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Weekly Media Updates
(29 May – 04 June, 2017)

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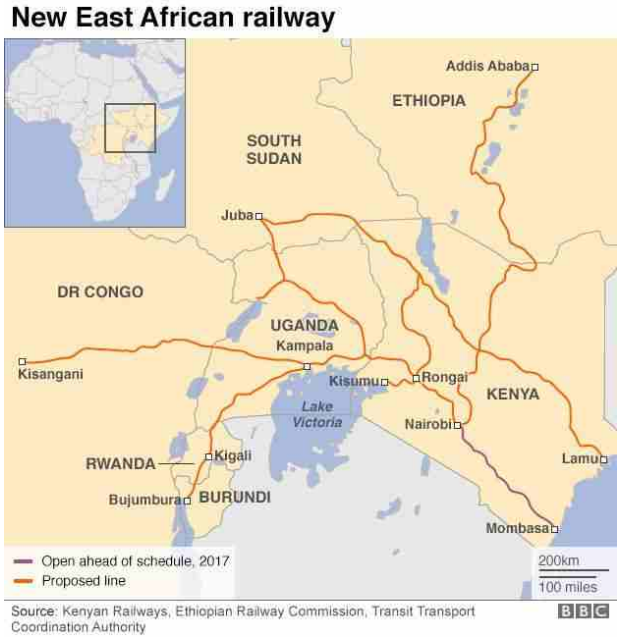
Africa

- **Kenya opens Nairobi-Mombasa Madaraka Express railway[1]**

Kenya opened a major new railway between the port city of Mombasa and the capital, Nairobi, 18 months early.President Uhuru Kenyatta said during the launch that the $3.2bn (£2.5bn) Chinese-funded line signalled a new chapter in the country.

The 470km (290 miles) line is Kenya's biggest infrastructure project since independence. It is part of China's Belt and Road initiative of massive global infrastructure projects.The railway is supposed to eventually connect land-locked South Sudan, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Ethiopia to the Indian Ocean.

Mr Kenyatta secured an additional $3.6bn from China to extend the railway line 250km (155 miles) west from the central town of Naivasha to Kisumu.



The Mombasa-Nairobi line is the first phase of a 840km (525 mile) line linking the port city of Mombasa to the western border town of Malaba.

The Chinese will be in charge of the new railway line for some time, while Kenyans are being trained to take over.

During the Belt and Road Forum for International Corporation meeting on 15 May, Mr Kenyatta asked China to ensure a win-win situation in its economic relationship with Kenya, as the country formally joined the infrastructure initiative.

The cost of the project has been criticized by opposition parties, who say it is too expensive and the economic returns exaggerated.The government says that it needs to invest in infrastructure to attract foreign investment.

- **Netanyahu meets African leaders[2]**

[1]BBC 31 May 2107,http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40092600?ocid
[2]Times of Israel, 4 June2017,http://www.timesofisrael.com/seeking-to-boost-ties-netanyahu-meets-with-african-leaders/

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with West African leaders in Liberia for discussions on boosting ties on 4 June 2017. After being greeted by Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf upon arriving in the capital Monrovia, Netanyahu met with Marcel Alain de Souza, the president of the Economic Community of West African States, to speak about how to further the relationship between Israel and the bloc.Netanyahu then met with Gambian President Adama Barrow, with whom he discussed bilateral ties. He also offered to send Israeli assistance to the country to help with its development.During his meetings, Netanyahu also stressed that the improving relations between those nations with Israel should be reflected into support for the Jewish state at international bodies such as the United Nations.

Prior to leaving for Liberia, Netanyahu said he would use his trip to the ECOWAS summit to try and garner support for Israel at the UN and other international forums.Netanyahu said he hoped to use his attendance at the annual conference of the ECOWAS to build off his July 2016 visit to the East African nations of Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia, which marked the first time in decades an Israeli premier had travelled to Africa.

Reiterating a message he repeated throughout his previous trip to the continent, PM Netanyahu said "Israel is returning to Africa in a big way".Netanyahu noted that the trip marks the first time a non-African leader will speak at ECOWAS — an organization that includes 15 nations with a combined population of some 320 million — which he called a "badge of honor for the State of Israel."

On Friday, however, Morocco's foreign ministry said that Mohamed VI had scrapped his plans to attend the meeting in light of Netanyahu's attendance, saying the king "wishes his first visit to a ECOWAS summit not take place in a context of tension and controversy."

Last July, de Souza became the first leader of the organization to visit Israel. He met with Netanyahu and President ReuvenRivlin to discuss economic cooperation and regional security issues.In December, Jerusalem hosted seven ministers and many other top officials from over a dozen Western African countries at an agricultural conference in Israel, which was co-sponsored by ECOWAS and Mashav, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation.

Netanyahu is also scheduled to attend an Africa-Israel summit in Togo in October, where the prime minister is expected to meet with the leaders of 25 African countries to discuss cooperation in high-tech, security and development.

North Africa

- **Morocco: Thousands rally for release of protest leader Zafzafi**[3]

Several thousand people took to the streets of Morocco's region of Rif demanding the release of the leader of the protest movement, Nasser Zefzafi. Mr.Zefzafi who was on run for few days taken to custody after he allegedly interrupted a preacher in the mosque and called for more protest and demonstration. Protesters came out near the centre of the northern city of al-Hoceima for a fifth consecutive night on Tuesday and slogans like "Free the prisoners or put us all in prison" and "we are all Zefzafi" were heard. It is worth mentioning here that the Rif region has been shaken by social unrest since the death of a fishmonger in October.

31-year-old Fikri was crushed in a rubbish truck as he protested against the seizure of swordfish caught out of season. Calls for justice for Fikri evolved into a grassroots movement demanding jobs and economic development, with Zefzafi, himself unemployed, emerging as the leader of people movement. Anti-riot police attempted to disperse the protesters but pulled back following a tense but non-violent standoff. Images that appeared on social media showed similar protests taking place in the neighboring town of Imzouren, with a strong police presence. Smaller protests were also held in the capital Rabat and Casablanca but were broken up by police, Moroccan media reported .According to official sources around forty people were arrested by Monday evening in connection with the disturbances in al-Hoceima. However human rights groups have given much higher figures.

- **Uruguay President visits Egypt**[4]

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi held talks with Uruguay's President Tabare Vazquez in Cairo on Wednesday where both leaders discussed boosting ties and trade between the two countries, a statement from Egyptian president's office said. President Vazquez's visit to the Egyptian capital is the first by a Uruguayan president since the start of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1932. The two leaders said they aim to bolster trade between the two countries, with a focus on food and agricultural products.

El-Sisi and Vasquez said that a free trade agreement signed by Egypt with the South American trade bloc Mercosur in 2010, which should come into effect and bolster the

[3] Aljazeera English http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/thousands-rally-release-protest-leader-zefzafi-170531114134164.html?utm_source=Media+Review+for+June+1%2C+2017&utm_campaign=DMR-+EN+-+6%2F1%2F2017&utm_medium=email

[4] Ahram Arabic Daily http://www.ahram.org.eg/News/202283/136/597054/%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA/%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%86-

economic ties. And promote trade exchange" between the Egypt and the bloc's member countries. The visiting President who is accompanied by foreign and agricultural ministers, also held talk with the Prime Minster of Egypt. After the meeting Mr. Ismail , Prime Minister of Egypt said that Uruguay is ready to open its market for the Egyptian products and other agreement on exchange of human resource was also signed between two nations. Latina American nation of Uruguay is well advanced in the meat production, renewable energy and pharmaceutical product.

Central Asia

India-EU to Start Negotiations on Free Trade Area

India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EUEU) have signed a 'petition' on the beginning of talks to create a free trade area. The document was signed during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum by Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Trade Minister VeronikaNikishina and India's Commerce and Industry Minister NirmalaSitharaman.5

No deadline has been fixed for the negotiations; however, it is expected to be concluded in 2-3 years, as hinted by Nikishina. During the same Forum two years ago, Industry Minister Sitharaman had signed an agreement to establish a Joint Feasibility Study Group on India-EAEU free trade area.6 Both sides have accepted the report prepared by the joint study group and the formal negotiations will begin with the signing of the current document.

The EAEU consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and it aims regional economic integration through free movement of goods, services, and people within the union. With the India-EUEA FTA, the potential export growth is expected at about 18 per cent for both.7

China

- **CMC specifies punishment for breaches of Party discipline**

The Central Military Commission (CMC) has called for strict political discipline in the military and outlined punishments for breaches of the rules and code of conduct of the Communist Party of China, according to a revised regulation issued by the commission.

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[5] Sputnik, "EAEU, India Sign Petition on Beginning of Free Trade Area Talks at SPIEF 2017," 3 June 2017, https://sputniknews.com/business/201706031054277151-eaeu-india-petition-trade/

[6] KseniaKondratieva, "India, Russia to set the ball rolling for FTA talks with Eurasian union," *The Hindu*, 31 May 2017, http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-russia-to-set-the-ball-rolling-for-fta-talks-with-eurasian-union/article9717037.ece

[7] KseniaKondratieva, "India, Russia to set the ball rolling for FTA talks with Eurasian union," *The Hindu*, 31 May 2017, http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/india-russia-to-set-the-ball-rolling-for-fta-talks-with-eurasian-union/article9717037.ece

The military should put "strict political discipline and rules" at the forefront, it said. It detailed punishment for those who made false political statements, were slack in their implementation of CMC instructions or damage the reputation of the military. It also clarified penalties for misconduct during military training, drills and important military missions.

The revised version is a requirement for strict Party governance and management of the Army in accordance with law, it said. The revision will play an important role in building a clean military and promoting the anti-corruption drive in the army. The regulation came into force upon publication.[8]

- **China to terminate all military paid services by 2018**

The CMC will terminate all paid services provided by the military by the end of June 2018, according to a military professor.

"In the first stage, services in 10 fields should stop by the end of this June," said Jiang Luming, Professor at the National University of Defense Technology, in an interview with Xinhua.The 10 fields are nursery education, press and publications, culture and sports, communications, personnel training, barrack projects, storage and transportation, militia armament repair, repair technology and driver instruction, he said.

Projects in another five fields -- real estate rentals, agricultural products, accommodation services, medical care and scientific research -- should be ceased by the end of June 2018, he added.[9]

- **Nepal proposes two all-weather customs points on China border: Mahat**

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal PrakashSharanMahat has said Nepal has proposed with China to open two all-weather customs points for Nepal.

When asked by journalists if diplomatic efforts were being made to reopen Tatopani customs point, which remains closed since the 2015 earthquakes, Minister Mahat said Nepal has proposed with China to reopen the customs point. "We have requested the Chinese side to reopen the Tatopani customs point with priority. We have also proposed

[8] Xinhua, "CMC specifies punishment for breach of Party Discipline", 1 June 2016, at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-06/01/content_4781859.htm (accessed 5 June 2016).

