supply to the Hamas-run Gaza Strip after the PA announced it would not continue to pay the bill as it stepped up pressure on its main rival. The PA has been paying 40 million shekels (\$11.3 million) a month for 125 megawatts, but recently said it was now only prepared to pay for 20-25 million shekels (\$7 million) a month for electricity to Gaza.¹⁰⁵ On normal days, Israel supplies 123 megawatts to Gaza through 10 power lines; 60 additional megawatts come from Gaza's own power station (which is running at only half-capacity and relies on diesel fuel imported through Israel). When there are no malfunctions, another 23 megawatts are supplied by two Egyptian power lines. It has been reported that during previous such crises, Hamas used to get material and financial assistance from Qatar and Egypt, along with Iran. But presently, due to the present crisis in between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Hamas will rely more on Iran.¹⁰⁶

Turkey

- **Bahraini Foreign minister in Turkey to discuss Qatar crisis¹⁰⁷**

The row over Qatar should be resolved before the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan toward the end of June, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said, according to Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

“President Erdoğan stressed that this tragic event – contradicting our religion, beliefs and traditions – should be resolved before the holy month of Ramadan ends, while he also emphasized his sadness over the crisis,” Çavuşoğlu said June 10 during a joint news conference with his Bahraini counterpart, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Khalifa, in Istanbul. Çavuşoğlu also expressed his support for a peaceful solution to the Qatar row and said Turkey would continue to take “constructive” steps to resolve the crisis. “We, as Turkey, will pursue our constructive efforts to resolve this crisis because we see the stability and security in Gulf region as our own. We regard the threats against the Gulf region as they are against us,” he added.

Al-Khalifa, however, said Qatar should change its policies and reach a conclusion with Bahrain. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates accused 59 individuals and 12 charity organizations in Qatar of being “linked to terror” in a statement released on June 8.

Çavuşoğlu also said no country in the Gulf region should feel threatened by Turkey's establishment of a military base in Qatar. On June 7, Turkey's parliament ratified two deals to deploy troops to Qatar and train the Gulf nation's gendarmerie. The deal to deploy Turkish troops in Qatar, aimed at improving the country's army and boosting military cooperation, was

¹⁰⁵ “Israeli cabinet decides to heed PA request to cut Gaza electricity”, *The Times of Israel*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-cabinet-decides-to-heed-pa-request-to-cut-gaza-electricity/> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁰⁶ Amos Harel, “Gaza Power Cuts Boost Tension With Israel “, *Haaretz*, June 12, 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.795201> (accessed on June 12, 2017)

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/qatar-dispute-should-be-resolved-by-end-of-ramadan-president-erdogan.aspx?pageID=238&nID=114177&NewsCatID=510>

signed in April 2016 in Doha. Çavuşoğlu said the aim of the base in Qatar was to contribute to the security and stability of all Gulf countries.

- **Erdogan vows to stand by 'Qatari brothers' amid crisis¹⁰⁸**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has requested the full removal of a Saudi-led blockade of Qatar after approving the deployment of Turkish troops there, saying Riyadh needed to put brotherhood ahead of animosity. Erdogan said isolating Qatar would not resolve any regional problems and vowed to do everything in his power to help end the regional crisis.

"We will not abandon our Qatari brothers," Erdogan told members of his ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party at a fast-breaking meal on Friday in Istanbul during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. "I also have a special request from the Saudi administration. You are the largest and most powerful state in the Gulf. We call you the Custodian of the Holy Places. You especially should work for brotherhood, not animosity. You have to work for bringing brothers together. This is what we expect from Saudi, the Custodian of the Holy Mosques.

"I say it should be lifted completely," Erdogan said of the embargo. Late on Thursday, a joint statement by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE accused 59 individuals and 12 charity organizations in Qatar of being "linked to terror". Speaking about the allegations, Erdogan said: "There is no such thing. I know those foundations."

