

Weekly Media Updates **(17-23 July, 2017)**

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Africa

- **Largest Free Trade Area for Africa Still Elusive¹**

The formal launch of the mega economic bloc for Africa, the Tripartite Free Trade Area (FTA), faces further delay because only one country has so far ratified its creation out of 19 member states.

A minimum of 14 ratifications are required for the agreement to come into force, combining three regional economic communities, the East African Community (EAC), Southern Africa Development Community (Sadc) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa).

This emerged last week when Madagascar, a COMESA member, appended its signature to the Tripartite Agreement before senior officials of the EAC, SADC and COMESA. "Egypt is the only country to have ratified the Agreement.

Under the Agreement, the three economic blocs were to merge into a single free trade area, the largest in Africa, with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$ 1.3 trillion, making it also one of the largest FTAs in the world.

Although the signing of the Agreement by Madagascar, only a few days after South Africa did so, the EAC secretary general, Liberat Mfumukeko, the current chairperson of the Tripartite Task Force, admitted that negotiations were going at a snail's pace and that little has been achieved.

At the Kampala meeting, the sixth session of the Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee, Uganda's minister for Trade, Industry and Cooperatives Ms Amelia Kyambadde stated that the Intra-Tripartite trade in the three blocs was still low. According to her, it amounted to only 19 per cent of the continent's \$930 billion total trade, attributing it to low level of industrialisation, restricted movement of labour, poor infrastructure and high dependency on export of unprocessed commodities. The minister observed, nevertheless, that the tripartite bloc provided an opportunity to unlock the enormous trade and investment potential of the envisaged bloc.

Establishment of the FTA is intended to bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increase investment flows, enhance competitiveness and encourage regional infrastructure development.

Although the formal agreement to set in motion its creation was signed by the Heads of State and Governments from 26 African countries on June 10, 2015 in

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, resource constraints has been blamed for failure to finalise the process.

Until recently, the very three blocs pushing for the creation of the tripartite economic bloc - EAC, SADC and COMESA - were themselves yet to ratify the pact and deposit instruments of ratification.

- **Ethiopia to Trade through Sudanese Ports²**

The Vice-President of Sudan Hassabo Mohammed Abdul Rahman has directed the authorities concerned to facilitate procedures of delivery of the Ethiopian goods through the Sudanese ports.

Hassabo who chaired, the meeting of the Sudanese-Ethiopian Committee on 19 July 2017 has affirmed the dealing through one window-system for import and export procedures, in Port Sudan besides, the transit fees in high ways and the development of the economic relations in the light of the agreements signed by the two countries.

The Wali (governor) of the Red Sea State, Ali Ahmed Hammed in the meeting, also, discussed transport of the Ethiopian pilgrims via Port Sudan ports.

- **Govt Has Paid \$134 M to Evicted White Farmers, Says Chinamasa³**

Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa told parliament on 22 July 2017, Thursday that his government had paid \$134 million in unbudgeted money in compensation in 2016. He did not give details and his official statement did not include the figure. But White Zimbabwean commercial farmers who were driven off their land during President Robert Mugabe's controversial land seizures are disputing claims by the finance minister.

Zimbabwe grabbed world headlines in 2000 when supporters of 93-year-old Mugabe invaded white-owned farms and evicted their owners, often violently. Mugabe defended the seizures as necessary to redress colonial exploitation. It is estimated that close to \$1 billion is needed to pay over 4500 former white commercial farmers who were forced-off their land to make way for government's land redistribution exercise. The International Monetary Fund has said compensating the farmers is among the requirements for Zimbabwe to access fresh international funding.

North Africa

- **Egypt Second Biggest Destination for FDI in the Region in 2016¹**

According to a recent report released by The Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation, Egypt has ranked second among Arab countries in attracting foreign direct investment in FDI in 2016. Egypt was next to the UAE which attracted USD 8.1 billion as FDI while Saudi Arabia came in the third rank.

Meanwhile, Egypt topped the list of new foreign projects with a backlog total US \$ 40.9 billion, representing 44.1 percent of the new foreign projects in the region. The Corporation based its report on evaluating the investment climate in 109 countries, including 16 Arab countries, through attractive investment guarantee index. The report showed that the most important investors in Egypt over the past five years are China, UAE, Greece, Italy and Saudi with US \$ 22.6 billion, 17.3 billion dollars, 10 billion dollars, 8.5 billion dollars and 5.2 billion respectively.

The report said that the most important sectors which attracted the investments in Egypt include food, coal, petroleum, natural gas, chemicals and real estate sectors, as well as communications, cars, textiles and industrial. Foreign direct investments in Egypt have risen 12 percent to reach \$6.6 billion in the fiscal year 2016/17, compared to \$5.9 billion in the same period last year. The \$6.6 billion figure was for the period from July 2016 to March 2017. The country's fiscal year begins on 1 July and ends on 30 June. 1,120 companies were newly established or expanded with a capital of EGP 4.2 billion. Out of the 1,120 companies, 960 were in June 2017 with a capital of EGP 2.2 billion, compared to 913 companies with a capital of EGP 2.4 billion in June 2016.

- **Egypt Inaugurates its Largest Military Base in the Region²**

President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt on Saturday inaugurated the Mohamed Naguib Military Base, reportedly the largest in the entire region of MENA. Its inauguration also held its first graduation of military students, according to the Al-Ahram Arabic website. The base is built on what used to be a military city, constructed in 1993, and consists of 1,155 buildings built and renovated over the past two years.

The military base will also serve as a headquarters to some forces of the Northern Military Unit, which is expected to increase its efficiency in protecting the region west of Alexandria, the North Coast, the currently under construction Al-Dabaa

¹ Daily News Egypt, <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2017/07/16/egypt-ranks-second-among-arab-countries-luring-foreign-investment/>

² English Ahram Online <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/274035/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt%E2%80%99s-Sisi-inaugurates-Mohamed-Naguib-military-b.aspx>

nuclear power plant, oil fields and the base will also be used in military exercises with the armies of other countries.

The base is named after Mohamed Naguib, the primary leader of the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and the first president of the Republic of Egypt after its establishment on 18 June 1953. It is worth mentioning here that Along with Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Naguib led the Free Officers movement, which ended the Mohamed Ali Dynasty that ruled over Egypt and Sudan from 1805 until 1952.

Central Asia

- **China to Provide Money for Construction of New Tajik Parliament**

Reportedly, China is to provide an amount of US\$ 230 million to Tajikistan for the construction of a new parliament building. Tajikistan Government and the Dushanbe city administration are constructing or renovating many old structures. In April 2017, President Emomali Rahmon and the Chairman of Dushanbe city Rustami Emomali participated in the foundation-stone laying ceremony for the construction of a new building to house Supreme Court of Tajikistan. An estimated budget for construction of a new 16-story building of the Supreme Court is 73.858 million somoni or about US\$ 9 million.³ They also launched the construction of three educational institutions in Dushanbe, including building for a medical university.⁴ However, the country lacks fund and seeks international partnership to build institutional infrastructure.

China deeply engaged with this Central Asian country, with which it shares boundary in the west. China is Tajikistan largest trading partner and the largest foreign investor in its economy. Both want to further increase their trade. Tajikistan is 'seriously considering' to create a 'zone of free trade' with China. Tajikistan wants to increase the bilateral trade with China to \$3 billion by 2020.⁵ It may be noted that China owns more than 50 per cent of the country's public debt, about US\$ 1.2 billion of the total external debt of US\$ 2.3 billion, which amounts to about one sixth of the GDP.⁶

Besides economy, China is also increasing its presence in security arena of Tajikistan. Last year, the Government of Tajikistan said that China is to provide finance and construct border outposts for Tajik security forces along the

³ Asia Plus, "President gives start to construction of a number of new facilities in Dushanbe," 28 April 2017, <https://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/tajikistan/economic/20170428/239217>

⁴ President of Tajikistan, "Working tour in Dushanbe city," 4 April 2017, <http://president.tj/en/node/15241>

⁵ Asia Plus, "Tajikistan intends to increase its two-way trade with China to \$3 billion by 2020," 15 May 2017, <https://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/economic/20170515/239818>

⁶ TRT World, "Tajikistan to get \$230M from China for new parliament building," <http://www.trtworld.com/asia/tajikistan-to-get-230m-from-china-for-new-parliament-building-404260>

Tajikistan-Afghanistan borders and a training centre for Tajik border guards.⁷ China has reportedly built an outpost on the porous Tajik-Afghan border in early 2016.⁸

China

- **China, Russia conduct simulation exercise for joint naval drills**

Chinese and Russian commanders conducted a simulation exercise on July 23, 2017, for the ongoing joint military drills code-named 'Joint Sea 2017' in the Baltic Sea. In the hours-long exercise, two tactical assault groups, consisting of mixed warships from the Chinese and Russian fleets, simulated details of the drills on a map, including ship-to-sea firing by secondary cannons, air defense, joint landing and inspection, maritime search and rescue, underway replenishment and other subjects. "The simulation exercise was conducted for two purposes, namely, making commanders at all levels more familiar with the procedures and subjects of the drills, as well as enhancing coordination and tacit understanding between commanders of the two countries," said Wang Xiaoyong, deputy captain of a destroyer detachment of the Chinese Navy.⁹

- **Chinese President eyes B&R cooperation with Palestine**

President Xi Jinping said on July 18 that China stands ready to work with Palestine on Belt and Road construction. China will support capable and qualified companies to carry out investment cooperation in Palestine for mutual benefits and win-win results, Xi said as he held talks with his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas at the Great Hall of the People.¹⁰

- **Asia Financial Cooperation Association**

Following is the text of a question and answer by Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Lu Kang on 20 July 2017:

.Q: The Asia Financial Cooperation Association (AFCA) was set up in May. We've heard that the AFCA will hold a ceremony in the coming days. Do you have more information on that?

⁷ Nazarali Pirnazarov, "China to build outposts for Tajik guards on Tajikistan-Afghanistan border," 26 September 2016, <http://in.reuters.com/article/tajikistan-china-border-idINKCN11W0WG>

⁸ Asia Plus, "China plans to help Tajikistan protect its common border with Afghanistan," 27 September 2016, <https://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/security/20160927/231335>

⁹ "China, Russia conduct simulation exercise for joint naval drills", July 24, 2017, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/0724/c90786-9245281.html> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

¹⁰ "Chinese President eyes B&R cooperation with Palestine", July 19, 2017 <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/20247.htm> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

A: China is committed to enhancing communication and cooperation between regional financial institutions. On March, 2015, President Xi Jinping raised the idea of setting up the Asia Financial Cooperation Association (AFCA) at the annual meeting of the Boao Forum for Asia, after which this initiative was repeated many times by Premier Li Keqiang. We are glad to see that financial institutions in Asia and other regions are very supportive of this initiative and have responded positively. As one of the outcomes of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the AFCA was officially established on May 11 and headquartered in Beijing. So far, it has attracted 107 institutions from across five continents as its founding members.