[9] Xinhua, "China to terminate all military paid services by 2018", 31 May 2017, at http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-05/31/content_4781747.htm (accessed 5 June 2016).

with the Chinese side to open at least two all-weather custom points," said Minister Mahat.

Organizing his last press conference as Minister for Foreign Affairs on June 1, ahead of the formation of a new government, Minister Mahat said negotiations with China to develop a detailed project report for Kerung-Kathmandu railroad is also underway. As a party to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, Nepal has already reached an agreement with China to build Kerung-Kathmandu-Lumbini rail network. [10]

- **China's efforts to strengthen implementation of reform**

The Chinese leadership has stressed the role of supervision in implementing reform on various occasions, especially at meetings of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform. In the public reports of all 35 meetings of the group, the word "implement" has appeared 219 times, and the word "supervision" showed up 69 times. All departments and localities should attach greater importance to delivering reforms and devote more efforts to examining reform effects, President Xi Jinping said on April 18, 2017 during the 34th meeting of the leading group, which he heads.[11]

- **China released a white paper on Human Rights in Xinjiang**

China's State Council Information Office has today published a white paper on human rights developments in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It is the first systematic official profile on human rights progress achieved in Xinjiang, southwest of China, and one of the country's five minority autonomous regions. The white paper covers developments in eight aspects, including political rights, civil rights, economic rights, social rights, cultural rights, environmental rights, freedom of religious belief and rights for the disadvantaged groups.[12]

- **Paris deal tests responsibility of Washington**

US President Donald Trump tweeted on Wednesday that he will announce his decision on the fate of US involvement in the Paris Agreement on climate change at 3 pm Thursday and "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Prior to that, a report claiming Trump has already decided to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement had stirred up international public opinion. Responding to the news, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said that Trump "wants a fair deal for the American people." Although Trump has not yet made his decision public, anxieties have spread within the international community. UN Secretary General AntónioGuterres said that even if the US government

[10]Republica, "Nepal proposes two all-weather custom points on China border: Mahat", 4 June 2017, at http://www.myrepublica.com/news/21216/ (accessed 5 June 2016).
[11]Xinhua, "China's efforts to strengthen implementation of reforms", 6 June 2017, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/04/c_136339120.htm (accessed 5 June 2016).
[12] Global Times, "China issues white paper on Xinjiang's Human Rights Progress", 1 June 2016, at http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1049650.shtml (accessed 5 June 2016).

decides to opt out of the agreement, he hopes that American cities, states and businesses remain engaged with the goals of the deal outlined. Almost all analysts agree that if the US pulls out of the Paris Agreement, it would deal a catastrophic blow. Given the US' status as the secondlargest emitter of greenhouse gases and its special international influence, its withdrawal from the accord would not only lead to the collapse of emission reduction efforts, but would also set a bad example. It's inevitable that other countries may follow the US in the future, using the American withdrawal as an excuse.[13]

European Union

- **Prime Minister Modi's Visit to Germany and France**

Prime Minister NarendraModi visited three European countries, namely Germany, Spain and France. In first leg of his visit, Prime Minister Modi visited Germany and met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. India signed 12 Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) and agreements with Germany for cooperation in areas of digitalization, empowerment and economic impact, skill development, cyber policy, alternative medicine, railway safety, sustainable development and urban development.[14] After Germany, Prime Minister travelled to Spain. This was first visit by an Indian prime minister since 1988. He met King Felipe VI and President Mariano Rajoy. Both countries signed MoUs on cooperation in the field of cyber security, civil aviation, renewable energy, etc.[15] From Spain, he visited Russia. On the last leg of four countries visit, Prime Minster Modi arrived in France. He met with newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron on 3 June, 2017. Both leaders discussed the issue of mutual importance.[16]

- **Terror Attacks in London**

Seven people killed and dozens wounded in terror attacks in London 3 June 2017. Three attackers came out of a van driving into pedestrians on London Bridge and carried out multiple stabbings in Borough Market. They were shot dead by Police. The police treated these attacks as act of terrorism. Reportedly, Islamic States has claimed the responsibility of the attack.[17] Police claim that they know the identity of attackers.[18]

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[13] Global Times, "Paris deal tests responsibility of Washington", 1 June 2017, at http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1049507.shtml (Accessed on June 5, 2017)

[14] Ministry of External Affairs, GoI, List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit of Prime Minister to Germany, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28497/List_of_MoUsAgreements_signed_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Germany

[15] List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28502/List_of_MoUsAgreements_signed_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Spain

[16] NarendraModi meets French President Emmanuel Macron, The Economic Times June 3, 2017 http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/narendra-modi-meets-french-president-emmanuel-macron/articleshow/58975503.cms

[17] London terror attack: what we know so far, the Guardian, June 5, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/04/london-attacks-what-we-know-so-far-london-bridge-borough-market-vauxhall

[18] London attack: Police 'know identities of killers', BBC, June 5, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-40155451

- **Sigmar Gabriel Calls for Talks with Taliban**

German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel told that there should be negotiations with Taliban to find political solution of crisis in Afghanistan. He said, "One doesn't make peace with friends, rather with enemies." Security situation is further deteriorating Afghanistan and a terror attack in Kabul killed more than 90 people. Germany has temporarily halted the deportation of denied asylum-seekers to Afghanistan.[19]

- **Germany-Turkey Relations**

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel will visit Turkey on 5 June 2017. His visit is intended to improve to the relationship between Germany and Turkey. Recently, German-Turkish relations are tensed. Furthermore, Turkey did not allow German lawmakers to visit İncirlik air base. Germany wants its lawmakers to visit troops stationed at a Turkish air base. If Turkey does not allow German lawmakers to visit troops at Incirlik air base, foreign minister Gabriel stated that the two countries should find civil way to move out the troops.[20]

- **PM Modi Visits Spain, Signs Deals to forge Closer Ties**

Prime Minister of India NarendraModi paid a visit to Spain on 30-31 May 2017. He held discussions with King of Spain, King Felipe VI and President Mariano Rajoy on bilateral, regional and international issues. It was a visit of Indian Prime Minister to Spain after about 30 years. In Madrid PM Modi also held a round-table interaction with a group of CEOs from Spain, who want to invest and expand their economic engagement with India. President Rajoy and Prime Minister Modi recognized terrorism posing 'gravest threat' to international peace and stability and expressed their strong commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.[21]

Economic partnership is an 'important pillar' in India-Spain relationship. About 200 Spanish companies are operating in India.[22] Bilateral trade between the two countries in 2016 was about US $ 5.22 billion and Spain is India's 7th largest trading partner in the

[19] German Foreign Minister Gabriel calls for peace talks with Taliban, DW, June 4, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/german-foreign-minister-gabriel-calls-for-peace-talks-with-taliban/a-39114698

[20] German Foreign Minister Gabriel heads to Turkey to improve ties, DW, June 4, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/german-foreign-minister-gabriel-heads-to-turkey-to-improve-ties/a-39114128

[21] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Spain Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain (May 31, 2017)," 31 May 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28500/indiaspain+joint+statement+during+the+visit+of+prime+minister+to+spain+may+31+2017

[22] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Transcript of Media Briefing on upcoming visits of Prime Minister to Germany, Spain, Russia and France (May 25, 2017)," 25 May 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/28491/transcript+of+media+briefing+on+upcoming+visits+of+prime+minister+to+germany+spain+russia+and+france+may+25+2017

EU.[23] President Rajoy congratulated Prime Minister Modi on India's fast economic growth and the Indian Government's various measures to improve Ease of Doing Business and boost manufacturing growth.[24] He also urged Spanish companies to participate actively in various economic initiatives launched in India, including Make in India, Digital India, Clean India, Start-Up India, Smart City etc. Prime Minister Modi also called for active participation of Spanish companies in India's Smart City projects.[25]

Spain has expertise in the fields of renewable energy, high speed rail, air space management and waste water management etc. All these expertise required in India's various national development programs. The two leaders of India and Spain welcomed further collaboration in these areas.

India and Spain also expressed support for peace, stability, prosperity, security and integrity of Afghanistan. The two countries called for early peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan through an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process in line with internationally accepted red-lines.

During the visit, following documents were signed: MOU on cooperation in civil aviation; MOU on cooperation in organ transplantation; MOU on cooperation in cyber security; MOU on cooperation in renewable energy; Agreement for transfer of sentenced persons; MOU between Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Academy of Spain, and Agreement on visa waiver for holders of diplomatic passports.

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Yang Jiechi's Visit to Japan**

China's State Councilor Yang Jiechi visited Japan from May 29 to 31 to attend the fourth high-level political dialogue between China and Japan. During the visit the Yang met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during which both have agreed to work towards a bilateral summit meet in July during the G20 meeting in Germany. Abe and Yang also agreed to

[23] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Spain Bilateral Brief,"13 April 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/C_Bilateral_brief.pdf

[24] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Spain Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain (May 31, 2017)," 31 May 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28500/indiaspain+joint+statement+during+the+visit+of+prime+minister+to+spain+may+31+2017

[25] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Spain Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain (May 31, 2017)," 31 May 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28500/indiaspain+joint+statement+during+the+visit+of+prime+minister+to+spain+may+31+2017

coordinate a trilateral summit between Japan, South Korea and China, chaired by Japan. In sight of improving relations between Japan and China, Yang met a number of high profiled Japanese leaders before meeting Prime Minister Abe, YoshihideSuga- Chief Cabinet Secretary, Natsuo Yamaguchi- head of ruling coalition member Komeito, ShotaroYachi - National Security Council chief and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.[26]

- **New UNSC sanction on DPRK**

On June 2, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution expanding sanction on North Korea following Pyongyang's recent missile tests. The resolution added 14 individuals and four groups as new target of asset freeze and travel ban. The resolution was passed unanimously however the resolution failed to imposed new sanctions or widening the scope of existing trade embargo on North Korea. It is the first time that UNSC is adopting a sanction resolute against North Korea's ballistic missiles, previously UNSC responded to North Korea's ballistic missile test other than long range one by issuing press statements, which are short of a strong message than a resolution. [27]

- **President Moon ordered to probe "uninformed" THAAD launcher installation**

On May 30, President Moon Jae-in ordered a probe into the delivery of four additional THAAD launchers. The THAAD system consist six launchers, of which two were delivered in April. However the new President of South Korea Moon Jae-in citing procedural flaw in the deployment of THAAD in the process of seeking a public consensus and National Assembly approval. According to the President's office, it was not informed about the deployment of the four additional launchers. The incident indicates the rift between the new administration and the Ministry of defence on the issue of THAAD deployment. After Moon's order was made public, the Defense Ministry said it briefed the new President's transitional team about the four additional launchers; a claim quickly rejected by the Presidential office.[28]