- **Turkish parliament ratifies Qatar military deals¹⁰⁹**

Turkey's parliament on Wednesday ratified two deals on deploying troops in Qatar and training the nation's gendarmerie forces. The votes came just days after five Arab countries cut ties with Qatar. The deal on deploying troops on Qatari soil to improve the country's army and boost military cooperation was signed in April 2016, in the Gulf country's capital Doha. Under the bill, the armies of the two countries will also be able to carry out joint exercises. The move aims to contribute to regional and world peace. In addition, the Turkish gendarmerie will be able to train Qatar's gendarmerie forces under a deal between the two countries' interior ministries signed in December 2015.

- **Turkey's TAV inks deal to operate 3 Saudi airports¹¹⁰**

Turkish airport operator TAV has signed a deal with Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority to operate three airports in the Gulf country in partnership with the Al Rajhi Group, the Turkish operator has announced. TAV will operate airports in Buraydah in central Qassim province, the northwestern city of Ha'il and the western port city of Yanbu for 30 years alongside the Al Rajhi Group, according to a statement released on June 9.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/erdogan-vows-stand-qatari-brothers-crisis-170609204946107.html>

¹⁰⁹ <http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-parliament-ratifies-qatar-military-deals/836771>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-tav-inks-deal-to-operate-3-saudi-airports-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=114179&NewsCatID=344>

“The number of airports we operate and passengers we serve will reach 17 and 110 million [respectively] with the Yanbu, Qassim and Ha’il airports,” TAV Chief Executive Officer Sani Sener said in the statement. Sener said the company remains keen on utilizing different resources in different parts of the world, especially in developing countries.

The Yanbu, Qassim and Ha’il airports are expected to serve 11.5 million passengers with \$400 million in investments in the construction of new terminals and service units, the statement said. The construction of new terminals, which TAV will start after taking over all the airports, will be completed by 2020, it added.

- **Official: EU choosing to ‘re-engage’ with Turkey¹¹¹**

Turkey and the European Union will hold a political dialogue meeting on June 13 in Brussels “to take stock of where both sides are in their relationship,” an EU official has told the Hürriyet Daily News. “The view of the EU side, and reciprocated on the Turkish side, is that ‘it’s time to re-engage. It’s important that we stop talking about each other, but rather talk to each other,’” the EU official said on condition of anonymity.

“I don’t think everything was solved at that meeting, but it opened a door for future engagement and for future meetings,” the official said, referring to a trilateral meeting featuring Turkey and the EU on May 25. In the May meeting bringing together Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk, EU officials suggested to Erdoğan that summits regularly be held with Turkey, the official said. Ankara has long insisted on such meetings since the Lisbon Treaty ended summits with candidate countries.

The EU official noted that no date had yet been determined for the summit but that they believed it was important to hold such gatherings annually or twice a year.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 11	Quetta / Balochistan	Three Balochistan Constabulary personnel were killed in an attack on a checkpoint near Chaki Shahwani on Sariab Road in provincial capital Quetta. One fruit vendor was injured	3	1

¹¹¹ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/official-eu-choosing-to-re-engage-with-turkey-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=114201&NewsCatID=510>

			in the attack. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹¹²		
2	June 11	Kalat / Balochistan	Three security officials were injured in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack, targeting their vehicle in the Johan area of Kalat District. No outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹¹³	0	3
3	June 11	Haripur / KP	A senior journalist, identified as Bakhshish Elahi, the bureau chief of an Urdu newspaper, was shot dead in a targeted attack near Lora Chowk in Haripur District. ¹¹⁴	1	0
4	June 8	Quetta / Balochistan	Islamic State (IS) claimed that it had killed two Chinese nationals, a man and a woman, who were abducted from Quetta on May 24, 2017. The two were teachers at a private language school in Quetta. ¹¹⁵	2	0

