

Weekly Media Updates **(10-16 July, 2017)**

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Africa

- **China to Open First Overseas Military Base in Djibouti¹**

China sent Ships carrying personnel for its first overseas military Base in Djibouti. According to state media reports the warships departed from Zhanjiang in southern China to set up a "support base" in the Horn of Africa nation.

China's agreement with Djibouti ensures its military presence in the country up until 2026, with a contingent of up to 10,000 soldiers. China began construction of a base in Djibouti last year. It will be used to resupply navy ships taking part in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions off the coasts of Yemen and Somalia, in particular. It will be China's first overseas naval base, though Beijing officially describes it as a logistics facility. State news agency Xinhua did not say when the base would begin operations.

Chinese Media Xinhua said the establishment of the base was a decision made by the two countries after "friendly negotiations, and accords with the common interest of the people from both sides". Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told that the base would enable China to make "new and greater contributions" to peace in Africa and the world and would benefit Djibouti's economic development.

Djibouti also hosts US, Japanese and French bases.

- **Ethiopia: Western World From Donation to Economic Partnership²**

Ethiopian Investment Commission has said that Ethiopia's relation with North American and European countries that has been largely characterized by assistance has transformed to business and development over the past few years.

Out of the total 25 billion Birr FDI came from Asian, European and North American countries between mid 2012 and mid 2017, the share of North American and European countries was close to 10 billion Birr, about 40 per cent of the total investment.

Mekonnen Hailu, Public Relation Director with the Investment Commission told the *Ethiopian Herald* that over the past 10 years Chinese and Indian investment had the lion's share in Ethiopia. Now the situation is changed and flow of North American and European investment has become nearly equivalent to those came from Asia.

The year 2012 was the starting point for North American and European to significantly grow investment in Ethiopia and the trend has continued in the subsequent years. During mid 2012 to mid 2017, some 46 North American investment projects with the combined capital of over 1.9 billion Birr were operational and created job opportunities for over

¹ Al Jazeera, 12 July 2017,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201707130003.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aacblp

² Ethiopian Herald, 12 July 2017,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201707130199.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt

5,743 citizens in permanent and temporary basis. In the past six years, some 150 European investment projects with the combined capital of 7.9 billion Birr became operational and created 8,336 permanent and temporary jobs.

The Director stated that Ethiopia's fastest economic growth over the past decade has changed its relation with the North American and European countries from aid and donation to business and economic partnership.

He said: "The right macroeconomic policies and reforms Ethiopia has put in place over years coupled with the peace and political stability sustained in the country have transformed the relationship from that has been characterized with assistance in to that of trade and investment."

- **Congo Votes for Parliament³**

The first round of legislative and local area elections were held on 16 July 2017 in the Republic of Congo, which 'went well' according to the head of the country's electoral body .

On Sunday, the ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) put up 128 candidates for the 151 seats available, while several independent candidates have close ties to the party.

The main parliamentary opposition group, the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS), has put forward 43 candidates, compared with 31 run by the UDH-Yuki group of Guy-Brice Parfait Kolelas, who came second in the presidential elections last year.

But an opposition coalition comprising the IDC, the FROCAD and the CJ3M has said it will only take part under certain circumstances, including "the end of the crisis in Pool and the release of all political prisoners". However, the head of the Independent National Election Commission (CNEI), Henri Bouka, insisted voting will be held nationwide, including in Pool. He said that "No (constituency) will be left out"..

The region, located in the country's south has been plunged into a state of insecurity since April last year. There have been reports of deadly clashes between security forces and militia loyal to former rebel leader, Frederic Bintsamou.

The second round of legislative polls will be held on July 30.

³PTI, India , http://www.ptinews.com/news/8890944_Opposition-cries-foul-as-Congo-votes-for-parliament.html

North Africa

- **France-Egypt Begin Joint Naval Exercise⁴**

France and Egypt on Monday began the joint military exercises in Egyptian waters as part of a strengthening of cooperation between the two countries' military forces, according to a statement. The Cleopatra 2017 manoeuvres are in continuation of last year 'Ramses 2016'" exercises and the exercise is scheduled to continue for seven days.