- **Joint Statement by US, Japanese and S. Korean Defence Ministers**

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[26]"Possible Japan-China summit seen for July" Nikkei Asia Review, June 1, 2017, http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Possible-Japan-China-summit-seen-for-July (Accessed on June 5, 2017)
[27]"UNSC slaps DPRK with fresh sanctions", The Japan News, June 5, 2017, http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003738852 (Accessed on June 5, 2017)
[28]"THAAD launchers brought in without Moon's knowledge", The Korea Times, May 30, 2017, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/05/356_230304.html (Accessed on June 5, 2017); "President hits ceiling over 4 Thaad launchers", The Joongang Daily, May 31, 2017, http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3034030&cloc=joongangdaily%7Chome%7Conline (Accessed on June 5, 2017)

On June 3, 2017 at the sideline of 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Japan Defence Minister Tomomi Inada, and Republic of Korea Minister of National Defence Han Min-koo convened the 8th annual trilateral defence ministerial meeting and issued a joint statement. The meeting focused on North Korea, the regional security situation, and advancing defence cooperation. It was the first meeting between the Defence Chiefs after the inauguration Trump government in Washington and Moon Jae-in Presidency in Seoul. The joint statement strongly condemned North Korea's recent missile tests and demanded Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missiles programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.[29]

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Phillipines)

- **Growing Instances of Terrorist attack in the ASEAN Region**

Last week itself Philippines has witnessed three terrorist attacks undertaken by Islamic radical groups'.[30] The most recent was of the thirty five people being killed at a Manila Casino in the early morning of June 2, 2017 by a lone gunman (no clarity if it's been undertaken by a terrorist outfit despite ISIS stating its claim for the attack, the Government dismisses it as a terrorist attack).[31] This is after the ongoing crisis in the southern Philippines city of Marawi, which began in May 23, 2017. Two thousand civilian are said to be trapped in the line of fire between the Philippines troops and the Islamic militants; as the death toll from almost a week of fighting neared one hundred.[32] This ever growing instance of terrorist attack and the need to combat the menace has also been brought out by the Secretary General of ASEAN, LêLuong Minh, during his visit to Canada at the invitation of the Canadian Foreign Ministry in conjunction with the 40th Canada Dialogue Relations. Mr Minh, emphasised on the ASEAN and Canada to vigorously explore collaboration across various aspects of development. His emphasis

[29] "United States – Japan – Republic of Korea Defense Ministers Meeting Joint Press Statement", US Department of defense, June 3, 2017,https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/US-Japan-South-Korea-Defense-Joint-Statement-June-2017.pdf (Accessed on June 5, 2017); N Korea decried as 'immediate threat' by Japan, US, S Korea on Shangri-la Dialogue sidelines, The Strait Times, June 5, 2017, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/n-korea-decried-as-immediate-threat-by-japan-us-s-korea-on-shangri-la-dialogue (Accessed on June 5, 2017)

[30] "List of Islamic terror Attacks 2017", *The Religion of Peace*, https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2017, accessed on June 2, 2017.

[31] Evan McKirdy, Ralph Ellis and Holly Yan, "35 bodies found in Resorts World Manila, Philippines official says", *CNN*, June 2, 2017, http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/01/asia/resorts-world-manila-philippines/, accessed on June 2, 2017.

[32] Ted Aljibe, "2000 trapped as fighting rages in Philippines city: Govt", *The Jakarta Post*, May 28, 2017, http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2017/05/28/2000-trapped-as-fighting-rages-in-philippine-city-govt.html, accessed on June 2, 2017.

was also on combating the rise of violent extremism and radicalisation in the region, which in turn would promote peace and security.[33]

- **China, Malaysia agree to further enhance law enforcement cooperation**

Malaysian Prime Minister NajibRazak met with Chinese State Councillor GuoShengkun, who is also China's minister of public security, on June 1, 2017. Given the ever increasing threat perception from Islamic radical groups the two sides agreed to further enhance cooperation in various fields including law enforcement. This includes working together in areas such as anti-terrorism, drug control and cyber security. China also expressed that both nations can align their strategic development in order to further develop their comprehensive strategic partnership, through the Belt Road Initiative.[34]

- **Local Election held in Cambodia on June 4, 2017**

On Sunday, local elections were held in Cambodia. The official result has still not been declared by Cambodia's National Election Committee as the polling closed only at 3 PM local time. However, unofficial results posted by the government affiliated Fresh News showed the party of the Prime Minister, Hun Sen, Cambodian People's Party (CPP) winning 1,163 commune chief seats compared to 482 seats for the ruling party's main opposition the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).[35] The result of the local election would be seen as a test for the veteran strongman and PM of Cambodia Hun Sen, who has been at the helm of power for more than three decades. Further, in a sign of election pressure, PM Hun Sen broke with his long standing tradition of avoiding direct campaigning to join an estimated 200,000 supporters of his CPP.[36] The main opposition along in alliance with other smaller parties has also made some gains in the local election. According to CNRP spokesman YimSovann, the party has made substantial gains in this elections and showed optimism that in the 2018 national election the CNRP would win sixty percent of the total vote.[37]

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[33] "Sec- Gen of ASEAN encourages ASEAN and Canada to realise full potential of their Partnership", *ASEAN*, June 2, 2017, http://asean.org/sec-gen-of-asean-encourages-asean-and-canada-to-realise-full-potential-of-their-partnership/, accessed on June 2, 2017.

[34] "China, Malaysia agree to further enhance law enforcement cooperation", *Global Times*, June 1, 2017, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1049646.shtml, accessed on June 2, 2017.

[35] Ben Paviour, Van Roeun and Brendan O' Byrne, "Ruling Party, opposition both Claim Commune Election Win", *The Cambodia Daily*, https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/ruling-party-opposition-both-claim-commune-election-win-130972/, accessed on June 5, 2017.

[36] Prak Chan Thul, "Mass Rallies end Cambodian Election", *The Star Online*, June 2, 2017, http://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2017/06/02/mass-rallies-end-cambodian-election-campaign-local-polls-a-test-for-strongman-pm/, accessed on June 2, 2017.

[37] Ben Paviour, Van Roeun and Brendan O' Byrne, "Ruling Party, opposition both Claim Commune Election Win", *The Cambodia Daily*, https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/ruling-party-opposition-both-claim-commune-election-win-130972/, accessed on June 5, 2017.

Myanmar

- **UN appoints three member fact-finding mission for Rakhine**

The United Nation's Human Rights Council has appointed three legal experts and rights advocates as members of a fact-finding mission to enquire the human rights situation on Myanmar, especially on Rakhine state. The UN said in a statement released on 29 May that the mission is tasked to "establish facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violation by military and security forces, and abuses" in Rakhine state of Myanmar. In March of this year, the UNHRC passed a resolution to form an independent fact-finding mission to inspect human rights situation in the conflict-torn Rakhine state. The government of Myanmar at that time objected the resolution.

The 47-member of UN rights council has "mandated the members of the mission to look into, inter alia, allegations of arbitrary detention, torture and inhuman treatment, rape and other forms of sexual violence, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances, forced displacement and unlawful destruction of property." "The mission members, who will serve in their personal capacities, are also mandated to carry out their work with a view to ensuring full accountability for the perpetrators of these acts and justice for the victims," said a press briefing by the UN.[38]

- **37 agreements approved by the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong 2nd session were signed as a part of the Pyidaungsu Accord.**

1) Looking forward to non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of the sovereignty, based on freedom, equality and justice, the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong 2nd session was held at Nay Pyi Taw from 24th May 2017 to 29th May 2017 for building up the Union in harmony with the Panglong spirit, based on democracy and federalism which guarantee democracy, national equality and self-determination, in accord with the outcomes of the political dialogues.

2) In this Conference, proposals acquired from discussions at different levels made in groups or in sectors over principles and proposals submitted by Union Peace Dialogues Joint Committee have been agreed as part of the Pyidaungsu Accord.

3) Part 1 of the Pyidaungsu Accord approved and signed in this conference and further parts of the agreements to be achieved in imminent different levels are to be combined to be signed as the Pyidaungsu Accord.

[38] "UN appoints three member fact-finding mission for Rakhine", 30 May 2017, http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26195-un-appoints-three-member-fact-finding-mission-for-rakhine.html

4) Part 1 of the Pyidaungsu Accord signed in this conference has
(A) 12 agreements on principles of political sector,
(B) 11 agreements on principles of economic sector,
(C) 4 agreements on principles of social sector,
(D) 10 agreements on principles of land and natural environment sector, altogether 37 agreements. These are described in Appendix—(A) (B) (C) & (D).

5) The above-said agreements have been signed by group leaders and witnesses in the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong 2nd session as the part 1 of Pyidaungsu Accord under clause 20(E) of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.[39]

- **Seven non-ceasefire signatory armed groups leave peace conference without reaching agreements in Myanmar**

Seven Northern Alliance non-ceasefire signatory armed groups have left the second meeting of 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference for home, before the end of the conference in Myanmar, without reaching agreements. However, the armed groups accepted the idea of going through further dialogue, U ZawHtay, Director-General of the Office of the State Counsellor's Office, told.

N'Ban La, Vice Chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), who was hosted by State Counsellor Aung San SuuKyi in her residence, also told the press that the KIO will soon hold further talks with the government. The seven Northern Alliance armed groups, who attended the opening ceremony of the peace conference in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday, refer to the United Wa State Army (UWSA), Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)-North and Mongla's National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Kokang's Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Arakan Army (AA).[40]

North America

Canada

- **Canada signals it will use military equipment to resist US protectionist measures**

The Canadian government is sending a pointed message it is ready to use military equipment purchases as a wedge against U.S. protectionist actions. The move could benefit European and other non-U.S. companies that hope to supply the Canadian

[39] State Councilor Office of the zRepublic of Union of Myanmar, "37 POINTS SIGNED AS PART OF PYIDAUNGSU ACCORD", 30 May 2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/904 (accessed 5 June 2017).
[40] 7 non-ceasefire signatory armed groups leave peace conference without reaching agreements in Myanmar, 29 May 2017, http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/7-non-ceasefire-signatory-armed-groups-leave-peace-conference-without-reaching

military. President Donald Trump has slapped a new tariff on Canadian lumber and has threatened similar action against its dairy products. U.S. firms are the largest suppliers of equipment to the Canadian Forces and Canadian government officials are now examining how to use that to deter some U.S. trade sanctions. [41]

- **Canada's defense minister threatens Boeing deal in speech**

Canada's defense minister repeated a threat to cancel the purchase of 18 fighter jets from Boeing because of the company's trade complaint against Canadian plane-maker Bombardier. Mr.HarjitSajjan said Boeing's action against Bombardier is "unfounded" and not the behavior of a "trusted partner." He said buying the Super Hornet fighter jets "requires a trusted industry partner." Boeing petitioned the U.S. Commerce Department and the U.S. International Trade Commission to investigate subsidies of Montreal-based Bombardier's C Series aircraft. Boeing says Bombardier has received more than $3 billion in government subsidies that let it engage in "predatory pricing." Brazil has also launched a formal complaint to the World Trade Organization over Canadian subsidies to Bombardier. Sao Paolo-based Embraer is a fierce rival of Bombardier's.[42]