Afghanistan

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 11	Kunduz	In the ongoing clearance operations in Imam Sahib District of Kunduz Province, at least 77 militants have been killed, said the commander of the 209th Shaheen Corps of the Afghan National Army General Amanullah Mubin said. He added that 110 others were injured. ¹¹⁶	77	110

¹¹² Saleem Shahid, Three constabulary men martyred in Quetta, Dawn, June 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1339038/three-constabulary-men-martyred-in-quetta>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹³ Syed Ali Shah, Three security forces personnel injured in IED blast, *The Express Tribune*, June 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338889/three-security-forces-personnel-injured-in-ied-blast>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹⁴ Senior journalist gunned down in Haripur, *The Express Tribune*, June 11, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1432828/senior-journalist-gunned-haripur/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹⁵ Abducted Chinese nationals killed, claims IS, *Dawn*, June 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338454/abducted-chinese-nationals-killed-claims-is>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹⁶ Top Taliban leaders among 77 killed during operations in Imam Sahib of Kunduz, *Khaama Press*, June 11, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/top-taliban-leaders-among-77-killed-during-operations-in-imam-sahib-of-kunduz-02912>, accessed on June 12, 2017

2	June 10	Faryab	Taliban shot dead religious scholar, Abdul Rasoul, and his daughter Najia in Andkhoi District of Faryab Province. ¹¹⁷	2	0
3	June 7	Nangarhar	At least 22 Daesh and three Taliban militants were killed in clashes and air raids in Pachirawgam and Kot Districts of Nangarhar province. ¹¹⁸	22	2
4	June 6	Herat	At least seven people were killed and 16 others were injured in a blast on a road close to Herat Grand Mosque in Herat city of Herat Province. ¹¹⁹	7	16
5	June 6	Nangarhar	At least 29 Daesh militants, including foreign fighters, were killed during airstrikes in Kot District of Nangarhar Province. ¹²⁰	29	0

Iraq

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 11	Anbar	Commander of Anbar Operations, Major General Mahmoud al-Falahi said that a key headquarters belonging to the Islamic State was destroyed by an air strike, south of the province. The international coalition air strike killed seven terrorists inside the headquarters, while security forces seized 6	7	0

¹¹⁷ Cleric, his Daughter Gunned Down in Faryab, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 12, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2012,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹⁸ 22 Daesh, 3 Taliban Killed in Nangarhar Clashes, Airstrikes, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 10, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2010,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹¹⁹ 7 Killed, 16 Injured in Herat Explosion, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 7, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2007,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²⁰ Foreigners among 29 IS , Fighters Killed in Airstrikes *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 7, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2007,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on June 12, 2017

			motorcycles and dismantled 21 IEDs. ¹²¹		
2	June 11	Mosul	Iraqi troops took over a half of the last district, al-Shifa neighbourhood, held by the Islamic State near the Old City in western Mosul. ¹²²	Capture of territory	
3	June 9	Karbala	At least 30 Shias were killed 35 others were injured in a suicide attack by a female ISIS bomber in the town of Musayab in Karbala city. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹²³	30	35

Syria

S.No	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 11	Raqqa	The Islamic State leader and founder, Ibrahim Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed by an airstrike in Raqqa City, reported Syrian State TV. However, the news report is still not verified. ¹²⁴	1	0
2	June 11	Raqqa	The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said its fighters captured the neighbourhood of Romaniah after two days of fighting that left 12 ISIS militants dead, including 'commander' Abu Khattab al-Tunsi. ¹²⁵	12	0

¹²¹ Loaa Adel, Anbar Operations announces destroying key IS headquarters, *Iraqi News*, June 12, 2017,

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/anbar-operations-announces-destroying-key-headquarters/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²² Mohamed Mostafa, Iraqi forces retake half of last IS-held district near Mosul's Old City, *Iraqi News*, June 11, 2017,