According to the reports, French and Egyptian Mistral warships, several frigates and F16 jet fighters are taking part as per the information given by the an Egyptian army spokesman . The exercises will take place in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. During a visit to Cairo in June, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian had said the two countries had reaffirmed their shared point of view on the fight against terrorism.

Both France and Egypt are part of the US-led coalition of countries fighting the Islamic State armed group in Iraq and Syria. France has troops in Mali and other Sahel countries, where it has actively supported the creation of a force run by the G5 group of African countries to fight smuggling, people trafficking and armed Islamists. Egypt is an important customer for French-built armaments. In last two years, Egypt has bought 24 Rafale airplanes, a multimission FREMM frigate, 5.2-billion-euros-worth of missiles and two Mistrals worth about 950 million euros.

- **Churches in Egypt Suspends Some Religious Activities for Security Reasons⁵**

Egypt's Coptic and Evangelical Churches have suspended some of their activities for security reasons after a spate of jihadist attacks, church officials said on Thursday.

Conferences and church-organized trips will be suspended for three weeks after security services warned of more attempted attacks, said the Reverend Andrea Zaki, head of the Egyptian Evangelical church. He also informed that the program (conferences and travel for religious events) is being postponed for three weeks because there is information of a possible attack in near future too. He also informed that church services would not be affected Coptic Church but there would be moratorium on some activities. It is worth mentioning here that since December, Islamic State group suicide bombers have targeted three Coptic churches, killing dozens of people. In May, IS claimed responsibility for shooting dead at least 28 Copts while they were travelling The jihadists have threatened to

⁴ http://m.en.rfi.fr/middle-east/20170711-france-egypt-begin-cleopatre-2017-joint-naval-exercise?utm_source=Media+Review+for+July+12%2C+2017&utm_campaign=DMR-+EN+-+7%2F12%2F2017&utm_medium=email

⁵ http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/1341c50041dbee40acf3aef424d01209/Egypt-churches-suspend-activities-for-security-reasons-20171307Egypt-churches-suspend-activities-for-security-reasons-20171307?utm_source=Media+Review+for+July+14%2C+2017&utm_campaign=DMR-+EN+-+7%2F14%2F2017&utm_medium=email

carry out further attacks on Christians, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 90 million people.

Central Asia

- **German President Visits Kazakhstan**

President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier paid his first official visit to Kazakhstan on 12 July 2017. The visit also marked the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The German President held meeting with Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev on range of bilateral, regional and international issues, including the developments in Ukraine and West Asia. The two countries also entered into the strategic partnership. The visiting President called Kazakhstan as 'anchor of stability' in the region.⁶ Kazakhstan President termed Germany a 'reliable friend' and 'key economic partner'.

Germany is an important destination for the export of energy resources from Kazakhstan. The country is Germany's fourth-largest supplier of oil.⁷ Other exports include iron and steel goods and chemical products. The import from Germany to Kazakhstan primarily consists of cars and automobile parts, pharmaceuticals, machinery, electrical equipment and chemical products. As per the Federal Statistical Office figures, bilateral trade was euro 4 billion in 2016.⁸

In his interaction with media, President of Kazakhstan informed that more than 900 companies with participation of German capital were operating in Kazakhstan. The total direct investment in the country from Germany is more than US\$ 4 billion.⁹ Kazakhstan is an important transport and trade corridor between China and Germany. During the visit, the two countries signed more than 20 documents for the total amount of about US\$ 1 billion.¹⁰

The German President also visited Lutheran church and met with ethnic Germans living in Kazakhstan. About one per cent of the country's total population or 1,80,000 Kazakhs are of German descent. Most of these people were deported to Kazakhstan from Russian Volga region during the World War II by the Soviet rulers.¹¹ Besides the current population of Germans in Kazakhstan, about 8,00,000 Germans have emigrated to Germany.¹²

⁶ "German President: Kazakhstan Is Region's "Anchor Of Stability," 13 July 2017, <http://kazworld.info/?p=63808>

⁷ Federal Foreign Office, "Kazakhstan," updated April 2017, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Nodes/Kasachstan_node.html

⁸ Federal Foreign Office, "Kazakhstan," updated April 2017, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Nodes/Kasachstan_node.html