- **Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in response to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement**

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, issued the following statement in response to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. "We are deeply disappointed that the United States federal government has decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Canada is unwavering in our commitment to fight climate change and support clean economic growth. Canadians know we need to take decisive and collective action to tackle the many harsh realities of our changing climate. ... This is not only about the huge economic opportunities of clean growth and the need to address the pressing threats of climate change. This is about an ambitious and unshakeable desire to leave a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable planet for our kids and for generations to come. ..."[43]

- **Canada's trade surplus with U.S. hits highest level in three years**

Canada's trade deficit fell in April and its surplus with the United States ballooned to its largest in three years, boosted by shipments of cars, natural gas and softwood lumber, Statistics Canada stated. The country's trade surplus with the U.S. hit $5.0 billion for the

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[41] David Pugliese, "Canada signals it will use military equipment to resist US protectionist measures," http://www.defensenews.com/articles/canada-signals-it-will-use-military-equipment-to-resist-us-protectionist-measures, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

[42] Rob Gillies, "Canada's defense minister threatens Boeing deal in speech," http://www.defensenews.com/articles/canadas-defense-minister-threatens-boeing-deal-in-speech, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

[43] Justine Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada Office, " Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in response to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement," http://pm.gc.ca/eng, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

month, up from $3.4 billion in March, at a time when the Canadian dollar slipped 0.3 cents US compared to the greenback, the federal agency said. The data could provide ammunition for U.S. President Donald Trump, who has pointed to what he says is America's trade imbalance with Canada as a rationale for sweeping changes to U.S. trade policies, including revamping NAFTA.[44]

The United States

- **Trump Will Withdraw U.S. From Paris Climate Agreement**

President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate accord, weakening efforts to combat global warming and embracing isolationist voices in his White House who argued that the agreement was a pernicious threat to the economy and American sovereignty. Mr. Trump's decision to abandon the agreement for environmental action signed by 195 nations is a remarkable rebuke to heads of state, climate activists, corporate executives and members of the president's own staff, who all failed to change his mind with an intense, last-minute lobbying blitz. Mr. Trump said he wanted to negotiate a better deal for the United States, and the administration said he had placed calls to the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Canada to personally explain his decision. But within minutes of the president's remarks, the leaders of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement saying that the Paris climate accord was "irreversible" and could not be renegotiated.[45]

- **Missile Defense Test Succeeds, Pentagon Says, Amid Tensions With North Korea**

A re-engineered American interceptor rocket collided with a mock intercontinental ballistic missile on Tuesday afternoon in the skies over the Pacific Ocean, the Pentagon said, in the first successful test of whether it could shoot down a warhead from North Korea racing toward the continental United States at speeds approaching true battle conditions. At a time when tensions with North Korea are running high, a successful test was vital for the Defense Department's beleaguered missile defense program. It enabled the Pentagon to argue that it is making strides in protecting the United States from a North Korean nuclear warhead. But even advocates of the program stop short of arguing that it can now provide a defensive shield; with Tuesday's test, only five of the last 10 tests have been declared fully or partly successful in the 13 years since the system became operational.[46]

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[44] The Canada Press, "Canada's trade surplus with U.S. hits highest level in three years," http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-trade-exports-april-1.4142845,Accessed on 05 June 2017.
[45] Michael D. Shear, "Trump Will Withdraw U.S. From Paris Climate Agreement," https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/trump-paris-climate-agreement.html?_r=0, Accessed on 02 June 2017.
[46] Helene Cooper And David E. Sanger, "Missile Defense Test Succeeds, Pentagon Says, Amid Tensions With North Korea," https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/30/us/politics/missile-defense-test-north-korea.html?_r=0, Accessed on 31 May 2017.

- **Trump Uses London Attack to Criticize Mayor, Promote Ban**

President Trump took to Twitter to criticize London's mayor and renew his calls to ban travel from some Muslim-majority countries, after a terror attack that killed seven people in the heart of the U.K. capital on Saturday night. "At least 7 dead and 48 wounded in terror attack and Mayor of London says there is 'no reason to be alarmed!'", Trump said. Shortly after the attacks, and before they were confirmed as terrorist events, he'd said that "we need the Travel Ban as an extra level of safety," a reference to his executive order that has been blocked by the courts. Trump's eagerness to turn the London attack to domestic political advantage will put further pressure on U.S.-U.K. relations, which have been strained as Prime Minister Theresa May tries to balance a historic alliance with the need to respond to the president's often-inflammatory actions. Last month, PM May complained openly about leaks by U.S. security agencies of details of the Manchester Arena suicide bombing, which British police said hurt their investigation.[47]

Mexico

- **Quick count gives lead to ruling party in key Mexico State**

A quick-count sampling of votes for governor of Mexico's most populous state gave a slight advantage to the candidate of President Enrique Pena Nieto's ruling party late Sunday, in a race seen as a key test ahead of next year's presidential election. The preliminary results indicated Alfredo delMazo of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, was likely to win between 32.75 percent and 33.59 percent of the ballots in the State of Mexico, compared with 30.73 percent to 31.53 percent for his closest rival, Delfina Gomez of the leftist Morena party. Pedro Zamudio, president of the state's Electoral Institute, said the forecast was based on representative sampling of voting stations that has 95 percent certainty — but he cautioned that it the outcome would not be final until all the ballots were counted.[48]

- **Coke, Cargill enter fray as sugar dispute threatens Mexico trade**

Representatives from Coca-Cola (KO.N), corn syrup makers Archer Daniels Midland Co (ADM.N) and Cargill Inc [CARG.UL], and others met on May 10 with White House official Ray Starling, special assistant to the president for agriculture, trade and food assistance, said a number of people who attended the meeting and some of the companies involved. They warned against potential fall-out for their industries if the United States and Mexico cannot agree to a new trade pact and avert large duties on U.S.

[47]Mathew Campbell, "Trump Uses London Attack to Criticize Mayor, Promote Ban," https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-06-04/trump-tweets-criticism-of-london-mayor-after-fatal-bridge-attack, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

[48] Peter OrsiAnd Maria Verza, "Quick count gives lead to ruling party in key Mexico State," http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/key-election-opening-mexicos-populous-state-47822646, Accessed on 05 June 2017.

sugar imports from Mexico. The deadline for an agreement is 05 June 2017. For sugar buyers like Coca-Cola, a failure to come to a new agreement could disrupt supplies and drive up prices. The United States does not produce enough sugar for all its needs and relies on imports to fill the shortfall. For U.S. corn syrup makers, the escalating tensions put them under threat of a trade war with their largest foreign market. The two countries have been embroiled in the dispute for three years. Talks between U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and Mexico, which began in March, are seen as a precursor to more complex discussions over NAFTA.[49]

Latin American and Caribbean

Argentina

- **EU-Mercosur deal, Brazil crisis on agenda for new Foreign Minister**

Argentina's next Foreign minister, Mr. Jorge Faurie, will take office in just over 10 days after surprise resignation of Ms. Susana Malcorra. Mr.Faurie, who headed a key role organising protocol for Macri's presidential inauguration in late 2015 and has since taken charge of the country's Embassy in Paris. Argentina is now part of the G20's troika and will host the group's representatives in 2018— setting a challenge for the administration to fully maximise the opportunity to set part of the agenda. Likewise, at the end of the year 2017 the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will hold its ministerial conference in Buenos Aires, making Argentina the first South American country to host both the WTO and the G20. The Ministerial Conference, which is attended by trade ministers and other senior officials from the organization's 164 members, is the highest decision-making body of the WTO. Faurie's recent experience in France may prove particularly handy as the process of a free-trade deal between the Mercosur and the European Union advances in the coming months. One of the sticking-points throughout the negotiations has been resistance from some EU members to easing barriers to agricultural products — with Paris being one of those most circumspect of any deal due to pressure from its farm sector.[50]

Chile

- **Chinese, Europeans interested in $1.5 billion Chile-Argentina tunnel**

Chinese and European firms have formally expressed interest in building a landmark US$1.5 billion tunnel under the Andes mountains to connect Argentina and Chile. Chinese companies Power China and the Chinese Communications Construction Company, Spain's OHL and FCC, and Italy's Astaldi and SaliniImpregilo are among the

[49] Chris Prentice "Coke, Cargill enter fray as sugar dispute threatens Mexico trade," https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-sugar-industry-idUSKBN18V138, Accessed on 05 June 2017.
[50]Tomas Brockenshire, "EU-Mercosur deal, Brazil crisis on agenda for new foreign minister," http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/225848/eumercosur-deal-brazil-crisis-on-agenda-for-new-foreign-minister, Accessed on June 05, 2017

interested parties, according to Chile's minister of public works Alberto Undurraga. China Power is one of the country's biggest companies, with involvement on major infrastructure projects, both abroad and at home, such as the Three Gorges Dam. The planned Agua Negra tunnel would be over 13km in length and would connect Chile's Coquimbo region with the Argentine province of San Juan, both mining regions. The tunnel would be able to operate year round, unlike existing cross-border roads that pass over the Andes and often must close during winter snowstorms. Both Chile and Argentina are revamping their infrastructure, drawing interest from Asian companies for the first time. Infrastructure in the area has traditionally been dominated by Spanish and Italian companies. Building the tunnel would be an ambitious and complex project that would likely take more than 10 years to complete, said Argentina's Transport Planning Secretary German Bussi. The tender for the project is due to start in September or October 2017.[51]

Ecuador

- **We are working on trade agreements with Korea, Japan and India**

Ecuadorian Foreign Trade Minister Mr. Pablo Campana said that the main challenge he faces is working in conjunction with the private sector. In addition, resources are sought to settle outstanding incentives with exporters. And mechanisms are analyzed to deduct the tax on foreign exchange outflows. Mr.Campana has plenty of experience in the private sector. He promised to comply with the State's austerity policy promoting an efficient use of resources. He will seek to open new international markets by developing policies and projects that are measurable in the short and medium term. Ecuador is interested in completing the process of signing trade agreements with El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Cuba. There is no small country or region when it comes to opening markets. At the same time, Ecuador is working with South Korea, India and Japan. President Lenin Moreno has told us to look for long-term investments, mainly in the mining, petroleum, industrial and agroindustrial sectors.[52]

Venezuela

- **US Mulls Sanctioning Venezuelan Oil as 'Economic War' Continues**

The Trump administration is debating imposing sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector, while Washington has raised "concern" about U.S. firms giving a "financial lifeline" to the South American nation. It is reported that the White House could hit Venezuela's vital oil and energy sector, including state-run oil company PDVSA, with a number of

[51] Santiago Times, "Chinese, Europeans interested in $1.5 billion Chile-Argentina tunnel," http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/06/01/chinese-europeans-interested-in-1-5-billion-chile-argentina-tunnel/, Accessed on June 05, 2017.