On July 24, the founding ceremony of the AFCA will be held in Beijing. China expresses its congratulations. We hope that the AFCA will uphold the principle of “connectivity, cooperation, joint governance, shared benefits” and play a constructive role in ensuring stability of the regional and even global financial market and in promoting common development and prosperity of the region.¹¹

- **Seminars on Investment Opportunities in Automobile & Auto-Components Sectors in India Organized in Chongqing and Changchun**

The Embassy of India in Beijing organized two Seminars on Investment Opportunities in Automobile & Auto-Components Sectors in India in Chongqing and Changchun on July 11 & 13, 2017 respectively. These events are a part of a series of industry and sector specific ‘Make in India’ events to be organized across China this year and were organized in partnership with the local Foreign Affairs Offices and China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) Sub-Councils of both cities.¹²

- **Xi pours cold water on China's “creativity” rally¹³**

China’s innovation bubble is rapidly losing air. Investors, hearing President Xi Jinping signal for a crackdown on financial risk, are speeding their flight from

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of China, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang’s Regular Press Conference on July 20, 2017”, July 20, 2017, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1479101.shtml (accessed on July 24, 2017)

¹² Embassy of India, “Seminars on Investment Opportunities in Automobile & Auto-Components Sectors in India Organized in Chongqing and Changchun”, Press Release, July 13, 2017, <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn/newsDetails.aspx?NewsId=996> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

¹³ Pete Sweeney, “Xi pours cold water on China's ‘creativity’ rally”, *Reuters*, July 18, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-stocks-breakingviews-idUSKBN1A30P3> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

expensive technology stocks and small caps into traditional economy blue chips. The overheated early-stage start up space might be next.

Mainland investors read Xi's weekend comments, delivered at a five yearly financial forum, as a sign conditions will tighten further. That poured cold water on Chinese small caps, and on the tech-heavy ChiNext growth board. Some 500 companies hit their 10 percent limit down on July 17, 2017. The ChiNext index lost over 5 percent, its worst day in years, and is down around 20 percent year to date, compared to a 10 percent rise in the benchmark CSI300.

- **China central bank told by Xi Jinping to play bigger role in managing financial risk¹⁴**

China's central bank will take on a bigger role in macro-prudential management and in averting systemic risk in the financial system, President Xi Jinping said at a once-in-five-years government work conference that ended on 22 July. Financial security is a vital part of national security, Xi said at the fifth National Financial Work Conference, adding that China will strengthen the Communist Party's leadership in the financial sector.

A Financial Stability and Development Committee will also be set up under the State Council, or cabinet, state media cited Xi as saying. No details were given on the committee and on how the role of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) will be strengthened.

- **Don't bog down scientists with red tape, says China's premier¹⁵**

China's Premier Li Keqiang has called for scientists to be given more freedom to operate in their research to help the country's drive towards greater innovation as it tries to shift its economy away from cheap manufacturing and heavy industry. Many scientists have complained that there were too many constraints on scientific projects from the government, especially over the management of funds, which was restricting researchers' creativity; Li was quoted as saying in a statement on the central government's website.

"[We] must create more space for scientists so that more vigour can be released," said Li in comments made to a State Council meeting on July 12, 2017. The premier criticised officials drawing up plans and quotas for research programmes, requiring certain tasks to be done by a specific month. "Which one of the major scientific

¹⁴ "China central bank told by Xi Jinping to play bigger role in managing financial risk", *The Economic Times*, July 16, 2017,

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/china-central-bank-told-by-xi-jinping-to-play-bigger-role-in-managing-financial-risk/articleshow/59617460.cms> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

¹⁵ "Don't bog down scientists with red tape, says China's premier" *South China Morning Posts*, July 14, 2017,

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2102663/dont-bog-down-scientists-red-tape-says-chinas-premier> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

discoveries in human history was made by planning? Even [Isaac] Newton himself couldn't plan his discovery of gravity," Li said. The government should create a more tolerant environment for researchers, especially in studies that could affect the future course of human history, the premier added.

- **Xinjiang Residents Forced to Install Spyware on Phones¹⁶**

Residents of Xinjiang, an ethnic minority region of western China, are being forced to install spyware on their mobile phones. On July 10, mobile phone users in the Tianshan District of Urumqi City received a mobile phone notification from the district government instructing them to install a surveillance application called Jingwang (or "Web Cleansing"). The message said the app was intended to "prevent [them] from accessing terrorist information." But authorities may be using the app for more than just counter-terrorism. According to an exclusive report from Radio Free Asia, 10 Kazakh women from Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture were arrested for messages sent to a private WeChat group chat soon after they installed the app.

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **US to ban Americans from travelling to North Korea**

On July 21 US government announced that it would bar US citizen from travelling to North Korea. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has authorised, a "Geographical Travel Restriction" which will come in to effect 30 days after it is pushed in the Federal Register. The move is in response to the tragic death of American citizen Otto Warmbier, who was detained and sentenced to hard labour for 15 years of hard labour on charges of stealing propaganda material. Two more Americans are still detained in North Korea.¹⁷Barring Americans from stepping foot in North Korea marks the latest US step to isolate the furtive, nuclear-armed nation, and protect US citizens who may be allured by the prospect of travelling there. The travel ban

¹⁶ "China's Xinjiang Residents Are Being Forced to Install Surveillance Apps on Mobile Phones ", *Global Voices*, July 19, 2017, <https://globalvoices.org/2017/07/19/chinas-xinjiang-residents-are-being-forced-to-install-surveillance-apps-on-mobile-phones/> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

¹⁷ "U.S. State Department to clamp ban on travel to North Korea", *The Reuters*, July 21, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-tours-idUSKBN1A60SE> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

comes as the Trump administration searches for more effective ways to ramp up pressure on North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme.¹⁸

- **N. Korea Responds Warily to Moon's Peace Overtures**

North Korea on July 15, 2017 gave its first official response to President Moon Jae-in's attempts at rapprochement, and it was largely scathing. The official Rodong Sinmun daily in an editorial said an initiative Moon laid out in Berlin two weeks ago "is riddled with sophistries like sleep talking, which only pose hurdles rather than helping improve North-South relations." But the daily added, "It is a relief [Moon] takes a different stance from his predecessors and vows to honor the previous inter-Korean declarations," in 2000 and 2007. Moon's roadmap includes security guarantees as well as economic and diplomatic incentives if the North scraps its nuclear and missile programs, and it rules out the prospect of forced unification. But the paper accused South Korea of contradicting itself by pursuing peace while tightening sanctions and called on Seoul to implement "a fundamental shift in policy and stance." If the North agrees to a meeting, it would mark the first official contact between the two sides in a year and seven months.¹⁹

- **Indo-Japan Civil Nuclear Agreement Comes into Force**

On July 20, the Indo-Japanese civil nuclear agreement came into effective with the exchange of diplomatic note between Indian Foreign Secretary and a Japanese special envoy marking the completion of the process.²⁰ The agreement was signed in November 2016 during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan only to be cleared by the Japanese Parliament in June 2017. The deal faced a challenge in Japanese Parliament because of India's non-membership in NPT and CTBT. The deal is very crucial for India to achieve its set target of producing 25 percentage of energy from nuclear sources by 2050. Not only the deal helps India to get civilian nuclear technology and equipment from Japan but it is important for the effectiveness of India-US nuclear cooperation as important US nuclear companies are owned by Japanese companies.

¹⁸ "US to ban Americans from travelling to North Korea", *North Korea Times*, 23 July 2017. <http://www.northkoreatimes.com/news/254073550/us-to-ban-americans-from-travelling-to-north-korea---sources> (accessed on July 24, 2017).

¹⁹ Kim Myong-song, "N. Korea Responds Warily to Moon's Peace Overtures", *The Chosun Ilbo* (English Edition): Daily News from Korea, July 17, 2017. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/07/17/2017071701518.html (accessed on July 19, 2017).

²⁰ "India, Japan civil nuclear deal comes into force", *The Hindu*, June 21, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-japan-civil-nuclear-deal-comes-into-force/article19320024.ece> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

- President Moon Announced New Administration's Five Year Plan**

On July 19, the newly elected South Korean President Moon Jae-in announced his administration's road map for the coming five years. The plan gives priority to democracy and justice. On releasing his plan with five goals, 20 strategies and 100 tasks President Moon said, "The five-year plans for state affairs announced today will be the blueprint and compass for a new Korea".²¹
- Prime Minister Abe's LDP faces another election defeat**

On July 23, Kazuko Kori a DPJ supported candidate won the Sendai Mayoral election defeating a candidate endorsed by Prime Minister Abe's LDP. Sendai Mayoral election is the second electoral defeat of LDP this month. Earlier in the first week of July LDP faced a crushing defeat in the Tokyo metropolitan assembly. Experts read these out come as a public outcry against the Abe administration which recently has come under criticism for cronyism and corruption.²²

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- First Indonesia- Pakistan Bilateral Consultative Forum**

Indonesia and Pakistan held their first ever Bilateral Consultative Forum (BCF) in Jakarta. The two parties noted the development of the relationship between the two countries which has become stronger and friendlier, at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels, since the very first diplomatic relationship established six decades ago. In the politic and security sector both parties agreed on the importance of cooperation to counter terrorism, drugs trafficking, and defence. In the socio-cultural sector, the two countries will encourage the increase of people-to-people interaction through scholarship programmes and inter-university cooperation. In the economic sector, Indonesia and Pakistan recognised the importance of preferential Trade Agreement in encouraging bilateral trade. In additional, both parties also shared their views on the issues in their respective regions and international issues of common interest to the two countries. In particular, Pakistan conveyed the request for Indonesia's support to become the member of IORA and enhance its role for becoming a fully-fledged partner in ASEAN.²³

²¹ "Moon Jae-in's five-year road map unveiled", *The Korea Herald*, July 19, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170719000825> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

²² 'Abe takes further hit as candidate backed by his party loses', *The Asahi Shimbun*, July 24, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201707240018.html> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

²³"The First RI-Pakistan Bilateral Consultative Forum, Six Decades Relationship Milestone", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia*, July 13, 2017, <http://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/The-First-RI-Pakistan-Bilateral-Consultative-Forum,-Six-Decades-Relationship-Milestone.aspx>, accessed on July 18, 2017.

- **Thailand-US Strategic Dialogue**

On July 14, 2017, the 6th US-Thailand Strategic Dialogue was held at the US State Department, Washington DC. The Thai delegation was led by Mrs Busaye Mathelin, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. The dialogue discussed preparation of PM Prayuth Chan-o-cha, visit to the US, which will take place at a mutually convenient date. Thailand and the US reaffirmed their enduring alliance and their shared commitment to promoting peace, security, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Both delegations engaged in a wide ranging discussion of mutual interests and concerns, including their shared concern on North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. Reaffirming their commitment towards maintaining peace, security, and stability in the South China Sea, both side agreed on ensuring the freedom of navigation. In this regard, they welcomed the progress of cooperation between ASEAN and China on the South China Sea issue. The Thai side discussed its aspiration of turning the South China Sea into a Sea of Peace, Stability, and Sustainable development. The two side also discussed ways to enhance their cooperation in regional frameworks including the EAS, APEC, and ASEAN-US Strategic Partnership, with a view to tackling common challenges as well as contributing to greater stability and prosperity to the region. On security cooperation both parties discussed ways to further strengthen and expand cooperation in areas of defence cooperation, cyber security, maritime security, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism cooperation, and intelligence sharing.²⁴

- **Meeting of Thailand-Myanmar Joint Boundary Committee**

On 12-14 July, 2017, the 9th Meeting of Thailand-Myanmar Joint Boundary Committee was held in Bangkok. Thailand and Myanmar share 2401 km long boundary, which is the longest boundary amongst Thailand's neighbouring countries. Both sides reached several outcomes that would contribute to the expedition of survey and demarcation between Thailand and Myanmar including the adoption of the joint production of orthophoto maps in sectors 8 and 9 of the Thailand-Myanmar boundary area in Ranong, Chumphon and part of Prajuab Khiri Khan Provinces. This is the first set of maps jointly produced by both sides using one of the most modern technologies. The meeting also adopted and agreed to apply the Technical Guidelines for the construction of Revetments along the Bank of the Thaungyin/Moei and Pak chan/Kra Buri River, which will also promote dialogue and mutual understanding between both countries and peoples,