⁹ President of Kazakhstan, 'Briefing for media following the official visit of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of Germany,' 12 July 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/briefing-for-media-following-the-official-visit-of-frank-walter-steinmeier-president-of-germany

¹⁰ Malika Orazgaliyeva, "German President makes first visit to Astana, meets with Kazakh President," 13 July 2017, <http://astanatimes.com/2017/07/german-president-makes-first-visit-to-astana-meets-with-kazakh-president/>

¹¹ "German President: Kazakhstan Is Region's "Anchor Of Stability," 13 July 2017, <http://kazworld.info/?p=63808>

¹² Federal Foreign Office, "Kazakhstan," updated April 2017, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Nodes/Kasachstan_node.html

China

- **China's 2017 H1 GDP grows 6.9%**

As per data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) released on 17 July, 2017, China's gross domestic product expanded 6.9 percent year on year in the first half of the year to about 38.15 trillion yuan (5.62 trillion U.S. dollars). The growth rate is well above the government's target for the year of 6.5 percent, reflecting a firming trend in the nation's economy. In the second quarter, China's GDP held steady, posting a rise of 6.9 percent year on year, flat from the first quarter. The service sector expanded 7.7 percent year on year in the first half, outpacing a 3.5-percent increase in primary industry and 6.4 percent in secondary industry, according to the NBS. On a quarterly basis, the economy increased 1.7 percent in the second quarter from the previous quarter. China's economy has been operating within a reasonable range, maintaining stable, coordinated and sustainable development, NBS spokesperson Xing Zhihong told a press conference.¹³

- **Revised regulation on military document processing released in China**

The Central Military Commission (CMC) Political Work Department announced on 16 July, 2017 that the Chinese President Xi Jinping, also chairman of the CMC, has signed an order to release a revised regulation on military document processing. The regulation, which contains eight chapters and 40 articles, makes new requirements for official military documents with regard to work standards, types and forms, processing procedures, management and other areas. The revision came as the Communist Party of China strives to realize the goal of building a stronger army. The revised regulation will take effect on October, 1.¹⁴

- **Report: 'B&R' cooperation rising, legal risks increasing**

The annual report on Development of "Belt and Road" (B&R) Construction 2017 was jointly released by the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Foundation for Reform and Development Studies under the China International Trust and Investment Corporation as well as the Social Sciences Academic Press on June 27 in Beijing. The report found that China's efforts to implement the "B&R" initiative and its pragmatic cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have achieved results in five key aspects of policy coordination, infrastructure development, investment and trade facilitation, financial integration and people-to-people connectivity. The report also highlights the existing legal risks in "B&R" construction. It noted that the Chinese enterprises considering investing and operating abroad might face a series of risks related to politics, culture, business,

¹³ "China's 2017 H1 GDP grows 6.9%", Xinhua, July 17, 2017, <http://en.people.cn/business/n3/2017/0717/c90778-9242492.html> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

¹⁴ Zhang Tao, "Revised regulation on military document processing released", Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, July 17, 2017, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-07/17/content_4785955.htm (accessed on July 17, 2017)

law and morality, most of which will ultimately be transformed into legal risks that directly determine the success or failure of their investment. It will come as a surprise to many that, according to the Chinese commerce ministry, 65 percent of Chinese foreign direct investments make a loss.¹⁵

- **Establishment of Shanghai Institute of International Organizations and Global Governance**

On July 2 2017, Shanghai Institute of International Organizations and Global Governance, cofounded by Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFE) and Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS), was officially opened in Shanghai. Mr. Jiang Hong, Deputy Director-General of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Mr. Ren Xiaowen, Vice President of Shanghai Federation of Social Science Associations (SFSSA), SIIS President Chen Dongxiao, and SUFE Principal Fan Liming launched the SIIOGG together.¹⁶

- **Ambassador Luo Zhaohui Meets with the Delegation from AQSIQ**

On July 10, 2017, Ambassador Luo Zhaohui (Chinese Ambassador to India) met with Mr. Wang Wei, President of China Research Society for Border Biosecurity. They exchanged views on strengthening quality inspection and quarantine cooperation on agricultural products between China and India.¹⁷

- **China places Wanda under unprecedented scrutiny, closes off most loan options¹⁸**