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-forces-retake-half-last-held-district-near-mosuls-old-city/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²³ Nehal Mostafa, Woman detonates bomb in crowded Friday market in Iraq, killing at least 30, *Iraqi News*, June 9, 2017,

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/woman-detonates-bomb-crowded-friday-market-iraq-killing-least-30/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²⁴ Leith Fadel, ISIL's Baghdadi killed in Raqqa: Syrian State TV, *Al Masdar News*, June 11, 2017,

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isil-baghdadi-killed-raqqa-syrian-state-tv/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²⁵ US-backed Syrian fighters seize parts of Isis 'capital' Raqqa, *The Independent*, June 11, 2017,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-raqqa-us-coalition-fighters-seize-isis-territory-a7784891.html>, accessed on June 12, 2017

3	June 10	Moscow	Russia said that it had told the United States it was unacceptable for Washington to strike pro-government forces in Syria after the US military carried out an air strike on pro-Assad militia last month. ¹²⁶	Statement	
4	June 9	Homs	ISIS killed four Syrian soldiers and wounded seven others near al-Talila Protectorate, east of Palmyra. The group also attacked government forces near Huwayses, Talila protectorate and al-Abbasiya areas, in the eastern countryside of Homs. ¹²⁷	4	7

International Economic Issues

- **India to grow at 7.2% in FY17-18, says World Bank**

In its Global Economic Prospects, the World Bank estimates India to see growth rates of 7.5 per cent in 2018-19 and 7.7 per cent in 2019-20. According to this, India retains the title of fastest growing economy, with China still lagging behind. The report pegged the growth rate of China at 6.5 per cent during 2017-18 and 6.3 per cent for 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively.¹²⁸

- **India takes US to WTO for failing to drop steel duties**

The *Hindu Business Line* reported on June 9, 2017 that India has sought consultations with the US under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) after the latter did not comply with the WTO dispute settlement body's ruling against countervailing duties imposed on Indian steel imports by the US. The last date to comply with the ruling expired on April 18, 2016.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Russia warns US not to strike Syrian pro-government forces again, *Reuters*, June 10, 2017, <https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/06/10/russia-says-tells-us-not-to-strike-syrian-pro-government-forces/22136136/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²⁷ Loaa Adel, IS kills, wounds 11 Syrian soldiers in Homs, *Iraqi News*, June 10, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/kills-wounds-11-syrian-soldiers-homs/>, accessed on June 12, 2017

¹²⁸ "India to grow at 7.2% in FY17-18, says World Bank", *Business Today*, June 5, 2017. <http://www.businesstoday.in/buzztop/buzztop-feature/india-to-grow-at-7.2percent-in-fy17-18-says-world-bank/story/253717.html> (accessed June 12, 2017)

¹²⁹ "India takes US to WTO for failing to drop steel duties", *The Hindu Business Line*, June 9, 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-takes-us-to-wto-for-steel-duties/article9723786.ece> (accessed June 12, 2017)

- **IMF Weighs Greek Loan that Would Release Funds after Debt Relief**

The International Monetary Fund on June 8, 2017 announced that it is considering a conditional loan for Greece that would defer the release of the money until the nation's European creditors agree to provide debt relief. The Fund further emphasised that it would still prefer that Greece's euro-zone partners agree to debt relief before the fund presents a loan proposal to its executive board. Noteworthy, any loan would have to be approved by the IMF's 24-member board, which represents the institution's 189 member countries. While the IMF has expressed support for Greece's proposed reforms, the fund believes its debt is unsustainable unless euro-area countries agree to ease its repayment terms under a European bailout program. A conditional loan would help avert a "destabilizing situation" when Greece has to make payments under its 86 billion-euro (\$96 billion) bailout from the euro zone next month.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Andrew Mayeda, "IMF Weighs Greek Loan That Would Release Funds after Debt Relief", Bloomberg, June 8, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-08/imf-weighs-greek-loan-that-would-release-funds-after-debt-relief> (accessed June 12, 2017)