²⁴ "The Sixth Thailand-United States Strategic Dialogue", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*, July 15, 2017, <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/79209-The-Sixth-Thailand-%E2%80%93-United-States-Strategic-Dialo.html>, accessed on July 18, 2017.

especially with regard to constructions along the bank of rivers which form the boundary between the two countries. Both sides also discussed necessary documents and procedures relating to survey and demarcation with a view to commencing the survey and demarcation of the common boundary at the earliest opportunity.²⁵

Myanmar

- **After deadline, Mandalay and Kayin remain Ma Ba Tha strongholds**

The deadline to stop activities under the name of Ma Ba Tha was passed on July 15 but some nationalist monks still refuse to soften their stance. The order also restricted Ma Ba Tha members from using that name individually or in groups for any purpose, but Ma Ba Tha groups in Mandalay Region and Kayin State insist they have the right to remain active under the name Ma Ba Tha.²⁶

- **Commander-in-Chief discusses bilateral ties with US diplomat**

Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Ambassador Joseph Y. Yun, deputy assistant secretary of the US State Department for North Korea and Japan at the Bayintnaung Yeiktha, the Ministry of Defence in Nay Pyi Taw on July 17. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said in the welcoming remarks that he believes the Tatmadaw is only to defend the State and not to cause trouble to others. Myanmar Tatmadaw is trying to maintain good ties with all Tatmadaws in the world, and promotes good Myanmar-US relation.²⁷

- **Myanmar still using ‘same tactics’ of oppression as junta: UN envoy**

Myanmar is still using the same “tactics” to silence its people as the former junta, the UN’s rights envoy said and urged the government to allow the UN to probe allegations of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims. More than 70,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since October 2016 to escape a bloody crackdown by security forces, many bringing stories of mass killings, gang rapes and arson by security forces. UN investigators fear the military has used “clearance operations” launched to find militants who attacked police as a cover for possible ethnic cleansing of the oppressed minority.²⁸

²⁵ “The Ninth Meeting of Thailand-Myanmar Joint Boundary Committee”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand*, July 20, 2017, <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/79313-The-Ninth-Meeting-of-Thailand-%E2%80%93-Myanmar-Joint-Boun.html>, accessed on July 20, 2017.

²⁶ “After deadline, Mandalay and Kayin remain Ma Ba Tha strongholds”, *Myanmar Times*, July 17, 2017, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/26824-after-deadline-mandalay-and-kayin-remain-ma-ba-tha-strongholds.html> (accessed on July 23, 2017)

²⁷ “Commander-in-Chief discusses bilateral ties with US diplomat”, *Myanmar Times*, July 18, 2017, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26846-chief-discusses.html> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

²⁸ “Myanmar still using ‘same tactics’ of oppression as junta: UN envoy”, *Mizzima News*, July 22, 2017,

- **UN Probe ‘Can Only Aggravate’ Rakhine Tension, Myanmar Tells Diplomats**
Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s security adviser told diplomats that a UN mission looking into allegations of rape, torture and killings of Rohingya Muslims would only “aggravate” troubles in the western state of Rakhine. Myanmar has declined to grant visas to three experts appointed by the United Nations in May to look into allegations of abuses against the powerful armed forces. “We dissociated ourselves from the decision because we found that it was less than constructive,” said National Security Adviser Thaung Tun, speaking to UN officials and diplomats, including US Ambassador Scot Marciel.²⁹

North America

Canada

- **Why Canada’s economic pivot to Asia must continue**
APEC, as an organization, represents enormous opportunities for Canadian businesses, not only as a driver of innovation and growth across the 21 interconnected Pacific economies, but also as a vehicle to promote Canada’s strategic interests in the Asia Pacific. Canada’s APEC-Canada Growing Business Partnership project is a demonstration of Canada’s leadership in the MSME space. The four-year project is designed to build and grow the MSME community in the APEC region; to increase their market access, particularly those MSMEs owned by women; and, to help reduce poverty in the region.³⁰
- **Five key NAFTA issues bound to spark friction between Canada, U.S.**
There are a number of issues bound to spark friction between Canada and the United States during their negotiations on NAFTA. Some of them are Dispute resolution mechanism: When Canada was negotiating a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. in 1988, it sought to eliminate the use of countervailing duty and anti-dumping laws, measures designed to neutralize the effect of imports deemed unfairly priced or subsidized. Canada believed such laws were over-zealously employed by the U.S. and upheld by their courts to protect American products from competition, including from Canadian softwood lumber.

<http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/myanmar-still-using-%E2%80%98same-tactics%E2%80%99-oppression-junta-un-envoy> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

²⁹ “UN Probe ‘Can Only Aggravate’ Rakhine Tension, Myanmar Tells Diplomats”, *Irrawaddy*, July 18, 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/un-probe-can-aggravate-rakhine-tension-myanmar-tells-diplomats.html> (accessed on July 20, 2017)

³⁰ Stewart Beck, “Why Canada’s economic pivot to Asia must continue,” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/why-canadas-economic-pivot-to-asia-must-continue/article35777552/>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

Dairy: The supply management system that limits the amount of dairy that can be imported into Canada before sky-high tariffs kick in is a long-standing trade irritant, but the bigger dairy-related issue expected to come up under NAFTA. Investment: The USTR's negotiating objectives called for rules to reduce or eliminate barriers to U.S. investment in all sectors, although it did not specify which industries the Americans might try to put on the table. Duty-free cross-border shopping: The U.S. wants Canada to allow a whopping increase in the value of goods American companies can send into Canada without paying an import tax. Wine :An ongoing Canada-U.S. feud over wine found its way into the U.S. Trade Representative's news release on its NAFTA objectives, even though the issue was not specifically outlined in the accompanying list of negotiating goals.³¹

The United States

- **Trump not convinced Russian meddling took place, communications chief says**

Donald Trump remains unconvinced that Russia interfered in last year's US election, his new communications chief said.... Anthony Scaramucci said the president believed Russian intelligence services were "super confident in their deception skills and hacking" and would have left no trace if they had intruded into Democratic computer systems. US intelligence concluded in January that Russian state hackers broke into email accounts at Democratic party headquarters and the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign, as part of an effort ordered by President Vladimir Putin to help elect Trump.³²

- **White House Signals Acceptance of Russia Sanctions Bill**

The White House indicated on Sunday that President Trump would accept new legislation curtailing his authority to lift sanctions on Russia on his own, a striking turnaround after a broad revolt by lawmakers of both parties who distrusted his friendly approach to Moscow and sought to tie his hands. If it passes, as now seems likely, the measure will represent the first time that Congress, with both houses controlled by fellow Republicans, has forced its will on Mr. Trump on a major policy matter. The legislation may also have long-term consequences for the American relationship with Russia and for the power of the presidency. Once sanctions are written into law, they are much harder to lift, even long after the

³¹ Andy Blatchford, "Five key NAFTA issues bound to spark friction between Canada, U.S.," <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/07/21/five-key-nafta-issues-bound-to-spark-friction-between-canada-us.html>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

³² Jon Swaine and Martin Pengelly, "Trump not convinced Russian meddling took place, communications chief says," <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/23/donald-trumps-legal-team-denies-it-is-looking-into-presidential-pardon>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

circumstances prompting them have changed, which is one reason European allies opposed the bill.³³

- **Trump Assigns White House Team to Target Iran Nuclear Deal, Sidelining State Department**

President Donald Trump instructed a group of trusted White House staffers to make the potential case for withholding certification of Iran at the next 90-day review of the nuclear deal. The goal was to give Trump what he felt the State Department had failed to do: the option to declare that Tehran was not in compliance with the contentious agreement. The agreement, negotiated between Iran and world powers, placed strict limits on Tehran's nuclear program in return for lifting an array of economic sanctions. Trump's decision follows months of friction between the White House and State Department over how to handle the Iran nuclear agreement, which Trump denounced as a presidential candidate. The administration was mired in similar divisions in April, when it had to decide whether to certify that Iran was complying with the deal. Every 90 days, the United States has to declare whether Iran is abiding by the agreement and whether sanctions that were waived should remain lifted.³⁴

Mexico

- **Mexico ruling party well behind upstart leftist in voter poll**

Mexico's ruling party is running in third place with less than a year to go before the next presidential election, well behind the new party of leftist hopeful Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, an opinion poll showed. Backing for the centrist PRI has gradually crumbled since Pena Nieto took office in December 2012 because of anger over corruption, resurgent gang violence and tepid economic growth. Various scenarios for the presidential race showed Lopez Obrador ahead of his rivals, polling between 30 and 33 percent of the vote. Political analysts say that may be enough to win the July 2018 contest with the electorate increasingly divided.³⁵

- **Mexico economy minister eyes multiple rounds of NAFTA talks**

There could be between six to nine rounds of negotiations between the United States, Canada and Mexico in the event a quick deal is reached on a revamp of the North American Trade Agreement, Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said. Guajardo told reporters in Mexico City the NAFTA members were looking at avoiding gaps of more than three weeks between negotiating rounds with a view to making quick progress. The three countries had agreed an aggressive timetable to

³³ Peter Baker and Andrew Higgins, "White House Signals Acceptance of Russia Sanctions Bill," <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/23/us/politics/trump-russia-sanctions.html>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

³⁴ Jana Winter, Robbie Gramer, Dan De Luce, "Trump Assigns White House Team to Target Iran Nuclear Deal, Sidelining State Department," <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/21/trump-assigns-white-house-team-to-target-iran-nuclear-deal-sidelining-state-department/>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

³⁵ Reuters, "Mexico ruling party well behind upstart leftist in voter poll," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-politics-idUSKBN1A8ORB>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

broker a deal on NAFTA in order to avoid politicizing Mexico's presidential election in July 2018, forecasting rounds held at three-week intervals.³⁶

Latin American and Caribbean

Brazil

- **Brazil Freezes R\$600,000 of Ex-President Lula's Assets**

The Central Bank in Brazil carried out an order issued by federal judge Sergio Moro and froze of more than R\$606,000 (US\$190,000) in assets from accounts belonging to former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on July 19, 2017. According to judge Moro, "The freezing of assets of the former president [was] to recover the proceeds of crime and the arrest of the same assets to guarantee reparation of the damage." On July 12, 2017, the former president was sentenced to nine years and six months in prison for passive corruption and money laundering related to renovations made in a penthouse apartment in the São Paulo beachfront. In addition to the freezing of bank accounts and the confiscation of the penthouse, officials were also ordered to seize two vehicles and Lula's participation in four other apartments in São Paulo state. Judge Moro decreed that the Central Bank block Lula's accounts and assets up to the limit of R\$10 million (US\$3 million), justifying the measure by stating that the confiscation of the real estate and vehicles alone would not cover the value of the damages caused by the former president's criminal activity. The court decision according to Lula's lawyers was 'illegal' and 'abusive' and will undermine the livelihood of Lula and his family. In a note, the former president's Worker's Party (PT) considered Moro's decision 'stingy' and an act of 'revenge' on an innocent man.³⁷

Bolivia

- **Bolivia: Evo Morales declares 'total independence' from IMF and World Bank**

President Evo Morales has highlighted the total Bolivian independence from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which have carried out "devastating economic policies for many years" in this South American nation.