[52] Ecuador Times, "We are working on trade agreements with Korea, Japan and India," http://www.ecuadortimes.net/we-are-working-on-trade-agreements-with-korea-japan-and-india/, Accessed on June 05, 2017

different sanctions, including the possibility of a blanket ban on Venezuelan oil imports — imports that the United States heavily relies on. Since President Donald Trump took office in January 2017, he has stepped up targeted sanctions against Venezuela, including against the vice president, the chief judge and seven other Supreme Court justices. While Trump officials hem and haw over the move that would further incapacitate Venezuela's economy, other senior officials are raising concern about U.S. firms' Venezuela investments. After Goldman Sachs Group Inc. came under fire for purchasing US$2.8 billion of state oil company bonds, one official told Reuters, "We're concerned by anything that provides a lifeline for the status quo."

In last week of May 2017, Venezuela's right-wing opposition-controlled National Assembly threatened not to pay the PDVSA bonds purchased by Goldman Sachs through a third party broker. The National Assembly's head, Julio Borges, one of the most prominent opposition leaders in the country, claimed that in purchasing the bonds, Goldman Sachs was "extending a lifeline" to a "dictatorship" and funding "human-rights abuses." "The deal with Goldman provides a desperately needed boost to Venezuela's shrinking international reserves, which had fallen to US$10 billion amid stagnant global crude prices," Venezuela Analysis reported. Borges' threats against Goldman Sachs are the latest in what the government has dubbed an "economic war" waged by international financial institutions and the right-wing opposition.[53]

Russia

- **Russia's new innovation in the field of Nuclear Energy**

Russia is in advanced stages of building the world's first "floating" nuclear power plant (FNPP) for installation in remote areas and hopes FNPP technology will also interest South Asian countries like India. The FNPP is basically a mobile, low-capacity reactor unit operable in remote areas isolated from the main power distribution system, or in places hard to access by land. PavelIpatov, Deputy CEO (Special Projects) in Russia's state atomic energy corporation Rosatom said that "FNPPs are designed to maintain both uninterruptible power and plentiful desalinated water supply in remote areas." He explained that floating units are components constructed for transport by sea or river to areas that are otherwise inaccessible or difficult to reach by land. "The plant is constructed as a non-self propelled vessel to be towed by sea or river to the operation site. Its mobility will make it possible to relocate it from one site to another, if

[53]Telesurtv, "US Mulls Sanctioning Venezuelan Oil as 'Economic War' Continues," http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/US-Mulls-Sanctioning-Venezuelan-Oil-as-Economic-War-Continues-201706040013.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8, Accessed on June 05, 2017

necessary," he said. The first floating NPP is to operate in Russia's extreme north-eastern region of Chukotka, where there is plenty of oil and gas exploration, gold mining and other mineral resource enterprises. The FNPP is called 'Academician Lomonosov', which will be transported by Russia's Northern Sea route to the operation site, where it will be integrated into the coastal network being constructed in the port of the city of Pevek. The FNPP will have a desalination unit. Memorandums of cooperation on floating nuclear power plants projects have been signed with China and Indonesia.[54]

- **Russia and India**

On his tour to Russia, to commence the 18th Annual Summit between India and Russia, Prime Minister NarendraModi on May 31 said India and Russia are "natural partners" in fighting terrorism. He asserted that the two countries must strive to open new vistas to broaden their ties that have "withstood the test of time." He was guest of honour at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum where India will be the partner country for the first time.[55] On June 1, Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the St Petersburg Declaration for enhanced ties across the board. The two countries signed a host of agreements such as agreement on intellectual property, a master framework agreement on building two units at the Kudankulam nuclear power plant, a programme of bilateral cultural exchanges for 2017–2019, an agreement on a feasibility study for a high-speed link between Nagpur and Secunderabad, and a memorandum on cooperation between joint stock company Alrosa and India's Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council. There was also signing of documents on building Russian-designed nuclear power plants at new sites in India, developing a bilateral leasing platform, developing bilateral investment activity, and developing rail transport vehicles.

- **Russia and France**

In his first meeting as the new president of France with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron on May 29 said he had"extremely frank, direct" talks with Putin. The pair discussed "disagreements" in the meeting. Mr Macron said he wanted to work with Russia over the conflict in Syria in the struggle against terrorism. Meanwhile, Mr Putin said he wanted to strengthen economic ties with France after the restrictions of recent years. During the meeting, both the leaders pushed for cooperation on Syria and against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and ISIS. Macron said he favoured "a democratic transition" that would "preserve the Syrian state". But the

[54]"Russia building first 'floating' nuclear power plant ", *Economic Times*, May 30, 2017. http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/russia-building-first-floating-nuclear-power-plant/articleshow/58908440.cms, Accessed on June 5, 2017.

[55]"India, Russia are 'natural partners' in fighting terrorism: PM NarendraModi", *Economic Times*, May 31, 2017. http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-russia-are-natural-partners-in-fighting-terrorism-pm-narendra-modi/articleshow/58929583.cms Accessed on June 5, 2017.

use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" that would draw an "immediate response" from France, he added. During the press conference, the French leader strongly defended banning two Russian media outlets (*Sputnik* and *RT*) from covering his presidential campaign, describing them as "agents of propaganda". Before becoming president this month, Mr Macron accused Russia of pursuing "a hybrid strategy combining military intimidation and an information war". Putin appeared to support Macron's nationalist rival Marine Le Pen during the 2017 presidential campaign. On a question asked to Putin regarding his support to Le Pen and on Russia's meddle in the French election, he said that "This doesn't mean that we somehow tried to influence the election at all… that would have been impossible as well." Macron also discussed the alleged persecution of gay men in the Russian republic of Chechnya, and Putin had promised "measures aimed at establishing the whole truth about the activities of local authorities". Macron said France would remain "vigilant" on the issue.[56]

- **On Hacking Allegations during the U.S. elections**

Speaking at a meeting with senior editors of leading international news agencies, President Vladimir Putin on June 1 acknowledged that some "patriotic" individuals may have engaged in hacking but insisted Russia as a country has never done it, and he pledged to wait out U.S. political battles to forge constructive ties with President Donald Trump. He lamented what he described as "Russo-phobic hysteria" in the U.S. that makes it "somewhat inconvenient to work with one another or even to talk," adding that "someday this will have to stop." Putin added that while the Russian state has never been involved in hacking, it was "theoretically possible" that Russia-West tensions could have prompted some individuals to launch cyber attacks. Putin said that hackers are free people but are not that influential to sway election outcomes because the public opinion isn't that easy to manipulate.

Putin on Russia's relationship with the new President Trump said Moscow had been encouraged by Trump's campaign promises to improve Russia-U.S. ties and is still hopeful to forge a constructive dialogue.

On meddling with German elections, Putin said that "We never engaged in that on a state level, and have no intention of doing so." He noted that Russia can work constructively with any German leader, adding that he had good ties with German Chancellor Angela Merkel despite some differences.

Touching on tensions in the Pacific, Putin said Russia's military deployments on a group of Pacific islands also claimed by Japan have been caused by concerns about the U.S.

[56]"France's Macron holds 'frank exchange' with Putin", *BBC*, May 29, 2017.http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40082346 Accessed on June 5, 2017.

military buildup in the region. Putin said the U.S. will likely continue to build up its missile shield in the region even if North Korea agrees to curb its nuclear and missile programs, in the same way it has continued to develop missile defenses in Europe despite a deal with Iran that curbed its nuclear program in exchange for lifting international sanctions. "We are concerned about our security," Putin said. "We are thinking about ways to neutralize possible threats at long distance."[57]

South Asia

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh, India, Nepal to go ahead without Bhutan** - Bangladesh, India and Nepal are preparing to make the Motor Vehicles Agreement for regulation of passenger, personal and cargo vehicular traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN MVA) operational without Bhutan, as the Himalayan kingdom excluded itself from the sub-regional initiative after the upper chamber of its parliament refused to ratify it.[58]

- **It's a bogus budget: Khaleda** - Khaleda Zia termed the proposed budget for 2017-18 fiscal year a "bogus budget", while the ruling Awami League brought out processions across the country yesterday to hail it. Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad said the proposed budget was not pro-people. "It is a bogus budget. It is the budget for looting money," Khaledasaid in an iftar party organised by Supreme Court lawyers on the court premises yesterday.[59]

- **AL attacking our religious programmes: Fakhrul** - BNP secretary general MirzaFakhrul Islam Alamgir on Saturday (June 2) alleged that ruling party men are obstructing and attacking their religious programmes like iftar parties at different parts of the country. "They (AL men) are foiling our iftar parties across the country. Police are not giving us permission for holding iftar parties at some places while the law enforcers together with the ruling party men are attacking us at some other places. Such an incident took place yesterday (Friday) in Keraniganj," he said.[60]

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[57]Vladimir Isachenkov and Ian Phillips, "Putin: Russia doesn't hack but "patriotic" individuals might", *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/putin-russian-state-has-never-been-involved-in-hacking/2017/06/01/efe4b576-46b1-11e7-8de1-cec59a9bf4b1_story.html?utm_term=.cbeb9d66bf70 Accessed on June 5, 2017.

[58]HumayunKabirBhuiyan, "Bangladesh, India, Nepal prepare to go ahead without Bhutan," *The Independent*, May 31, 2017, http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/97146 (accessed May 31, 2017)

[59] "It's to loot money," *Daily Star*, June 2, 2017, http://www.thedailystar.net/city/its-loot-money-1414444 (accessed June 2, 2017)

[60] "AL attacking BNP's religious programmes: Fakhrul ," *The Independent*, http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/97644 (accessed June 3, 2017)

- **AL wants polls sans BNP: Fakhrul** – BNP secretary general MirzaFakhrul Islam Alamgir on Sunday (June 4) alleged that Awami League is trying to hold the next national election keeping BNP aside for fear of facing a debacle. "Awami League wants to hold controlled parliamentary polls without BNP's participation as the party knows it very well that it won't be able to win the election if BNP joins it," he said. Fakhrul said the country's people will foil all the plots of the government to hold another January-5, 2014 like lopsided election.[61]

- **BNP has no connection with soil: Hasina** - Taking a swipe at BNP chief Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday (June 4) said her party BNP has no connection with the soil as it was from the leftover of power. "BNP is a party which was from the leftover of power. So, this party (BNP) is not founded from the soil. The party which was founded from the highest peak of power doesn't have soil or root beneath its feet," she said.[62]