China's bank regulator has instructed the country's largest state-owned lenders to put six of magnate Wang Jianlin's overseas acquisition projects under an unprecedented level of scrutiny, because they have touched a red line concerning foreign investments, according to several sources familiar with the matter. Four of the six purchases have closed. Of the two uncompleted acquisitions, Chinese government departments have been ordered to not approve any loan applications or foreign currency exchanges, for completing the deals, based on verbal instructions delivered at a June 20 meeting summoned by the China Banking Regulatory Commission in Beijing, according to sources familiar with the briefing. Chinese banks are instructed to not lend any money to the four acquisitions that have closed.

- **High-flier in Chinese politics under investigation ahead of power reshuffle, sources say¹⁹**

¹⁵ Chang Hong, "Report: 'B&R' cooperation rising, legal risks increasing", Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), July 12, 2017, http://casseng.cssn.cn/news_events/news_events_news_briefing/201707/t20170712_3577654.html (accessed on July 17, 2017)

¹⁶ "Opening of Shanghai Institute of International Organizations and Global Governance", <http://en.siis.org.cn/Content/Info/4U1S8QIYF806> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

¹⁷ Embassy of Peoples' Republic of China in the Republic of India, "Ambassador Luo Zhaohui Meets with the Delegation from AQSIQ", July 11, 2017, http://in.china-embassy.org/eng/embassy_news/t1476834.htm (accessed on July 17, 2017)

¹⁸ Xie Yu, "China places Wanda under unprecedented scrutiny, closes off most loan options", *South China Morning Post*, July 17, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/business/companies/article/2102933/china-places-wanda-under-unprecedented-scrutiny-closes-most-loan> (accessed on July 17, 2017).

A top contender for a role in China's next leadership is being investigated by the anti-graft agency of the Communist Party, according to people familiar with the matter. Sun Zhengcai, at 53 the youngest member of the party's 25-strong Politburo, is suspected of "serious violation of party discipline", according to a source in Chongqing.

He was removed as party boss of the city on July 15. The development could have a significant impact on the upcoming leadership reshuffle in the autumn. Sun was seen as having a strong chance of being named to the Politburo Standing Committee. Sun was now in the middle of an investigation "at the conversation level", the city's propaganda chief told senior editors in Chongqing on July 15, according to the source.

- **China's ban on foreign content on Bilibili, AcFun is not about piracy²⁰**

Foreign movies and TV shows were abruptly wiped from two of China's most popular video-sharing websites in what appeared to be part of an intensifying crackdown by Beijing on what citizens can see on the web. Many observers believe the sudden disappearance of vast amounts of content produced overseas from Bilibili and AcFun – both particularly popular with millennials – has less to do with tackling piracy than with a desire in Beijing to tighten control of information ahead of the crucial 19th Communist Party's national congress this autumn, at which the next generation of leaders is expected to be named.

Last week, a large number of movies, dramas and shows from the US, UK, Japan, and South Korea vanished overnight from Bilibili. Even some programmes originating in Hong Kong and Taiwan were pulled from the site. The next day, Bilibili issued a somewhat vague statement on its Weibo account explaining that the "temporary" removal of videos was due to "a content review of the movies and TV dramas within the site". "After the review is finished, those in violation of the criteria will be pulled off permanently, while the others will be gradually restored," it said, without elaborating on what the "criteria" are.

- **China Orders Xinjiang's Android Users to Install App That Deletes 'Terrorist' Content²¹**

Authorities in the north-western region of Xinjiang have ordered local residents to install an app on their cell phones that will monitor their activity for 'terrorist' content, local sources told RFA on July 13. 'In order to achieve city-wide coverage

¹⁹ Jun Mai, "High-flier in Chinese politics under investigation ahead of power reshuffle", *South China Morning Post*, July 16, 2017, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2102886/high-flier-chinese-politics-under-investigation-ahead> (accessed on July 17, 2017).

²⁰ Laura He, "China's ban on foreign content on Bilibili, AcFun is not about piracy", *South China Morning Post*, July 17, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/business/companies/article/2102948/chinas-ban-foreign-content-bilibili-acfun-not-about-piracy> (accessed on July 17, 2017).