³⁶ Reuters, "Mexico economy minister eyes multiple rounds of NAFTA talks," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nafta-trade-mexico-idUSKBN1A70TT>, Accessed on 24 July 2017.

³⁷ Lise Alves, "Brazil Freezes R600 Thousand of Ex-President Lula's Assets," July 20, 2017, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/brazil-freezes-r600-thousand-of-ex-president-lulas-assets/>, Accessed on July 24, 2017.

According to Morales official twitter account, “A day like today in 1944 ended Bretton Woods Economic Conference (USA), in which the IMF and WB were established. These organizations dictated the economic fate of Bolivia and the world. Today we can say that we have total independence of them.” In recent speeches when opening social works in this Andean-Amazonian nation, Evo Morales revealed that Bolivia’s past economic dependence was so immense that the IMF had an office in government headquarters and even participated in their meetings. Bolivia is now in the process of becoming a member of the Southern Common Market, Mercosur and Morales attended the group’s summit in Argentina in mid-July 2017. In his speech at Mercosur Summit held in Mendoza, Morales said that the Mercosur cannot repeat the bitter history of the Organization of American States (OAS): for political or ideological reasons expel or exclude some nations. He also said that neither as Mercosur member nations nor as America’s organisations, we can be accomplices of a U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

Bolivia’s popular uprising known as the The Cochabamba Water War in 2000 against United States-based Bechtel Corporation over water privatization and the associated World Bank policies shed light on some of the debt issues facing the region. Some of Bolivia’s largest resistance struggles in the last 60 years have targeted the economic policies carried out by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Most of the protests focused on opposing privatization policies and austerity measures, including cuts to public services, privatization decrees, wage reductions, as well the weakening of labor rights. Since 2006, a year after Morales came to power, social spending on health, education, and poverty programs has increased by over 45 percent.³⁸

Venezuela

- **Venezuela opposition appoints alternative Supreme Court judges**

Venezuela’s opposition-controlled National Assembly has appointed 33 alternative judges to the Supreme Court, prompting accusations of an attempted power grab. The assembly says it has the right to name and fire justices under the country’s constitution. Describing the move as illegal, the top court has warned that they could be jailed. In a statement broadcast on state television later on July 21, 2017, the Supreme Court blasted the alternative judges who were named by the legislature. According to Juan Jose Mendoza, the president of the top court’s

³⁸ “Bolivia: Evo Morales Declares Total Independence from IMF and World bank,” July 23, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/07/23/bolivia-evo-morales-declares-total-independence-from-imf-and-world-bank/>, Accessed on July 24, 2017

constitutional chamber said that the move is a crime against the independence and security of the nation, in particular, in terms of crimes of treason and against the powers of the nation and states. The opposition is stepping up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro to call early elections. The socialist president has refused and is instead going ahead with plans to form a constituent assembly which would have the power to rewrite the constitution and bypass the National Assembly. Colombia, France, Spain, the US and the EU have urged the Venezuelan government to cancel the vote for a new constituent assembly on 30 July, 2017. U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to impose “strong and swift” economic sanctions on Venezuela if President Nicolas Maduro goes ahead with plans to create a super-legislature known as a Constituent Assembly. But Mr. Maduro has rejected the calls.³⁹

- **Venezuelan situation overshadows Mercosur presidential summit**

The members of Mercosur trade bloc called for an end to violence in Venezuela in a joint statement on July 21, 2017. However again opinions were divided: while Brazil and Argentina sponsored a more explicit warning to President Nicolas Maduro and his regime, Uruguay had it redrafted in a more conciliatory tone and Paraguay finally came out with a compromise option. But Bolivia refused to adhere since it openly supports the Chavista revolution, and Peru also stepped down because the document proved to be too soft. Mercosur members Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay again called on Venezuela to release political prisoners and offered to facilitate talks between President Nicolas Maduro’s socialist government and the opposition in the statement, issued as the nations met in Mendoza, Argentina, to discuss trade and regional integration. Associate Mercosur members Chile, Colombia and Guyana, as well as Mexico, also signed the statement, which called on both the government and the opposition to “not take any initiative that could divide Venezuelan society even more, or aggravate institutional conflicts.” The statement comes days after U.S. officials said they were preparing sanctions against Venezuelan government figures.

Venezuela was suspended from Mercosur in December 2016 amid concerns about human rights. In April 2017, Argentine President Mauricio Macri warned that Venezuela could be expelled from Mercosur if it did not change its behavior. The joint statement did not refer directly to Maduro’s plan to hold a July 30, 2017 vote to elect a constituent assembly with powers to rewrite the OPEC nation’s constitution. Mexico on July 20, 2017 had called on Maduro to shelve the vote. At

³⁹ “Venezuela Opposition Appoints Alternative Supreme Court Judges,” July 22, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/07/22/venezuela-opposition-appoints-alternative-supreme-court-judges/>, Accessed on July 24, 2017.

the meeting, Mercosur members agreed to establish common legal conditions within the bloc to encourage investment and took steps to boost trade ties with the Pacific Alliance countries of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Mercosur is also eyeing a trade deal with the European Union, which Faurie said could be reached in December. Argentina as the host country of the summit handed the Mercosur pro tempore chair for the next six months to Brazil. Apparently Brazil is prepared to invite either Maduro or his foreign minister to talks in Brasilia to press on its disapproval of the controversial national vote for a constituent assembly to modify the Venezuelan constitution.⁴⁰

Russia

Russia

- **Russia and China on the Naval Drill in Baltic Sea**

On July 21, China joined Russia for the joint naval exercises in the Baltic Sea, named Naval Interaction-2017, a first to the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in this region. The exercise is till July 28. The drills are aimed at simulating the interaction between the Russian and Chinese fleets in countering naval threats, coherence of actions of the crew and enhancing cooperation between the Russian and Chinese naval troops. The active phase of the joint military exercises will take place on July 24-27 in the Baltic Sea.⁴¹

- **Russia and Turkey**

Turkey reached an agreement with Russia to purchase the latter's most sophisticated missile-defense system, the S-400. Under the \$2.5 billion agreement Ankara would receive two batteries of the antiaircraft missile from Moscow within the coming year and then produce two more batteries in Turkey. Turkey stepped up efforts to acquire its own missile-defense system after the US, Germany, and the Netherlands - all NATO members - decided at the end of 2015 not to renew their Patriot-missile deployments in southern Turkey. But the agreement has deepened concern that Turkey is drifting away from its longstanding alliance in NATO, which it joined during the security bloc's first enlargement in 1952.

⁴⁰ "Venezuelan Situation Overshadows Mercosur Presidential Summit," July 23, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/07/23/venezuelan-situation-overshadows-mercosur-presidential-summit/>, Accessed on July 24, 2017.

⁴¹"Russian Fleet Welcomes Chinese Ships in Russia's Baltiysk for Naval Drills", *Sputnik*, July 21, 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201707211055761634-russia-fleet-china-drills/> Accessed on July 25, 2017.

According to a Russian analyst, Turkey's purchase from Russia would be a tectonic-shift and a game-changer in the arms market.⁴²

- **Russia and Israel on Syria**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on July 16 said Israel opposes the cease-fire agreement in southern Syria that the United States and Russia reached because it perpetuates the Iranian presence in the country. The prime minister noted that in his meeting with the French President Emmanuel Macron, Netanyahu made it clear Israel was totally opposed to the cease-fire plan. A senior Israeli official said Israel is aware of Iranian intentions to substantially expand its presence in Syria. Iran is not only interested in sending advisers to Syria, the official said, but also in dispatching extensive military forces including the establishment of an airbase for Iranian aircraft and a naval base.⁴³

- **Russia's Domestic News**

During a three-hour question and answer session with Russian children at a school in the Black Sea city of Sochi on July 22, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that he could stay on as President of Russia for at least another six years. However, he pledged not to change the Russian constitution to allow him to stay as President indefinitely. "I had an opportunity, I was even asked to change the constitution at one time," he said. "I did not do it, and I don't intend to do it in the future."⁴⁴

Around 3000 protesters attended the rally, titled "For a Free Internet" in Moscow on July 23 calling for stringent laws regulating online activity to be repealed. They also called for the release of Russians detained for their activity online and on social media. Last week a report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that Russian authorities have clamped down on internet freedoms and introduced "invasive surveillance" online, under the pretext of fighting extremism.⁴⁵

⁴²Christopher Woody, "Turkey has agreed to buy Russia's advanced missile-defense system, leaving NATO wondering what's next", *Business Insider*, July 17, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.in/Turkey-has-agreed-to-buy-Russias-advanced-missile-defense-system-leaving-NATO-wondering-whats-next/articleshow/59638576.cms> Accessed on July 25, 2017.

⁴³Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu: Israel Opposes Cease-fire Deal Reached by U.S. and Russia in Southern Syria", *Haaretz*, July 16, 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.801612> Accessed on July 25, 2017.

⁴⁴Ben Ketish, "Vladimir Putin says he may seek re-election as President of Russia in 2018", *Independent*, July 22, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia-president-election-not-leave-russian-presidency-second-term-re-election-sochi-a7854621.html#> Accessed on 25 July 2017.

⁴⁵"Russians Rally Against Internet Crackdown", *The Moscow Times*, July 24, 2017. <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russians-protest-internet-censorship-58476> Accessed on July 25, 2017.

- **Russia and India**

Victor Nikolayevich Kladov, the head of the Department of International Cooperation and Regional Policy, Rostec State Corporation on July 18, 2017 said that India has sought time to "evaluate" Russia's offer of upgrading its Sukhoi-30 fleet to a near fifth-generation aircraft level. He said that it was upto India whether it wants to pick up the entire upgrade package or opt for selective modernisation; hence the pricing of the upgrade would also depend on that.⁴⁶

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Afghanistan, Uzbekistan begin cooperation talks**

Afghanistan initiated talks with Uzbekistan on expanding bilateral security, economic and political cooperation and created respective commissions in this regard, the office of the National Security Advisor said on 22 July 2017. Afghanistan National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar and presidential advisor on economic affairs Dr. Humayun Qayumi held talks with Uzbek foreign minister Abdulaziz Khafizovich Kamilov on security and economic cooperation in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. The two sides agreed to the creation of economic and security commissions. They also agreed on creation of a joint strategy in the fight against terrorism.⁴⁷

- **Kabul optimistic as US withholds \$50m reimbursement to Pakistan over Haqqani network**

The Afghan government is optimistic that the withholding of reimbursements to Pakistan by the Department will have an impact regarding the country's decision to provide sanctuaries to Afghan militants, specifically the Haqqani terrorist network. A US official quoted by Reuters said that United States will withhold \$50 million remaining in military reimbursements to Pakistan for fiscal year 2016 because Defense Secretary Jim Mattis believes that Islamabad has not done enough to blunt the Islamist militant Haqqani network. This comes as the United States Department of States released its latest reports regarding terrorism for 2016 last week, providing an overall report regarding the terrorism related upheavals during the year.⁴⁸

⁴⁶“India sought time to evaluate Russia's Su-30 upgrade offer: Rostec State Corporation”, *Economic Times*, July 18, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-sought-time-to-evaluate-russias-su-30-upgrade-offer-rostec-state-corporation/articleshow/59654226.cms> Accessed on July 25, 2017.