Pakistan

- **Security Concerns over CPEC** –

After two Chinese language instructors were kidnapped from Quetta on May 24th, the Chinese diplomatic mission in Pakistan activated its "emergency response mechanism" — an internal response mechanism. The Chinese embassy in Islamabad and the Consulate General in Karachi are working with Pakistani authorities for rescuing the kidnap victims. A meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) was held on May 31st to review the security of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects and Chinese nationals based in the country. Being presided over by PM Sharif, the NSC discussed internal and external security situation of the country.[63] It can be noted here that China confirmed that most of the early harvest energy projects being built under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework would be completed before 2019 and help ease the electricity shortage in Pakistan. HuaChunying, the spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry, said this while replying to questions regarding the inauguration of the first unit of the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, during a press briefing on May 31st.[64]

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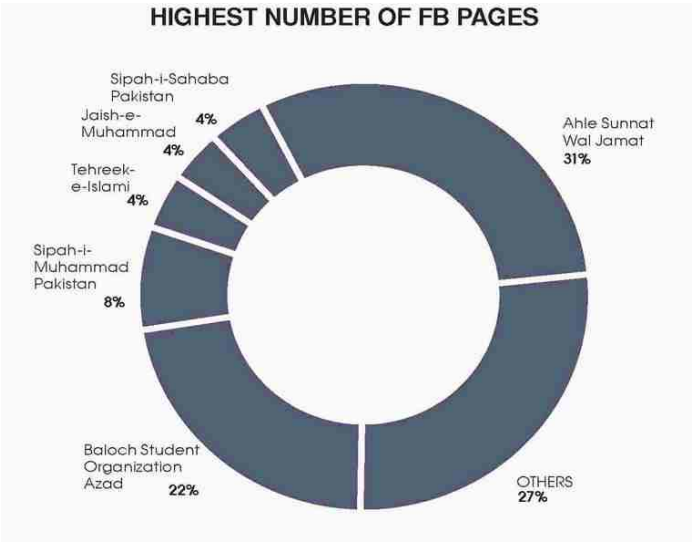
[61] "AL wants polls sans BNP fearing defeat: Fakhrul," *The Independent*, June 4, http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/97790 (accessed June 4, 2017)
[62] "Hasina hits back at Khaleda, says BNP has no connection with soil," June 4, The Independent, June 4, http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/97829 (accessed June 4, 2017)
[63] BaqirSajjad Syed, "Top national security body reviews CPEC projects", *Dawn*, June 01, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1336674 (accessed on June 5, 2017)
[64] "China reaffirms early harvest power projects under CPEC", *Dawn*, June 01, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1336711/china-reaffirms-early-harvest-power-projects-under-cpec (accessed on June 5, 2017)

- **Banned Outfits on Facebook –**

As per a report published in *Dawn*, 41 of Pakistan's 64 banned outfits are present on Facebook in the form of hundreds of pages, groups and individual user profiles.The biggest outfits on the social network, in order of size, are AhleSunnatWalJamaat (ASWJ) with 200 pages and groups, Jeay Sindh MuttahidaMahaz (JSMM) with 160, Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP) with 148, Baloch Student Organisation Azad (BSO-A) with 54 and Sipah-e-Muhammad with 45.



Source: *Dawn, June 2, 2017, http://epaper.dawn.com/Advt.php?StoryImage=30_05_2017_004_005 (accessed on June 5, 2017)*

While some of the Facebook pages and groups claim to be 'official' representatives of the outfits, others appear to be managed by members and supporters in ideological agreement. Of the pages, groups and users appeared to be based in larger urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.[65]

- **Riyadh Conference and Pakistan –**

Conceding that the recent US-Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh widened the sectarian divide in the world, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz observed on June 1 that Pakistan would have to tread carefully in pursuing efforts for greater unity. Aziz while clarifying to the Senate said the Saudi foreign minister had clarified that the coalition members would be free to decide the activities they wanted to participate in. These activities included political consultations, intelligence-sharing, capacity-building, building counter-narratives and military cooperation.Aziz said that Gen Sharif realised the importance of maintaining a balance with Iran. "In fact his presence will restore a certain balance in what this coalition should do and what it should not," he said, insisting that the focus of the coalition would remain on

[65]JahanzaibHaque& Omer Bashir, "Banned outfits in Pakistan operate openly on Facebook", *Dawn*, June 02, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1335561 (accessed on June 05, 2017)

counterterrorism.[66] It can be noted here that National Security Adviser retired Lt Gen Nasser Khan Janjua on June 2 held separate meetings with the ambassadors of Iran and Japan as well as the British high commissioner to discuss matters pertaining to regional security, border management and bilateral ties.[67]

- **Balochistan and CPEC –**

Balochistan wants Chinese companies to kick-start a boom in its mining industry by including the sector into Beijing's Belt and Road initiative. Mineral extraction is a deeply contentious issue in Balochistan, as the province remains the country's poorest despite its vast mineral wealth. Although it has a significant natural gas industry, large-scale mining has failed to take off. Foreign firms have been put off by security fears and a high-profile litigation case with Canada's Barrick Gold and Chile's Antofagasta over RekoDiq, one of the world's biggest undeveloped gold and copper mines, in the province. Balochistan's mining official, Saleh Mohammad Baloch, said the plan was for Chinese companies chosen by Beijing to team up with local firms to mine marble, chromite, limestone, coal and other minerals, and set up steel mills and other plants. He said the province wanted the projects to be set up close to the source of raw materials and near the CPEC roads that would connect western China with Gwadar. A profit-sharing formula will also be negotiated, he added.He cited the Saindak copper and gold mine, operated by a subsidiary of state-run China Metallurgical Group Corporation, as an example to follow. The mine has been given export privileges and enjoys big tax breaks. However, extraction of precious metals, such as copper and gold, would not fall under the CPEC remit, he pointed out.[68]

Indian Ocean Region

Maldives

- **Maldives disappointed with 'US abdication of responsibility on climate change –**

President Abdulla Yameen has expressed disappointment with the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Paris climate change agreement, calling it a blow to global efforts and a setback for essential multilateral processes. "As one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and a leader of 37 island and low-lying coastal nations at the United Nations, we are especially disappointed that the world's largest economy and biggest historic emitter abdicated its responsibility on such a critical issue," reads a statement issued Friday by the president's office. "The Maldives

[66]Iftikhar A. Khan, "Riyadh conference widened sectarian divide: Aziz", *Dawn*, June 2, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1336819 (accessed on June 5, 2017)
[67] "Janjua highlights Pakistan efforts for regional security", *Dawn*, June 3, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1337077 (accessed on June 5, 2017)
[68] "Balochistan to give Chinese firms mining rights, says official", *Dawn*, June 3, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1337082 (accessed on June 5, 2017)

will continue its historic role as the voice of the nations most vulnerable to climate change and work with all partners, new and old, to realise the promise of a clean energy economy and healthy planet," Yameen said. The Maldives, which presently chairs the Alliance of Small Island States – a coalition of 44 low-lying and coastal nations – signed the Paris accord in April last year, becoming only the fourth nation to do so after Fiji, Marshall Islands, and Palau.[69]

- **Please do not leave the Paris Agreement": Nasheed to Trump** – Former President Mohamed Nasheed said that the United States' repudiation of the Paris Agreement to combat climate change is a "death sentence" to the Maldives. In an interview to Sky News, the former president proclaimed that the effects of climate change and global warming have put the people of the Maldives and other low-lying nations on death row. Widely acknowledged as the "champion" of advocating for environment protection, Former President Nasheed stressed that even the smallest change to world climate and temperature has major negative repercussions on the fragile environments of the Maldives, listing coastal erosion, coral bleaching, water contamination and dwindling fish catch as examples.[70]

Sri Lanka

- **Hate Crimes: Top Diplomats In Unprecedented Meeting Seeks Justice For Muslims** –

In what is termed as an 'unprecedented meeting' several top diplomats in Sri Lanka came together on 1st June 2017 to assure the Muslim community that they will utilize their necessary diplomatic channels to pressure the government and the police to take action against the increasing attacks on Muslims.During a meeting between the Ambassadors of EU, Australia, Canada, Turkey, South Africa, and the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka as well as other civil society organizations at the Dewatagaha Mosque in Colombo, the diplomats condemned the violence and called for freedom of religion and rule of law to be respected.

In a tweet, Alan Keenan, Sri Lanka Project Director of the International Crisis Group said, "To my knowledge this kind of collective public diplomatic intervention is

[69] "Maldives disappointed with 'US abdication of responsibility on climate change". 3 June 2017, http://maldivesindependent.com/environment/maldives-disappointed-with-us-abdication-of-responsibility-on-climate-change-131014 (Accessed on 4 June 2017)

[70] "Please do not leave the Paris Agreement": Nasheed to Trump, 4 June 2017, http://en.mihaaru.com/please-do-not-leave-the-paris-agreement-nasheed-to-trump/ (Accessed on 5th June 2017)

unprecedented in Sri Lanka." He added that such intervention would have been 'unnecessary' if the government had enforced the law.[71]

- **US provides Rs. 350 million for flood relief –**

The US Ambassador to Sri Lanka AtulKeshap joined President MaithripalaSirisena on 2nd June to announce approximately LKR 350 million ($2.3 million) in humanitarian assistance from the United States government and people to help victims of flooding and landslides in Sri Lanka. The aid will be used to provide safe drinking water, hygiene kits, emergency shelter materials, home repair kits, and critical health care services to stave off diseases. A portion of the assistance will be provided throughSarvodaya, a Sri Lankan nongovernmental and charitable organization. "Americans and Sri Lankans have shared a deep bond throughout the history of our two countries," said Ambassador Keshap. "The people of both countries have always stood side-by-side in times of need."[72]

- **193 deaths, 94 missing due to floods and landslides in Sri Lanka**

The number of deaths due to the floods and landslides has increased up to 193 while 94 are missing. 575, 816 people belonging to 149,678 families have been affected and 383 safety centers are in operation as of now.[73]

West Asia

Saudi Arabia and GCC

- **Saudi Deputy Crown Prince visits Russia**

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince and defense minister, Muhammad Bin Salman (MbS) visited Moscow on 30 May 2017, to meet the Russian President Vladimir Putin.[1] This was any first high-level foreign visit of Saudi Arabia after the visit of President Trump to the Kingdom. The main purpose of the visit of MbS was to deliberate upon 'oil' and 'Syria'.[1] On both the issues, the two countries have different views despite having common interests. Both the Saudi and the Russian economies are highly dependent upon oil revenue and need a reasonable and stable oil price. But both are not cooperating with each other; rather whenever they get a chance they tried to compete

[71] "Hate Crimes: Top Diplomats In Unprecedented Meeting Seeks Justice For Muslims", 2 June 2017, https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/hate-crimes-top-diplomats-in-unprecedented-meeting-seeks-justice-for-muslims/ (Accessed on 1 June 2017)

[72] "US provides Rs. 350 million for flood relief", 3 June 2017, http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/03/us-provides-rs-350-million-for-flood-relief/ (Accessed on 4 June 2017)

[73] "193 deaths, 94 missing due to floods and landslides in Sri Lanka", 30 May 2017, https://www.news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/16945-193-deaths-94-missing-due-to-floods-and-landslides (Accessed on 2 June 2017)

out the other and give opportunity to the third party such as Shale to dent into their market shares.