²¹ AFP, "China orders Xinjiang's Android Users to install App that deletes 'Terrorist' Content", *Radio Free Asia*, 14 July 2017, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/china-orders-xinjiangs-android-users-to-install-app-that-deletes-terrorist-content-07142017102032.html> (accessed 17 July 2017).

in the antiterrorist video and audio clean-up, and to target people, materials and thinking for clean-up work, management and crackdowns, a technology company affiliated with the municipal police department has developed an app for Android smartphones that can filter out terrorist video and audio content,' the Tianshan district government in the regional capital Urumqi said in a directive issued July 10. The app, called Clean WebGuard, is to be installed by all Android Smartphone users in the city, regardless of ethnic group, in order to carry out "self-surveillance," the directive said.

European Union

- **France to Facilitate Kuwait-Led Mediation on the Qatar Crisis**

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that France wants to facilitate Kuwait-led mediation for resolving the Qatar crisis. He said, "France should be a facilitator in the mediation." His statement came after meeting with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. Later French Foreign Minister visited Jeddah and stated the same. Qatar has also welcomed France's facilitation for finding a solution for resolving the crisis.²²

- **Investment Facilitation Mechanism for EU Investment in India**

India and the European Union (EU) established an Investment Facilitation Mechanism for EU investments in India. It will cover both new and old EU investment in the country. It was stated that the mechanism is intended to facilitate greater coordination between India and the EU.²³

- **Protest against Changes in Judicial System in Poland**

Thousands of people protested against a number of planned changes in the judicial system by the PIS government in Poland. Protesters accused that the government is undermining the rule of law in the country and 'introducing dictatorship.' On the other hand, the government says that changes are intended to reform the inefficient and sometimes corrupt judicial system. However, the opposition says that planned changes would undermine the independence of judiciary.²⁴

- **German Chancellor Angela Merkel is against the Upper Limit on Refugee**

In a TV interview, German Chancellor Angela Merkel rejected the call for limiting the number of refugee accepted by a country. The call for putting an upper limit

²² France wants to help mediate Gulf crisis, foreign minister says, France 24, July 16, 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20170716-france-wants-mediator-gulf-crisis-jean-yves-le-drian-foreign-minister-saudi-qatar>

²³ EU, India set up fund for investments, The Hindu, July 15, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/business/eu-india-set-up-fund-for-investments/article19280385.ece>

²⁴Protests at sweeping changes to Polish courts, Radio Poland, July 17, 2017, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/316618,Protests-at-sweeping-changes-to-Polish-courts>

on accepting refugees was made by Christian Social Union (CSU). Chancellor Merkel considered that it is not 'way forward'. She said, "As far as an upper limit is concerned, my position is clear: I will not accept it." On the relations with Turkey, she said that she would work with NATO to resolve the difference with Turkey. She also defended to G20 summit held in Hamburg.²⁵

- **President Trump's Visit to France**

On the invitation of French President Macron, US President Donald Trump visited Paris to celebrate the Bastille Day and commemorate the 100th anniversary of the entry of the United States into World War I. In current state of relations between Europe and the US, the visit of President Trump to France was important. The Both presidents discussed a range of issues of bilateral and global importance. President Trump said that the US' relationship with France is 'unbreakable'. On Paris climate agreement, President Trump vaguely indicated to revisit his decision. He said, "Something could happen with respect to the Paris accords, let's see what happens. If it happens, that will be wonderful, and if it doesn't, that'll be OK too."²⁶

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **South Korea Proposes Military, Family Reunion Talks With North**

On July 17, 2017, South Korea proposed military talks with North Korea starting from July 21, the first government-level talks since late 2015 in an effort to halt hostile activities near their joint border and after a series of missile tests by the North in recent weeks. The proposal is the first formal overture by the government of President Moon Jae-in, who came to power in May pledging to engage the North in dialogue, as well as to apply pressure on Pyongyang to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula. Tongilgak is a North Korean building at the Panmunjom truce village on the border used for previous inter-Korea talks. The last government-level talks were held in December 2015. The proposal came roughly a week after Moon said the need for dialogue with North Korea was more pressing than ever to curb Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. Pyongyang has repeatedly said it refuses to engage in all talks with the South unless Seoul turns over 12 waitresses who defected to the South last year. North Korea says the South abducted the 12 waitresses and the restaurant manager and has demanded their return, but the South has said the group decided to defect of its own free will. In an act to rein in the North, the