⁴⁷ Javed Hamim Kakar, "Afghanistan, Uzbekistan begin cooperation talks", *Pajhwok News*, 22 July 2017. <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/07/22/afghanistan-uzbekistan-begin-cooperation-talks> accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁴⁸ "Kabul optimistic as US withholds \$50m reimbursement to Pakistan over Haqqani network", *Khaama Press*, 22 July 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/kabul-optimistic-as-us-withholds-50m-reimbursement-to-pakistan-over-haqqani-network-03195> accessed on 24 July 2017.

- **Indo-Afghan Commerce Chamber Stresses New Trade Opportunities**

The Indo-Afghan Chamber of Commerce Director Mr. Kanwarjit Bajaj has met Afghan envoy to India and discussed the company background and future activities. The meeting took place at the Afghan envoy Shaida Abdali's office in New Delhi. Established in 1952, the Indo-Afghan Chamber of Commerce has been involved importing and trading dry fruits, nuts, herbs and spices across the world.⁴⁹

- **Afghan MP Warns Regarding Tactical Achievements Of ISIS in Nangarhar**

An Afghan lawmaker has warned regarding the tactical achievements of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. Haji Zahir Qadir, representing Nangarhar in the Lower House of the Parliament, Wolesi Jirga, made the claims during the general session of the parliament on 17 July 2017. He said the loyalists of the terror group are attempting to further expand their influence in Nangarhar and are tactically moving forward to gain grounds.⁵⁰

- **Afghanistan Criticizes Pakistan Over Operation Khyber-4**

The Afghan government has slammed Islamabad over the launch of Operation Khyber-4 by Pakistani forces along the Durand Line, saying that "Kabul is not aware about the military operation". The Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) said that it had "verbally" agreed that when Afghanistan or Pakistan launches military operation against insurgency, "we will agree with both sides and also the operation must be monitored by the U.S or China". However, reports say that Pakistan has launched this operation without informing Afghanistan.⁵¹

- **IEC Seeks Financial Aid as Observers Cast Doubt on Polls Date**

"The electronic ID cards department will help us in preparing the content and sample of the voters lists," the IEC secretariat chief said. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) on 20 July 2017, said the United Nations has vowed to clarify countries and the levels of their support to the upcoming elections in Afghanistan within the next week.⁵²

- **CEO Calls For Urgent Unity To Avoid Political Crisis**

Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on 23 July 2017, called on all Afghan political leaders and political parties to act responsibly, to put aside their personal

⁴⁹ "Indo-Afghan Commerce Chamber Stresses New Trade Opportunities", *Outlook Afghanistan*, 20 July 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18664 accessed on 21 July 2017.

⁵⁰ "Afghan MP warns regarding tactical achievements of ISIS in Nangarhar", *Khaama Press*, July 17, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-mp-warns-regarding-tactical-achievements-of-isis-in-nangarhar-03161> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

⁵¹ "Afghanistan Criticizes Pakistan Over Operation Khyber-4", *Tolo News*, July 20, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan-criticizes-pakistan-over-operation-khyber-4> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

⁵² "IEC Seeks Financial Aid as Observers Cast Doubt on Polls Date", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 22, 2017, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18676 (accessed on July 24, 2017)

issues and to work for the benefit of the country. According to the CEO, any attempt to promote terrorism or extremism is an act of national treason.⁵³

Bangladesh

- **EC's roadmap a blueprint to bring AL back to power: BNP⁵⁴**

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has said that the election commission's roadmap for the 11th parliamentary polls has ignored the nation's aspirations. "This is part of a blueprint to once again bring Awami League to power in the old manner of manipulation," he told a press conference at BNP's central office in Naya Paltan of the capital city.

- **Bangladesh growth beats forecasts: ADB⁵⁵**

Preliminary government economic growth estimates in Bangladesh for the last fiscal beat the forecasts of Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2017, according to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. In the ADO 2017, published in April this year, ADB said Bangladesh economy will grow to 6.9% in the fiscal 2016-17 but Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) growth reached 7.24% in FY2017, beating all the previous records. In a supplement to its ADO 2017 report ADB upgraded its growth outlook in the region from 5.7% to 5.9% in 2017 and from 5.7% to 5.8% for 2018.

- **BNP proposes 1991's formula for polls⁵⁶**

BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed proposed that the next general elections could be held under an interim poll-time government like that of 1991 based on a consensus of all political parties. He made the proposal at a discussion meeting, apparently in response to the ruling Bangladesh Awami League's (AL) denial of BNP's demand for holding the next polls under an election-conducive government.

⁵³ Massoud Ansar, "CEO Calls For Urgent Unity To Avoid Political Crisis", *Tolo News*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ceo-calls-urgent-unity-avoid-political-crisis> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

⁵⁴ "EC's roadmap a blueprint to bring AL back to power: BNP," *Prothom Alo*, July 18, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/154023/EC%E2%80%99s-roadmap-a-blueprint-to-bring-AL-back-to> (accessed July 18, 2017)

⁵⁵ "ADB: Bangladesh growth beats forecasts," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 20, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2017/07/20/adb-bangladesh-growth-beat-forecast/> (accessed July 20, 2017)

⁵⁶ "BNP proposes 1991's formula to hold next polls," *Prothom Alo*, July 22, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/154367/BNP-proposes-1991%E2%80%99s-formula-to-hold-next-polls> (accessed July 22, 2017)

- **New high-level platform initiated**⁵⁷

Dhaka and New Delhi have initiated a new high-level bilateral platform with an objective to ensure safety and welfare of the Bangladeshis living in India and Indians living in Bangladesh. Secretary (consular) of the Foreign Ministry will lead the Bangladesh side while the Indian side will be led by secretary (consular) of its External Affairs Ministry. This will be the third high-level regular platform of discussions between the Foreign Ministry and Indian External Affairs Ministry.

- **Country heading towards danger: Ershad**⁵⁸

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said that the country was heading towards danger due to a conflicting behaviour of Awami League and BNP. He said this while talking to reporters at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. After a five-day personal visit to India, Ershad returned home yesterday. He claimed that the Indian political leaders would stand beside Jatiya Party in the next election.

नेपाल

नेपाल

प्रधानमंत्री ने चुनाव आयोग से अगले चुनावों की तैयारी के लिए कहा :

प्रधानमंत्री देउबा ने चुनाव आयोग के साथ अगले चुनावों के सिलसिले में एक बैठक की जिसमें उन्होंने कहा कि चुनाव क्षेत्रों के सीमांकन के लिए दो सप्ताह के अन्दर एक परिसीमन आयोग का गठन किया जाये चुनाव आयोग ने प्रधानमंत्री से कहा कि वे तीन महीने पहले प्रांतीय और संघीय संसद के चुनावों की तिथि की घोषणा करें⁵⁹

देउबा ने केबिनेट के विस्तार पर चर्चा की:

सत्ताधारी दलों नेपाली कांग्रेस और माओवादी केंद्र की बैठक के दौरान मंत्रियों और मंत्रालय के आवंटन पर बातचीत हुई . मंत्रालय मिलेंगे 9 और माओवादी केंद्र को 13 नेपाली कांग्रेस को , नेपाली कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता बिम्लेंद्र निधि के अनुसार दोनों दलों के मध्य समझौते के अनुसार नेपाली कांग्रेस को वित्त सूचना और ,भौतिक संरचना और परिवहन ,श्रम ,शिक्षा , महिला ,सहकारिता और गरीबी उन्मूलन ,वाणिज्य ,सामान्य प्रशासन ,युवा और खेल ,रक्षा ,जल आपूर्ति ,सिंचाई ,संपर्क माओवादी केंद्र को वि .बच्चे और सामाजिक कल्याण मंत्रालय मिलेंगेदेश ,कानून ,शहरी विकास ,स्वास्थ्य ,कृषि ,उर्जा ,गृह , शासकीय गठबंधन ने यह भी निर्णय लिया है कि दो . पशुधन और आपूर्ति मंत्रालय मिलेंगे , न्याय और संसदीय मामले यद्य , मंत्रालय पर्यटन और भूमि सुधार को बिजय गच्छेदार की पार्टी नेपाल लोकतान्त्रिक फोरम को दिए जायेंगेपि गच्छेदार पहले से ही उप प्रधानमंत्री है और उनके पास संघीय मामलों और स्थानीय विकास के मंत्रालय है निधि के .

⁵⁷ Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan, "New high-level platform initiated," *The Independent*, July 24, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/105704> (accessed July 24, 2017)

⁵⁸ "Country heading towards danger due to AL, BNP conflict: Ershad," *Daily Star*, July 24, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/country-heading-towards-danger-due-al-bnp-conflict-ershad-1437889> (accessed July 24, 2017)

⁵⁹ "PM asks EC to gear for state, fed polls", *The Kathmandu Post*, 17 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-17/1>

– राष्ट्रीय प्रजातंत्र पार्टी और संघीय समाजवादी फोरम को पर्यावरण मंत्रालय मिलेगा (संयुक्त) अनुसार एन सी पी नेपाल को उद्योगशांति और पुनर्निर्माण, वन, माण तथा विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय मिलेंगे ये मंत्रालय अभी प्रधानमंत्री देउबा इस मामले में के पास रहेंगे लेकिन यदि ये दो दल सरकार में शामिल होते है तो तब उन्हें ये चारों मंत्रालय मिल जायेंगे – राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी नेपाल से बातचीत के बाद मंत्रालयों के आवंटन पर पुनः विचार किया जा सकता है.⁶⁰

तीसरे चरण के चुनाव का कलेंडर जारी:

चुनाव आयोग ने स्थानीय चुनाव के तीसरे चरण का कलेंडर जारी कर दिया है सितम्बर 18 में 2 जिसके तहत प्रांत संख्या , सितम्बर 6 इसके तहत उम्मीदवार . स्थानीय निकायों के चुनाव होने है 127 कोर तक नामंकन कर सकते है 7 शिकायत , , सितम्बर तक दर्ज कर सकते है 8 सितम्बर तक उम्मीदवारी वापस ले सकते है अंतिम सूची और चुनाव चिन्हों का , .सितम्बर को मतदान होगा 18 सितम्बर तक तथा 9 निर्धारण⁶¹

भारत के नये राष्ट्रपति को बधाइयाँ:

नेपाल की राष्ट्रपति बिद्या देवी भंडारी और प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा ने राम नाथ कोविंद को भारत का 14 वां 14 उन्होंने अपने सन्देश में कहा कि राष्ट्रपति कोविंद के कार्यकाल में दोनों देशों के रिश्ते . राष्ट्रपति चुने जाने पर बधाइयाँ दी और प्रगाढ़ होंगे⁶²

Indian Ocean Region

- **Australia hopes to be Part of Future Malabar Exercises**

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said that hopefully Australia would be a part of Malabar exercises in the future.⁶³ During her two- day visit (18-19 July 2017) to India, interacting with reporters in New Delhi, she said, “Australia is always keen to take part in naval exercises to improve inter-operability between friends and partners...We carried out second iteration of AUSINDEX naval exercises between Australia and India...It is up to each country to determine which exercises they want to participate in and with whom but Australia will hopefully be part of exercises Malabar in the future.”⁶⁴

- **India, Japan target maritime security pact**

According to a media report, maritime security pact between India and Japan is expected during the Japanese PM Shinzo Abe visit to New Delhi in September 2017. "PM Shinzo Abe wants to reach an agreement with PM Modi to strengthen

⁶⁰ "13 ministers for Congress, Maoist centre to get 9", The Kathmandu Post, 19 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-19/1>

⁶¹ "Phase III local poll calendar published", The Kathmandu Post, 21 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-21/3>

⁶² "Prez, PM congratulate India's new President", The Kathmandu Post, 21 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-21/3>

⁶³ Australia hopes to be part of Malabar naval exercises in future, 19 July 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/zMZvmwxtMrsBUaZnYsNECO/Australia-hopes-to-be-part-of-Malabar-naval-exercises-in-fut.html>, accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

bilateral cooperation on maritime security, apparently to address China's growing activities in the East and South China seas and the Indian Ocean,"⁶⁵ Economic Times quoted the report of Jiji- a Japanese news agency.