In Syria too, both countries want stability, but again the two are not looking eye to eye. Both are supporting to the rival groups. Saudi Arabia wants Russia to limit the growing influence of Iran in the region, and develop a common policy to handle the post-Assad Syria. So the region may not plunge into chaos, while Russia is firm to maintain the status quo in Damascus.

With these objectives, MbS visited Moscow. This has sparked a ray of hope that both the countries might develop some common policy on both the issues. As reported by the Russian news agency Tass in Moscow that MbS said, "Relations between Saudi Arabia and Russia are seeing one of their best stages at the moment…We have achieved much in the preceding period, but we have to do still more".[1]

Saudi Arabi and Russia are the two global oil giants. Their combined production and export shares account approximately 40 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. Their interests are also the same, i.e. reasonably a stable oil price. However, the two countries have hardly been found working in tandem of developing a common oil policy and manage their oil revenue despite high dependence on it. In the last couple of years, the oil prices plummeted to less than $50 a barrel from the peak $110 a barrel. As a result, both countries suffered great economic losses. This affected their economies, including high budget deficits, which led both to adopt austerity measures. Since politically both states are non-representative, they cannot afford to neglect the aspirations of their citizens and continue the expenditure cut policy longer. Last year in Vienna meeting, both had agreed to cut oil production and stabilize the oil market. The initiative was taken by Saudi Arabia. However, President Putin did not show any sign of fulfilling the commitment. Rather, he increased the production and became the top oil producer in the world and grabbed the Saudi oil market as well.

Reduction in oil production by Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries brought favorable impact on oil prices. Oil prices jumped up immediately from US$40 per barrel to around US$50 a barrel. Through the income of the oil exporting countries increased, but at the same time an increased oil price again enabled the shale producers to enter the energy market and start competing with the traditional oil exporters. Today, the shale producers from US are posing tough competition to both Saudi Arabia and Russia in the energy market.

In fact, for the last two years Saudi Arabia had followed a liberal oil production policy to glut the market and bankrupt and oust the shale producers from the energy market. But it failed as it lost half of its own oil income, more than $200 billion annually. Besides,

other oil exporters, including both OPEC and Non-OPEN, had also suffered from this oil policy. While contrary to this, the Shale producers developed resilience; they did not only put money into R&D and succeeded in developing cheaper technology but were also able to manage loans from banks at US$50 per barrel oil.

As a result, the current visit of the Saudi deputy crown prince and defense minister to Moscow is seen as a positive sign of developing some common policy on oil. MbS in an interview to *Al Arabiay* said there is no competition between us on oil, while President Putin also said that oil has a role in their relationship. Our coordinated activities make it possible to stabilize the situation on global hydrocarbon markets.[1]

On Syria, the two countries have policy differences. But recently, both have been seen as developing a common understanding on some issues. For instance, Moscow agreed that Saudi Arabia can help evacuate around 1000 people stranded in Syria.[1] Besides, Saudi Arabia also showed interest in investing in nuclear, transportation and other areas in Russia. The two oil giants, Aramco and Rosneft have also agreed to work together on oil project in Saudi Arabia. President Putin hailed the strengthening relations between the two countries and is waiting for the visit of Saudi King Salman, the first king to be visiting Moscow.

Palestine

Palestine welcomes US decision not to move capital to Jerusalem[74]

The Palestinian leadership welcomed President Donald Trump's decision on Thursday not to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem for now, saying it "gives peace a chance".
Palestinian ambassador to the United States HussamZomlot said that this is in line with the long-held US policy and the international consensus and it gives peace a chance. He also added that Palestine is ready to start the consultation process with the US administration and we are serious and genuine about achieving a just and lasting peace.

Trump visited Israel and the Palestinian territories last week, holding talks with both Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The US president had said that he wanted to reach the "ultimate deal" and end the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Foreign countries currently have their embassies in the Israeli commercial capital Tel Aviv since they do not recognize Israel's unilateral claim of control over all of Jerusalem. Israel occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank

[74] Ahram Online http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/270026/World/Region/Palestinians-say-Trump-decision-gives-peace-a-chan.aspx

in 1967. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. It claims all of Jerusalem as its united capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern sector as the capital of their future state.
The issue is among the most contentious in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel

- **Qatar and Hamas**

As per Israeli media reports, Qatar has been a major backer of Hamas, pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into the Gaza Strip and sheltering the group's top leadership in recent years. However, as per reports published on June 3rd, Qatar has taken the decision of expelling several senior Hamas members from the Gulf kingdom, in response to outside pressure, in a major blow to the Gaza-based terror group. Hamas was recently informed of the decision by a representative of the Gulf kingdom, who gave Hamas a list of members who must leave Qatar's capital of Doha, Hebrew media quoted a report from the Hezbollah affiliated al-Mayadeen television station as saying. According to the report, those singled out are Hamas members tasked with coordinating with the terror group's operatives in the West Bank, and the list of names reportedly came from interrogations of Palestinian security prisoners by Israel.[75]

- **Tel Aviv Against US decision**

Tel Aviv's City Hall was lit in green lights June 3rd in protest of the decision by US President Donald Trump to withdraw his country for the Paris climate change accord. Mayor Ron Huldai said he was adding Tel Aviv to the list of cities around the world speaking out against the move, which has drawn strong condemnation from leaders around the world. Israel signed the agreement in 2015 and the government has vowed to keep up the accord no matter what the US does. Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz posted on Face book June 1, "The Paris accords were a rare occurrence in which the world united — save for Syria and Nicaragua — to care for the welfare and health of future generations." The statement was seen as a rare criticism of US policy by Jerusalem, which has been among Trump's most vocal supporters.[76]

Turkey

- **Turkey Says U.S.-Backed Assault to Retake Raqqa Begins[77]**

[75] "Qatar said to order several Hamas terror chiefs to get out", *The Times of Israel*, June 3, 2017, http://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-main-backer-qatar-said-to-expel-several-members/ (accessed on June 5, 2017)
[76]"Tel Aviv City Hall goes green to protest US climate accord pullout", *The Times of Israel*, June 5, 2017,http://www.timesofisrael.com/tel-aviv-city-hall-goes-green-to-protest-us-climate-accord-pullout/ (accessed on June 5, 2017)
[77]https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-06-04/turkey-says-u-s-operation-to-drive-is-from-raqqa-has-begun

Turkish Prime Minister BinaliYildirim said the U.S.-backed operation to drive Islamic State from its Raqqa stronghold in Syria has begun, state-run Anadolu news agency reported. The offensive started on the night of June 2 and the U.S. notified Turkey beforehand, Yildirim told reporters, Anadolu said on Sunday. U.S. Army Colonel Ryan S. Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-backed coalition against Islamic State, said the Syrian Democratic Forces who would lead the offensive had closed a ring around Raqqa, but he did not confirm the assault had started.
"Raqqa, as with other former ISIS strongholds, will be liberated and returned to its citizens," Dillon said, using another acronym for Islamic State. The U.S.-backed coalition will support partner forces with air and artillery strikes throughout the operation, he added.

Speaking at a fast-breaking dinner with media representatives and correspondents, Yıldırım stated that the U.S. informed Turkey in advance of the planned operation."It is no secret that Turkey does not approve the method of the U.S. to drive Daesh out of ofRaqqa," Yıldırım said, noting that U.S. officials told their Turkish counterparts that cooperation with PKK's Syrian offshoot Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing People's Protection Forces (YPG) is a tactical decision out of necessity and that it will not last in the long term.

- **Russia 'nears deal to sell air-defense system to Turkey'[78]**

Russia is closing in on a deal with Turkey to supply its latest S-400 air-defense system to Ankara, Moscow said June 3, in the latest sign of restored ties. "Moscow and Ankara have almost finished discussing the technical side of the contract for S-400," Russian state giant Rostec said in a statement. The firm said the finance ministries from the two countries were "discussing the possibility of providing Ankara a loan for the purchase." Rostec CEO Sergei Chemezov said he did not know the outcome of the financial negotiations and refused to give any more details on the sale as the "contract is not yet signed."The potential sale of the hi-tech system by Russia to NATO-member Turkey marks the latest step in a dramatic turnaround in relations since the two fell out after Ankara downed a Russian warplane on the Syrian border in 2015.

- **PM Yıldırım calls for mutual efforts to restore ties with Germany, EU[79]**

Prime Minister BinaliYıldırım has said that Turkey aims to restore its ties with Germany which soured after the German state's controversial stance against the Turkish

https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/06/04/us-backed-operation-begins-to-drive-daesh-out-of-syrias-raqqa-pm-yildirim-says

[78]http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/russia-nears-deal-to-sell-air-defense-system-to-turkey-----.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113896&NewsCatID=345

[79]https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/06/05/pm-yildirim-calls-for-mutual-efforts-to-restore-ties-with-germany-eu

government, throughout the April 16 constitutional referendum campaign. He, however, affirmed that such move, if undertaken by Turkey singlehandedly, would not succeed. The prime minister was talking to Turkish media over the weekend in Ankara. In addition to relations with Germany, Yıldırım touched upon relations with the EU and underlined Turkey's determination to normalize relations with the 28-nation bloc. The Turkish prime minister's remarks over the weekend came ahead of the German foreign minister's visit to Ankara today. Prime Minister Yıldırım met with Turkish media representatives at the Çankaya Palace for an iftar program, where he commented on some most recent developments.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 4	Quetta / Balochistan	A man and his young sister belonging to the Shia Hazaracommunity were shot dead near KilliTirkha on Spiny Road in Quetta.[80]	2	0
2	June 4	NWA / FATA	North Waziristan Agency (NWA) has returned to normalcy after the completion of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and more than 90 per cent of the displaced persons have been resettled in the Agency. "North Waziristan has returned to life," said Political Agent Kamran Khan Afridi, adding, that all schools and hospitals in the Agency are made functional now.[81]	Operation Zarb-e-Azb completed	
3	June 2-3	Mastung / Balochistan	At least top 10 IS 'commanders' from different parts of the country, who had assembled for a meeting in Mastung District, were reportedly killed in an	10	NS

[80]SaleemShahid, Shia Hazara siblings gunned down in Quetta, *Dawn*, June 5, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1337451/shia-hazara-siblings-gunned-down-in-quetta, accessed on June 5, 2017
[81]ShahabullahYusufzai, NWA returns to life thanks to the Pak Army, *The Express Tribune*, June 4, 2017, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1426674/nwa-returns-life-thanks-pak-army/, accessed on June 4, 2917

			intelligence-led counterterrorism operation near the District.[82]		
4	May 30	FATA	Security forces recovered a huge quantity of arms and ammunition during intelligence-based operations as a part the Operation RaddulFasad in FATA and adjoining areas, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The raids were conducted in village Punga kali in South Waziristan Agency, village Idak of North Waziristan Agency, Roringar valley, Matta (Swat) and others.[83]	Weapons recovered	
5	May 29	Quetta / Balochistan	Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) UmerurRehman was killed and another police officer, identified as Sub-Inspector Bilal Shams, was injured when unidentified militants opened fire at them n Huddah area of Quetta evening, said Police.[84]	1	1