- **Illegal Fishing in Western Indian Ocean is rampant**

Illegal fishing is alarming in the western Indian Ocean region. According to latest release of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) reports, "today, one out of every five fish is caught illegally in the western Indian Ocean region,"⁶⁶ Illegal fishing in western Indian Ocean is costing a "\$ 400 million loss per year in landings or nearly \$ 1 billion in processed products."⁶⁷ Despite continuous efforts, littoral states of this region are not successful to reduce unregulated fisheries.

- **Pirates and Terrorists Connection in Somalia**

According to a media report (CNN), "the United Nations and the United States are investigating at least two pirate kingpins for providing material support to terror groups."⁶⁸ The report says that the material support includes providing help to the faction of two terror groups namely Al- Shabaab and Somalia's ISIS faction.⁶⁹ The pirates and terrorist are helping each other to get money, weapons and hijack ships.⁷⁰ It appears that the pirates have made deal to serve each other interests without interfering each other's work. As Al- Shabaab has a lot of influence in much of rural areas of central and southern part of Somalia, aspiring Somali pirates seeks the approval of this terrorist group to 'operate without interference'.⁷¹

Maldives

- **Four ex-PPM MPs stripped of seats**

The Elections Commission has declared that four lawmakers have lost their seats as a consequence of the Supreme Court's controversial anti-defection ruling, triggering by-elections in the four constituencies. The apex court ruled on 13th July that MPs who were elected on political party tickets will lose their seats once the electoral

⁶⁵India, Japan target maritime security pact during Shinzo Abe's September visit, 24 July 2017, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/59729884.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst, accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁶⁶ East Africa: Illegal Fishing in Western Indian Ocean 'Alarming', <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707210145.html>, accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ CNN Exclusive: Somali pirate kings are under investigation for helping ISIS and al-Shabaab, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/10/africa/somali-piracy-attack-spike/index.html>, accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁶⁹ Pirates and terrorists are working together now in Somalia, July 13, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/7/13/15948184/pirates-terrorists-somalia-isis-shabaab>, accessed on 24 July 2017.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

body notifies parliament that they have either left their party, been expelled, or switched parties.

MPs Mohamed Waheed Ibrahim, Mohamed Aameeth, Saud Hussain, and Abdul Latheef Mohamed were disqualified after the EC informed the parliament secretariat of their expulsion from the ruling Progressive Party of Maldives. The announcement comes after President Abdulla Yameen reportedly declared at an emergency meeting of the PPM council on 18th July night that the July 24 no-confidence vote against the speaker will be cancelled after the renegade MPs are stripped of their seats.⁷²

- **Majlis throws out no-confidence motion**

The July 24 no-confidence vote against the speaker has been cancelled after four MPs were stripped of their seats, Deputy Speaker 'Reeko' Moosa Manik informed lawmakers. Without the disqualified MPs, the number of signatures on the opposition-led motion falls below 42, the minimum required to submit a no-confidence motion, the deputy speaker said. The opposition, however, contends that the move was unconstitutional as only the Supreme Court has the authority to determine questions concerning the qualification and removal of lawmakers.⁷³

- **Maldives locks up parliament, bars entrance to all**

The session on the opposition lobbied resolution to seek a motion of no confidence against the parliament speaker was previously scheduled to be held on 24th July. The sitting was later cancelled after the Elections Commission announced by-elections will be held for the constituencies of four lawmakers who have lost their seats, stating that the number of valid signatures is below the required amount to file for impeachment of the speaker. However, the opposition claims that such a resolution initially signed by the members cannot be cancelled as the last decision regarding the parliament speaker would be taken by the Supreme Court. Hence, opposition MPs have declared that they will enter the parliament on 24th July and that security forces cannot obstruct them from doing so.⁷⁴

⁷² "Four ex-PPM MPs stripped of seats", 19 July 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/four-ex-ppm-mps-stripped-of-seats-131587>

⁷³ "Majlis throws out no-confidence motion", 20th July 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/majlis-throws-out-no-confidence-motion-131610>

⁷⁴ "Maldives locks up parliament, bars entrance to all", 24 July 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-locks-up-parliament-bars-entrance-to-all/>

Sri Lanka

- **Army releases 189 acres for civilians Featured**

Sri Lanka Army released 189 acres of land situated in the Security Force Headquarters - Mullaittivu (SFHQ-MLT) Army Cantonment premises on Wednesday (19th July), states Army media sources. With the release of this land, families who were living elsewhere will be able to return to their original places of residence in Keppapilavu. Minister of Prison Reforms, Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Hindu Religious Affairs D. M. Swaminathan was also present at the occasion. On 25th January this year an area of 243 acres of land belonging to the people of Keppapilavu which was earlier used by the security forces was also released for the civilian owners.⁷⁵

- **OMP gazette signed, UN, US, Canada hail move**

President Maithripala Sirisena on 20th July signed the gazette on the Office of Missing Persons (OMP), a move which drew praise from the international community. "I signed the Office of Missing Persons Gazette. This marks another step forward in Sri Lanka's path to sustained peace," President Sirisena tweeted. UN Resident Coordinator Una McCauley said the OMP being gazetted is a significant step forward for the people of Sri Lanka⁷⁶.

- **UN notes not enough progress in Sri Lanka on rights issue**

The United Nations (UN) noted that Sri Lanka has not made enough progress on addressing human rights issues and the issue on missing persons was a concern. UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters in New York that "a major rights concern, the issue of missing persons, and we have been pressing on this for about a year and a half, so the establishment of this office is a welcome step forward," Haq said with reference to the announcement by the Government last week that it had signed the gazette on the Office of Missing Persons (OMP).⁷⁷

- **CPC launch indefinite strike**

The Ceylon Petroleum Cooperation (CPC) Trade Union launched an indefinite strike from 24th July citing what it called the government's inability to repeal the agreement which would allegedly handover the China Bay oil tanks farm in Trincomalee to India and the Hambantota port to China. CPC TU Collective Convener D. J. Rajakaruna said a cabinet paper was planned to be presented on

⁷⁵ "Army releases 189 acres for civilians", 20 July 2017, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/17465-army-releases-189-acres-for-civilians>

⁷⁶ "OMP gazette signed, UN, US, Canada hail move", 20th July 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/07/20/omp-gazette-signed-un-us-canada-hail-move/>

⁷⁷ "UN notes not enough progress in Sri Lanka on rights issue", 23 July 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/07/23/un-notes-not-enough-progress-in-sri-lanka-on-rights-issue/>

25th July to Parliament regarding the handing over of the china-bay oil tanks to India and Hambantota port oil tanks to china. During the strike, there would be no fuel distribution in the country.⁷⁸

West Asia

Saudi Arabia and GCC

- **Qatar Crisis – New Hope of Resolution**

On Friday 21st July 2017, in a joint press conference with his Italian counterpart Angelino Alfano, Saudi Foreign Minister Adil al Jubeir in Rome said that the Qatar crisis could be solved within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council. He explained to Angelio Alfano that four major Arab countries, including three GCC member states, namely Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, cut their diplomatic, trade and transport ties with other GCC member state – Qatar. The Anti-Terror Quartet (ATQ) took this action, according to the Saudi Foreign Minister “due to Qatari support and financing of terrorism, harboring terrorists, incitement, spreading hatred and interfering in other countries’ internal affairs.”⁷⁹ He further added: “We provided our Qatari brothers with a set of demands... We hope wisdom in Qatar will prevail and respond positively to these demands so we can put an end to this page... We will wait for the desired change to occur.” He also shared opinion about Iran, which according to him, is playing a negative role. It ‘interferes in countries’ internal affairs, ignites sectarianism, cultivated terrorist cells in Gulf countries, violates international agreements regarding ballistic missiles, dispatches its Revolutionary Guards to Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and smuggles weapons and explosives to Kuwait, Bahrain and Yemen to undermine regional stability’.

The ATQ severed its diplomatic relations with Qatar, charging Doha for funding terrorism and maintaining relations with Iran. They view both acts of Qatar as fatal to the unity and stability of the Arab bloc. However, after Kuwait’s mediation efforts, the ATQ issued 13 point agenda to be accepted by Qatar in 10 days. On Kuwait’s request 48 hours were further extended. But at the end, Qatar refused to accept these demands, which the Qatari cabinet termed as compromising with sovereign issues. Qatar cannot accept to shutter down Aljazeera, snap its defence ties with Turkey and wind up its troops, stop sheltering the citizens of ATQ working against their regimes and misguiding youth against them. Doha

⁷⁸ “CPC launch indefinite strike”, 24 July 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/CPC-launch-indefinite-strike-133421.html>

⁷⁹ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1133481/saudi-arabia>

vehemently denied ATQ's allegation of terrorism financing. It refused to append its foreign policy to their dictations and lose its independence.

On Qatar's refusal to accept the demand, the ATQ again met in Cairo and issued six point demands, mentioning that Qatar has to abide by the basic spirit, which are essential to strengthen the regional unity and security and ensure the stability of the AQT's regimes. This could be done by following non-interference in the internal affairs of the ATQ; ousting all AQT's citizens involved in anti-Quartet activities; shut down or stop misusing its airpower to create negative opinion about AQT's regimes and moreover, Doha should implement the 2013 agreement, known as Riyadh Agreement and 2014 Agreement along with Supplemental Agreement of 2014.

The demands put forth by the ATQ created wide repercussions. The US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that it should be 'reasonable and actionable', while President Trump initially appreciated the action taken by the ATQ but as the situation lingered, he changed his position and started persuading both the sides to resolve the standoff through negotiation. The US cannot afford bifurcation of its allies as both are important to its Middle East policy. Qatar hosts the Central Command of the US Air Force at Al Udiid, which helps Washington and London in carrying out its anti-ISIS sorties and also helps in managing logistics for Iraq and Syria. Economically too, both sides are important for the US. Both are rich arms market for the US, while the warring camps of the GCC, including Egypt also depend on US for their security and stability.

As situation lingered on, the role of Iran, Turkey, Russia, etc., also started changing. Iran opened its three ports for Qatar and supplied water and food to Doha. These activities of Iran have been interpreted as dangerous to the Gulf unity and security. Widening rift between the Gulf States would only benefit Tehran. Turkey's indomitable support to Qatar has also opened a new chapter in Gulf politics. Now, it is obvious that the role of non-Arab states in Gulf is likely to increase. Saudi Arabia and the UAE need to develop a new security architecture, which could effectively put a check on non-Arab powers. But looking at their current state, it becomes obvious that they are not financial and military capable to undertake such projects. Therefore, the ATQ needs to evolve a hybrid system of security for the region. This is important because the world cannot afford the region to remain unstable for long. Besides these measures, the ATQ also needs to be flexible in its demands; it should also indentify the reasons why Qatar is maintaining a balanced policy with Tehran. Qatar is not the only country, which has balanced its relations with Iran. Oman, Kuwait and Dubai too have maintained good relations with Tehran.

Overall, both the sides need to negotiate and work out a model blueprint based on consensus to defeat terrorism and extremism in the region. Funding of terrorism is essential to eliminate these forces from the region. Qatar and the US have signed an accord on terrorism financing, which needs to be made public and considered by all the victim countries. This will bring policy unanimity in fighting against terrorism.

The end of Qatar crisis is hoped to open a new chapter in naming and shaming all those countries and agencies involved in financing, protecting and allowing their soil to be used by these terrorist and extremist forces.

Turkey

- **Turkey wants full EU membership, says Minister Çelik**⁸⁰

Turkey's European Union Affairs Minister Ömer Çelik has reiterated that his country wants to become a full member of the European Union and will not be open to any other offer apart from that.

Speaking at the 36th Turkey-EU Joint Advisory Committee in Brussels on July 18, Ömer Çelik said Turkey's "strategic aim" in the EU accession talks is to gain full membership. "The EU should support Turkey during this difficult period in the region by understanding the reasons for the fight against terrorism, by providing visa liberalization and especially by accelerating the accession process," Çelik said.

Turkey's accession talks began in 2005. Negotiations hit a stalemate in 2007 because of Turkey's position on the Cyprus issue. The German and French governments had also opposed the country's full EU membership.

To gain membership, Turkey has to successfully conclude negotiations with the EU over 35 policy chapters that involve reforms and the adoption of European standards.

Çelik said Turkey was ready to open EU chapters 23 and 24 on judiciary and fundamental rights as well as justice and freedoms. He said it was a "double standard" to criticize Turkey without opening these EU chapters. Earlier this month, the European Parliament approved a 2016 commission report on Turkey, which called on EU member states to suspend Turkey's long-running accession talks if constitutional changes endorsed in an April 16 referendum went ahead "unchanged."

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<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-wants-full-eu-membership-says-minister-celik.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115677&NewsCatID=510>

The vote was non-binding in terms of EU decision-making, as the approved version of the report will be sent back to the European Commission to agree on the changes made by the parliament.

- **CHP leader challenges President Erdoğan to discuss July 15 coup attempt in TV debate**

The leader of the main opposition party has reiterated his challenge to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for a televised debate over the July 15 coup attempt, after he was harshly accused of supporting coup plotters for calling the putsch a “controlled coup.” “I openly invite this person and I use his own words—if you are courageous, if you are not a coward, if you are not a despot, if you are not fearful, then let’s debate the July 15 coup attempt together on a channel of one of your media institutions at the time of your choice. Let the people learn who is speaking the truth and who is not,” Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said in his address to the party on July 18.

Kılıçdaroğlu had invited Erdoğan to this challenge before the April 16 constitutional referendum but Erdoğan did not respond. The commemoration program for the July 15 coup attempt had been changed three times by the parliament speaker in order to prevent Kılıçdaroğlu’s address to the crowds that gathered in front of the parliament last week.

“Who changed the program? The parliament speaker did. Why? Upon the instruction of one man; one authority—this person is not the parliament speaker but the yes-man of the [presidential] palace,” Kılıçdaroğlu said.

- **Erdogan visits Saudi Arabia over Gulf crisis⁸¹**

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has embarked on a two-day trip to the Gulf in an effort to help resolve the dispute between Qatar and four other Arab states.

Erdogan arrived in Saudi Arabia’s port city of Jeddah on Sunday and met with King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman separately. Details about the discussions were not made public. He later departed for Kuwait - the main mediator in the Gulf crisis - and will travel to Qatar on Monday.

"No-one has any interest in prolonging this crisis anymore," Erdogan said at Istanbul airport before leaving. He accused "enemies" of seeking to "fire up tensions between brothers" in the region. Erdogan praised Qatar's behaviour in the crisis, saying it had sought to find a solution through dialogue. I hope our visit will

⁸¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/erdogan-set-visit-saudi-arabia-gulf-crisis-170722173756933.html>

be beneficial for the region," he said.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt cut ties with Qatar accusing it of backing extremism and fostering ties with their Shia rival Iran. Doha denies the claim and has been strongly backed by Ankara throughout the standoff.

The four countries imposed an air, sea and land blockade on Doha last month. They also issued a list of 13 demands that included closure of a newly-opened Turkish military base. Erdogan has said the demands are unlawful and has called for an end to the crisis, citing the need for Muslim solidarity and strong trade ties in the region. The dispute has so far proven intractable and Erdogan has said Saudi Arabia should solve the crisis.

On Friday, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani called for dialogue to resolve the crisis but stressed that any talks must respect his country's sovereignty.

- **Saudi Arabia and Turkey must maintain strategic partnership**⁸²

The regional crisis brought on by Qatar has the potential to weigh heavily on the partnership between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, given Ankara's recent call for the Anti-Terror Quartet (ATQ) to end its boycott of Doha. That said, there is a strong realization by Turkey that as a powerful and influential Sunni Muslim country, it would not be in its best interest to sour relations with Saudi Arabia. As for the Iranian threat, it is now closer than ever to Turkey's borders as thousands of Iranian Revolutionary Guards and their extremist proxy militias advance throughout Syria. Tehran benefits the most if there are divisions between the two most powerful Sunni-majority states in the region. Hopefully differences with Turkey on Qatar can be worked out through respectful bilateral channels. Erdogan's visit to Riyadh this week will hopefully prove to be a signal of continued cooperation and unity. This partnership must endure if the line is to hold against extremists, their benefactors and the malign Iranian aggression that threatens us all.

- **'Germany aside, Turkey will pursue defense projects'**⁸³

Regardless of whatever decisions Germany may take, Turkey will continue to pursue projects for a self-sufficient military apparatus, a top Turkish defense official said on July 22. If, as some media reports claim, Germany halts defense industry projects with Turkey, "maybe this would slow down some projects, but it

⁸² <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1132561>

⁸³ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/germany-aside-turkey-will-pursue-defense-projects-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115859&NewsCatID=344>

would not affect the outcome. It would boost our motivation for national and local systems," İsmail Demir, undersecretary for the Turkish defense industry, told Anadolu Agency.

Amid tensions with Ankara, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on July 19 that Berlin would not encourage German businesses to invest in Turkey, nor would it provide investment guarantees to such companies. German dailies have also claimed that Berlin would freeze defense projects with Turkey.

- **Germany continues war of words with Turkey, reviews arms sales⁸⁴**

Germany's Economy Ministry on Friday said that Berlin would be reviewing all future exports of weapons to Turkey, which like Germany is a member of NATO. "Special weight" was being given to "the current situation and particularly respect for human rights," a ministry spokesperson said in a statement. The spokesperson added that since the failed military coup in Turkey in July 2016, permission to export arms to Turkey had only been given "after very differentiated and careful review of individual cases."

There was no indication that the announcements would affect any already agreed upon deals for arms. In 2016, Germany approved the sale of 83.9 million euros (\$98 million) in weaponry to Turkey - in the first four months of this year, arms deals worth \$22 million were permitted.

Berlin hopes that putting future cooperation under review, together with the travel advisory and a review of economic guarantees, will send a strong signal to Ankara. "We hope that our message has gotten through to the Turkish government," SPD foreign affairs expert and parliamentarian Rolf Mützenich told DW. "

Yemen

- **Yemen's Houthis say hit Saudi oil refineries with long-range missile**

ADEN, Yemen, July 22 (Xinhua) -- Yemen's Shiite Houthi group said on Saturday night it had fired a new long-range ballistic missile and struck oil refineries in Saudi Arabia's Yanbu. The Houthi rebels, through their official satellite channel Al Masirah TV, said that their armed forces fired a ballistic missile into Aramco Oil Refineries in Yanbu, a port city on the Red Sea coast of western Saudi Arabia. The Yemeni rebels claimed that the new ballistic missile Burkan-2H was used for the

⁸⁴ <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-continues-war-of-words-with-turkey-reviews-arms-sales/a-39784093>

first time and successfully hit the refineries. There was no immediate comment from the authorities in Saudi Arabia on the reports released by the Houthis.⁸⁵

- **Yemen: Army and resistance have control over Midi city⁸⁶**

The Yemeni army and Popular Resistance took control of the town of Midi in Hajjah province on Sunday.

An official military source in the Fifth Military Region, announced the control of the national army and the people opposition on the coastal city of Midi north-west of the border province of Hajjah after fierce battles, and cutting off supply lines for the Houthi militias.

The source pointed out that the militias are besieged in the southeast part of the city, while the rest of the city is under the full control of the national army. The source expected that the Midi city will be fully cleared within the next few hours.

Cyber Security

- **Briton admits to cyber-attack on Deutsche Telekom**

A 29-year-old British man has confessed to carrying out a cyber-attack on Deutsche Telekom's routers last year, claiming he had acted on behalf of a Liberian telecommunications company but that his mission had got out of hand.

Speaking via a translator at a court in Cologne, the man, who was arrested under a European arrest warrant at Luton airport in February, described it as the "biggest mistake of my life".

The November attack hijacked about 900,000 routers and briefly stopped their owners getting online, affecting about 1.25 million Deutsche Telekom customers. The Bonn-based company estimated the cost of the attack to have been more than €2m (£1.79m).

- **Apple to open data centre in China to comply with cyber law**

BEIJING: US tech giant Apple today announced that it is setting up its first data centre in China, becoming the first company to comply with a new strict law that requires foreign firms to store Chinese users' information within the country.

The centre in the southern province of Guizhou, part of a USD 1 billion investment there, will be operated with a local data management company, the company said.

⁸⁵ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/23/c_136464801.htm

⁸⁶ <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/07/23/Yemen-Army-and-resistance-have-control-over-Midi-city.html>

Apple said in a statement that the new centre would keep ""strong data privacy and security protections in place," adding that no back doors would be created in its systems, the New York Times reported.

"The addition of this data centre will allow us to improve the speed and reliability of our products and services while also complying with newly-passed regulations," the company said.

The data centre in Guian New Area plans to offer iCloud services on the Chinese mainland.

The new centre will run entirely on renewable energy and will become a pilot green data centre project in southern China.

- **NSA chief: Now is 'not the best time' for US-Russia cyber unit**

Adm. Mike Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, cast doubt Saturday on the prospect of a Russia-U.S. cyber security unit, saying now "is probably not the best time" for such an endeavor, according to Reuters.

President Trump floated the idea earlier this month of a joint cyber security working group, saying he discussed with Russian President Vladimir Putin the creation of "an impenetrable Cyber Security unit" to guard against election hacking and other cyber threats.

But several lawmakers in Congress quickly shot down the idea of such a group, and Trump later walked back his statement on the unit.

"The fact that President Putin and I discussed a Cyber Security unit doesn't mean I think it can happen. It can't-but a ceasefire can, [and] did!" the president wrote on Twitter.