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 4	Kabul	At least 7 people were killed and 119 others were injured in triple suicide bombing at the funeral of a Senator's son in KhairKhana area of Kabul city. According to sources, three suicide bombers	7	119

[82]BaqirSajjadSayid, Top IS leadership targeted in Mastung operation, *Dawn*, June 3, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1337339/top-is-leadership-targeted-in-mastung-operation, accessed on June 4, 2017
[83] ISPR claims recovering huge cache of weapons during intelligence based operations, *Dawn*, May 30, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1336342/ispr-claims-recovering-huge-cache-of-weapons-during-intelligence-based-operations, accessed on May 31, 2017
[84] DSP killed, his nephew injured in Quetta firing, Dawn, May 30, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1336154/dsp-killed-his-nephew-injured-in-quetta-firing, accessed on June 4, 2017

			detonated their explosives back-to-back during the ceremony.[85]		
2	June 4	Kapisa	The shadow 'deputy governor' of Taliban for northeasternKapisa Province, identified as Mawlavi Dost Mohammad, was killed along with 10 others during an operation by the Afghan Special Forces.[86]	10	0
3	June 3	Washington	Pakistani Ambassador to Washington, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, during a press briefing in Washington told reporters that the Haqqani Network has moved to Afghanistan and the Afghan officials must focus on eliminating the terror network inside its soil rather than blaming Pakistan.[87]	Statement	
4	June 1	Paktia	Militants and security forces unspecified number of suffered casualties during an attack by the Taliban in Dandi-Pathan District of Paktia Province.	NS	NS
5	May 31	Kabul	At least 90 people were killed and 461 others were injured in a suicide bombing in the diplomatic quarter near the German Embassy in Kabul. No outfit claimed responsibility for	90	461

[85] 7 Killed, 119 Wounded in Kabul Triple Suicide Bombing, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 4, 2017, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18330, accessed on June 4, 2017
[86] Taliban's shadow deputy governor and 10 militants killed in Kapisa, *Khaama Press*, June 4, 2017, http://www.khaama.com/talibans-shadow-deputy-governor-and-10-militants-killed-in-kapisa-02866, accessed on June 4, 2017
[87] Pakistani ambassador claims Haqqani network has shifted to Afghanistan, *Khaama Press*, June 3, 2017, http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-ambassador-claims-haqqani-network-has-shifted-to-afghanistan-02861, accessed on June 4, 2017

			the attack. Taliban denied any involvement in the attack.[88]		

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 4	Kurdistan	The number of Kurdish fighters killed since the breakout of the Iraqi war against Islamic State militants in the summer of 2014 has stood at 1760, said Mahmoud Haji Saleh, the Kurdish Martyrs Affairs Minister.[89]	Statement	
2	June 2	Mosul	At least 120 IS militants were killed as Iraqi troops recaptured al-Sihha District in western Mosul. Army's elite Counter-Terrorism Service spokesman Brigadier General Sabah Noaman confirmed the development.[90]	120	NS
3	June 2	Mosul	The number of Islamic State militants in western Mosul's Old City stands at 500, Lieutenant Captain AbdulahTaha from the Iraqi Federal Police forces said.[91]	Statement	
4	June 1	Diyala	At least 16 Iraqis were killed and wounded in Diyala in separate	16	16

[88] 90 Killed, 461 Injured in Kabul Explosion, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, June 1, 2017, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2001,%202017/Front%20page.pdf, accessed on June 1, 2017
[89] Mohamed Mostafa, Kurdistan: 1760 Peshmerga soldiers killed in anti-IS war since 2014, *Iraqi News*, June 4, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/kurdistan-1760-peshmerga-soldiers-killed-anti-war-since-2014/, accessed on June 4, 2017
[90]NehalMostafa, More than 100 IS militants killed as one western Mosul district retaken, *Iraqi News*, June 3, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/100-militants-killed-one-western-mosul-district-retaken/, accessed on June 4, 2017
[91] Mohamed Mostafa, UPDATED: Police: 500 IS fighters trapped in Mosul's Old City, chief vigilante killed, *Iraqi News*, June 2, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/police-500-islamic-state-fighters-trapped-western-mosuls-old-city/, accessed on June 4, 2017

			attacks and bombings in the Province. According to a monthly United Nations count, violence and armed conflict has claimed the lives of 317 Iraqis and has caused injuries to 403 others in the month of April.[92]		
5	June 1	Baghdad	According to a monthly count released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), violence and armed conflicts left 824 Iraqis dead and wounded during the month of May. "A total of 354 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 470 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in May 2017," said UNAMI in its report. The statistics does not include the fatalities of security personnel.[93]	UNAMI Statement	

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 4	Syria	A British man, identified as Jack Letts (21) and dubbed as "Jihadi Jack" has been captured by Kurdish fighters in Syria where he was accused of joining ISIS. Jack was the first from the UK to join ISIS in Syria.[94]	Capture	

[92] Mohamed Mostafa, 16 casualties in separate Diyala attacks, including soldiers, militants and civilians, *Iraqi News*, June 1, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/16-casualties-separate-diyala-attacks-including-soldiers-militants-civilians/, accessed on June 2, 2017

[93] Mohamed Mostafa, Violence, armed conflicts leave 824 Iraqi casualties in May: UNAMI, *Iraqi News*, June 1, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/violence-armed-conflicts-leaves-824-iraqis-dead-may-unami/, accessed on June 2, 2017

[94] ISIS Suspect 'Jihadi Jack' Caught In Syria: Report, NDTV, June 4, 2017, http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/isis-suspect-jihadi-jack-caught-in-syria-report-1707702, accessed on June 4, 2017

2	June 3	Raqqa / Aleppo	With the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the verge of liberating the strategic town of Al-Mansourah, the Islamic State finds itself clinging on to the provincial capital of Al-Raqqa, where they hope to fend off the swarming enemy forces. The IS is on the verge of losing their last positions in the Aleppo Governorate to the Syrian Arab Army (SAA).[95]	IS losing territory	
3	June 3	Damascus	During an interview with India's Wion TV, President Bashar al-Assad said that the situation in Syria is "much better than before." Pointing to assistance from its Russian and Iranian allies, he said the Syrian military was able to reassert control over major cities formerly held by ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups.[96]	Interview	
4	June 1	Daraa	15 members of the Syrian opposition were killed in two bomb blasts in the road linking between Kafr Shams and Aqrabah in northern Daraa.[97]	15	NS
5	May 31	Damascus	The Syrian opposition announced killing 25 members of the government forces in Tal	25	0

[95] Leith Fadel, ISIL's rule in northern Syria is coming to an end: map, Al Masdar News, June 3, 2017, https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isils-rule-northern-syria-coming-end-map/, accessed on June 4, 2017
[96] Tom O' Connor, SYRIA'S ASSAD SAYS WORST OF THE WAR IS OVER, AS ISIS NEARS DEFEAT, Newsweek, June 3, 2017, http://www.newsweek.com/syria-assad-worst-war-over-isis-defeat-620332, accessed on June 4, 2017
[97] Loaa Adel, Bomb blasts kill15 members of Syrian opposition in Daraa, *Iraqi News*, June 1, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/bomb-blasts-kill15-members-syrian-opposition-daraa/, accessed on June 2, 2017

			Dakwa, in the eastern Qalamu, in Damascus. The killings were the result of clashes that broke out between its forces and the Syrian regime forces, amid mutual artillery and rockets shelling.[98]		

International Economic Issues

- **St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2017**

The 21st St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) took place from June 1–3, 2017 in Russia. The theme of the forum was 'In Search of New Balance in the Global Economy'. In his opening statement on June 2, 2017, Prime Minister NarendraModi spoke of India as an investment destination, underlining the strengths of its young workforce as well as enormous capacity to absorb investments, skills and technologies. He also listed infrastructure, particularly railways, solid waste management, the Clean India mission and the Skill India programme that aims to equip the country's burgeoning youth population with vocational skills as some of the areas where India was looking for foreign direct investment. On June 1, Prime Minister Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled a bilateral vision document aimed at boosting economic and trade ties between the two countries.[99] On the sidelines of the forum, both leaders also adopted the 'Saint Petersburg Declaration: A vision for the 21st century'[100], and also signed an agreement on intellectual property, a master framework agreement on building two units at the Kudankulam nuclear power plant, a programme of bilateral cultural exchanges for 2017–2019, an agreement on a feasibility study for a high-speed link between Nagpur and Secunderabad, and a memorandum on cooperation between joint stock company ALROSA and India's Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council [101].

[98]Loaa Adel, 25 members of government forces killed in Damascus, *Iraqi News*, June 1, 2017, http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/25-members-government-forces-killed-damascus/, accessed on June 2, 2017

[99]Elizabeth Roche, "NarendraModi hard-sells GST, other reforms to woo investors in Russia", Livemint, June 3, 2017, http://www.livemint.com/Politics/xIA5C2MVRtPAxf7D6cWi3H/Narendra-Modi-hardsells-GST-other-reforms-to-woo-investors.html(accessed on June 5, 2017)

[100] Government of India, Press Information Bureau, "Saint Petersburg Declaration by the Russian Federation and the Republic of India: A vision for the 21st century", June 1, 2017. http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=163332(accessed on June 2, 2017)

[101] President of Russia, "A package of agreements signed following Russian-Indian talks", June 1, 2017,http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54659 (accessed on June 2, 2017)

- **Finland donates CHF 48,000 for LDCs' participation**

According to the press release of the World Trade Organization on June 1, 2017, the government of Finland contributed CHF 48,000 to support the participation of least-developed countries (LDCs) in the eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11), which will take place on 10-13 December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.[102]

- **World Bank keeps 2017 global growth forecast at 2.7%**

The World Bank report on "Global Economic Prospects: A Fragile Recovery", released on June 4, 2017, forecasts that global growth will strengthen to 2.7 percent in 2017. This will be supported by a pickup in manufacturing and trade, rising confidence, favourable global financing conditions, and stabilizing commodity prices. Growth in advanced economies is expected to accelerate to 1.9 percent in 2017. Growth in emerging market and developing economies will recover to 4.1 percent this year, as obstacles to activity diminish in commodity-exporting countries.[103]

[102] The World Trade Organization (WTO), "Finland donates CHF 48,000 for LDCs' participation in Ministerial Conference", June 1, 2017. https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres17_e/pr792_e.htm(accessed on June 2, 2017)

[103]The World Bank, "Global Economic Prospects: A Fragile Recovery", June 4, 2017http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects (accessed on June 5, 2017)