Rogers's comments, made at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, come amid ongoing investigations into Russia's efforts to meddle in the 2016 race, as well as possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 23	Khyber Agency/ FATA	The army has cleared two strongholds of terrorists in the Rajgal valley during the ongoing Operation Khyber-IV, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in its statement. The army was targeting terrorist hideouts "by artillery and army aviation" which has dismantled terrorists who are "on the run", the ISPR quoted IG FC Major General Shaheen. ⁸⁷	Statement	
2	July 22	Chagai/ Balochistan	Two Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were killed during routine patrol in Killi Dawoodabad area on the RCD Highway in Chagai District. ⁸⁸		
3	July 21	Khyber Agency/ FATA	A soldier, identified as Sepoy Mohammad Yasir, was killed in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast during Operation Khyber-4 in Khyber Agency. ⁸⁹	1	0
4	July 20	Khyber Agency/ FATA	At least 13 terrorists were killed and six others were injured in the ongoing Operation Khyber-4 in the Rajgal Valley area of Khyber	13	6

⁸⁷ Operation Khyber-IV: army clears terrorist strongholds in Rajgal valley, *Dawn*, July 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1347158/operation-khyber-iv-army-clears-terrorist-strongholds-in-rajgal-valley>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁸⁸ Syed Ali Shah, 2 FC men martyred in Balochistan's Chaghi district, *Dawn*, July 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1346950/2-fc-men-martyred-in-balochistans-chaghi-district>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁸⁹ Sepoy martyred in IED blast during Khyber-4 operation: ISPR, *Dawn*, July 21, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1346735/sepoy-martyred-in-ied-blast-during-khyber-4-operation-ispr>, accessed 24, 2017

			Agency, according to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). ⁹⁰		
5	July 17	Peshawar/ KP	Two Frontier Corps (FC) personnel, identified as Major Jamal Sheran and his gunman Zahir Shah, were killed in a suicide blast in Hayatabad area of Peshawar. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. ⁹¹	2	9

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 23	Jawzjan	ISIS militants executed three of their comrades in Qosh Tapa District of Jawzjan Province, where the ISIS militants are actively operating. Provincial Governor's spokesman Mohammad Reza Ghafoori confirmed the incident and said the militants were executed after they were accused of having links with the Government. ⁹²	3	0
2	July 23	Faryab	Taliban captured the District Center of Kohistan in Faryab Province. The Provincial Police spokesman Abdul Karim Yuresh confirmed the fall of the District Center to Taliban control. ⁹³	District captured	centre

⁹⁰ 13 terrorists killed, 6 injured as Operation Khyber-4 gains momentum, *Dawn*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1346503/13-terrorists-killed-6-injured-as-operation-khyber-4-gains-momentum>, accessed on July 21, 2017

⁹¹ Syed Ali Shah, Suicide bomber strikes Hayatabad, Frontier Corps' officer martyred, *Dawn*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345880/suicide-bomber-strikes-hayatabad-frontier-corps-officer-martyred>, accessed on July 18, 2017

⁹² ISIS militants execute three of their comrades in North of Afghanistan, *Khaama Press*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/isis-militants-execute-three-of-their-comrades-in-north-of-afghanistan-03205>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁹³ Taliban capture district center of Kohistan in Faryab province, *Khaama Press*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-capture-district-center-of-kohistan-in-faryab-province-03201>, accessed on July 24, 2017

3	July 23	Ghor	The control of the District Center of Taywara in Ghor Province fell to the hands of Taliban, following heavy gun battle. Provincial public order police forces commander Mahmood Andarabi confirmed the incident. ⁹⁴	District Centre captured	
4	July 22	Kabul	The Afghan Government is optimistic that the withholding of reimbursements to Pakistan by the Department will have an impact regarding the country's decision to provide sanctuaries to Afghan militants, specifically the Haqqani Network. US withheld USD 50 million remaining in military reimbursements to Pakistan for fiscal year 2016. ⁹⁵	US withholds USD 50 million aid to Pakistan	
5	July 22	Kandahar	Taliban shot dead seven civilians after abducting at least 70 people in Kandahar Province. ⁹⁶ The civilians were abducted from Shah Wali Kot District on July 13, 2017. ⁹⁷	7	NS
6	July 21	Nangarhar	At least 24 ISIS and two Taliban militants were killed during clashes between the two groups	26	NS

⁹⁴ Taywara district center also falls to Taliban control in Ghor province, *Khaama Press*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/taywara-district-center-also-falls-to-taliban-control-in-ghor-province-03202>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁹⁵ Kabul Optimisite as US Withholds \$50 million Reimbursement to Pakistan over Haqqani Network, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2023,%202017/Front%20page.pdf>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁹⁶ Taliban execute 7 of the 70 abducted civilians in Kandahar province, *Khaama Press*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-execute-7-of-the-70-abducted-civilians-in-kandahar-province-03200>, accessed on July 24, 2017

⁹⁷ Rights Watchdog Says Civilian Kidnapping in Kandahar a War Crime, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 24, 2017, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18689, accessed on July 24, 2017

			in Khogyani District of Nangarhar Province. ⁹⁸		
7	July 17	Helmand	Afghan security forces claimed killing 80 Taliban militants and injuring 25 others, while completely clearing the Nawa District of Helmand Province of their presence. ⁹⁹	80	25

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
	July 23	Anbar	Two Policemen were killed and another injured in a blast at the entrance of Fallujah city in Anbar Province. Has In a statement, Brigadier General Saad Maan, Interior Ministry spokesperson said that Anbar Police arrested driver of a vehicle, which was revealed to be booby-trapped, at al-Halabsa region. ¹⁰⁰	2	1
	July 23	Mosul	Iraq's Social Affairs Ministry referred a group of Chechen children to orphanages in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Ministry's "Special Needs" Director, Abeer	Chechen children sent to orphanage	

⁹⁸ 24 Daesh, 2 Taliban Rebels Killed in Nangarhar, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%202022,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 2, accessed on July 24, 2107

⁹⁹ 80 Taliban Killed as Afghan Forces Wrest Back Nawa, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 18, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2018,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰⁰ Nehal Mostafa, Two policemen killed, third injured in bomb blast in Fallujah, *Iraqi News*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/two-policemen-killed-third-injured-bomb-blast-fallujah/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

			al-Chalabi, said that the children were found in areas that had been under IS militants' control and later recaptured by Iraqi forces. ¹⁰¹		
	July 22	Mosul	At least 17 IS female members were killed and injured as a missile was shot on a building, which was the headquarters of the IS al-Khansaa brigade, in Tal Afar town, west of Mosul. "The brigade included wives and sisters of IS members and leaders as well as foreigners," said a source from Nineveh Province. ¹⁰²	17	NS
	July 22	Iraqi-Syrian border	At least 10 IS militants were killed as the Shia-led paramilitary troops thwarted an attack near the Iraqi-Syrian borders. In a statement, the media service of al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Units) said, "troops of the first and 13th brigades confronted on Saturday an attack by IS militants near the Iraqi-Syrian borders." ¹⁰³	10	NS
	July 20	Mosul	At least six IS militants were killed as Iraqi army targeted IS locations in Tal Afar town, west of Mosul, which is still held by the militant group. The Defense Ministry's War Media Cell said	6	NS

¹⁰¹ Mohamed Mostafa, Govt sends Chechen children found in Mosul to orphanages, *Iraqi News*, July 23, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/features/govt-sends-chechen-children-found-mosul-orphanages/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰² Nehal Mostafa, Seventeen IS female members killed, injured as missile shot west of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/seventeen-female-members-killed-injured-missile-shot-west-mosul/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰³ Nehal Mostafa, Ten IS members killed as paramilitary troops foil attack near Iraqi-Syrian borders, *Iraqi News*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/ten-members-killed-paramilitary-troops-foil-attack-near-iraqi-syrian-borders/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

			Iraqi army jets “launched airstrikes targeting IS locations in Tal Afar.” ¹⁰⁴		
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Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 23	Idlib	An explosion ripped through the al-Zira’a Roundabout in Idlib City, killing several militants from the al Qaeda linked Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham rebel faction. The opposition activists claimed that at least 13 HTS fighters were killed and another 30 were wounded, including several civilians. ¹⁰⁵	13	30
2	July 23	Idlib	The city of Idlib has fallen completely under the control of the Ha’yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) jihadist group. Despite the ceasefire agreement reached two days ago between HTS and Ahrar Al-Sham, the former launched a surprise attack on the last bases and checkpoints belonging to both the al Sham and the Free Syrian Army (FSA). ¹⁰⁶	Idlib falls to HTS	
3	July 22		Syrian warplanes carried out several air strikes against the IS, on the Islamic State headquarters in Ma’dan and Be’r al-Sabkhawi	NS	NS

¹⁰⁴ Nehal Mostafa, Army airstrike in Tal Afar leaves six Islamic State militants killed, *Iraqi News*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/army-airstrike-tal-afar-leaves-six-islamic-state-militants-killed/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰⁵ Leith Fadel, Massive car bombing targets large Al-Qaeda gathering in Idlib, *Al Masdar News*, July 24, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/massive-car-bombing-targets-large-al-qaeda-gathering-idlib/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Illingworth, Idlib city falls 100 percent under HTS jihadist control, *Al Masdar News*, July 23, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/idlib-city-falls-100-percent-hts-jihadist-control/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

			urban areas, east of Raqqa Province, destroying several headquarters and vehicles, as well as killing many members of the group. ¹⁰⁷		
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International Economic Issues

- **AIIB Receives Third Triple-A Credit Rating**

S&P Global Ratings (S&P) on July 18, 2017 assigned the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) its highest possible rating and a stable outlook. According to its press release, S&P provided its ‘AAA/A-1+’ long- and short-term issuer credit ratings to AIIB. S&P stated: “The ratings reflect our opinion that over the next three-to-five years AIIB will establish a track record and significantly enhance its operational setup, supporting our assessment of its very strong business profile and its extremely strong financial profile.”¹⁰⁸

- **IMF keeps global growth forecasts; China, eurozone revised higher**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on July 24, 2017, kept its growth forecasts for the world economy unchanged for this year and next, although it slightly revised up growth expectations for the eurozone and China. In its updated World Economic Outlook, the IMF said global gross domestic product would be 3.5 percent in 2017 and 3.6 percent in 2018, unchanged from April forecasts. The IMF has cut its growth forecast for the UK economy this year after a weak performance in the first three months of 2017. The recent update expects the British economy to expand by 1.7% this year, 0.3 points lower than when it last made predictions in April. The growth forecast in the **United States** has been revised down from 2.3 percent to 2.1 percent in 2017 and from 2.5 percent to 2.1 percent in 2018 respectively. Growth projections for 2017 have been revised up for many **euro area countries**. Germany growth forecast has been revised up by 0.2 points to 1.8%, France by 0.1 points to 1.5%, while Italy and Spain have both been revised up

¹⁰⁷ Loaa Adel, Syrian warplanes hit IS near Raqqa: State TV, *Iraqi News*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-warplanes-hit-near-raqqa-state-tv/>, accessed on July 24, 2017

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Ekbohm and YeeFarn Phua, “Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Assigned ‘AAA/A-1+’ Rating; Outlook Stable”, S&P Global Rating, July 18, 2017, https://www.aiib.org/en/news-events/news/2017/_download/20170718_001.pdf (accessed on July 24, 2017); Larry Elliott, “IMF cuts 2017 growth forecasts for UK and US”, *The Guardian*, July 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jul/24/imf-cuts-2017-growth-forecasts-uk-us-economy-trump-tax-cuts> (accessed on July 24, 2017)

by 0.5 points to 1.3% and 3.1% respectively. Growth in **India** is forecast to pick up further in 2017 and 2018, in line with the April 2017 forecast. ¹⁰⁹

Endnotes

¹¹ The Citizen , 19 July

2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201707190091.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabljpw,

² Sudan News Agency, 19 July 2017 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707200287.html>

³ Reuters, 21 July 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-07-21/zimbabwes-evicted-white-farmers-dispute-government-compensation-claims>

¹⁰⁹ IMF, “World Economic Outlook Update, July 2017”, <http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2017/07/07/world-economic-outlook-update-july-2017> (accessed on July 24, 2017)