²⁵ Chancellor Angela Merkel rejects refugee limit for Germany in TV interview, DW, July 16, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/chancellor-angela-merkel-rejects-refugee-limit-for-germany-in-tv-interview/a-39714436>

²⁶ US friendship with France 'unbreakable', Trump says on Paris visit, France 24, July 13, 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20170713-macron-welcomes-trump-bastille-day-press-conference-paris-france-usa>

United States is preparing new sanctions on Chinese banks and firms doing business with Pyongyang possibly within weeks, two senior U.S. officials said last week.²⁷

- **New Radar to Detect N. Korean Drones**

South Korea has completed development of a new perimeter or localized air-defense radar that can detect small North Korean drones. The radar is designed to defend a specific area, military unit or facility from air strikes. The Defense Acquisition Program Administration said on July 14, 2017, that the radar has been in development since 2011 and recently passed combat suitability tests. Mass production will start next year, and it will first be deployed at Army and Marine units on the north-westernmost islands off the North Korean coast. The three-dimensional “active electronically scanned array” radar detects drones by radiating beams with hundreds or thousands of transmit/receive modules on a flat panel. Unlike older mechanical scanning radars, AESA radars are capable of detecting and tracking multiple objects simultaneously. They can be mounted on a vehicle or the nose of a plane. Several North Korean drones have been found crashed in South Korea recently after spying on military installations.²⁸

- **Washington Propose to Renegotiate US-Korea Trade Deal**

On July 14, 2017, US Trade Representative Office formally send an application to Seoul to “start the process of negotiating to remove barriers to US trade and consider needed amendments to the agreement.” Meanwhile, in Seoul, the government has denied that there was no agreement to renegotiate the trade agreement. The opposition parties accused President Moon for hiding information on trade during his recent Summit with President Trump. During the Summit President Trump announced that, both parties have agreed to renegotiate the trade agreement. President Moon rejected such an agreement.²⁹

- **Japanese MSDF Joins India and US Navy at the Malabar Exercise**

On July 10, 2017, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) joined Indian and the US Navy in the annual Malabar exercise in an effort to bolster their maritime security cooperation. Japan joined the Malabar exercise in 2014. This year Japan sent its largest destroyer, the Izumo, capable of carrying up to 14 helicopters for the first time.³⁰

²⁷ "South Korea Proposes Military, Family Reunion Talks With North", *North Korea Times*, 17 July 2017. <http://www.northkoreatimes.com/news/253993516/south-korea-proposes-military-family-reunion-talks-with-north> accessed on 17 July 2017.

²⁸ Lee Yong-soo, "New Radar to Detect N.Korean Drones", *The Chosun Ilbo (English Edition): Daily News from Korea*, 17 July 2017. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/07/17/2017071700674.html accessed on 17 July 2017.

²⁹ “Trump says ‘horrible’ FTA being ‘renegotiated’”, *The Joogang Ilbo*, July 15, 2017, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3035899> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

³⁰ “Japan, U.S., India begin joint naval drill in India”, *The Japan News*, July 11, 2017, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003811579> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

- **US-Japan-South Korea Agrees to Put More Pressure on North Korea**
On July 11, 2017, at a meeting in Singapore, senior officials of US, Japan and South Korea agreed to cooperate in adding pressure on North Korea in response to its ICBM test through the UN Security Council and other forums. The senior officials who met in Singapore are the chief negotiators of the three countries in the six-party talks. They also called for constructive role of China and Russia in solving North Korea nuclear issue.³¹

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Thailand's increasing Defence Spending**
On July 11, 2017, Thailand's cabinet approved the US \$ 258 million purchase of eight, T-50 advanced jets from South Korea. The military government has increased the defence budget every year since taking over in 2014.³² Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has defended his government's procurement of military jet trainer T-50. He urged the public to understand that the Air Force is in need of trainer jets in order to replace the aging Czech-made L-39 aircraft which have been in service for more than 30 years. Since the May 22, 2014 coup, the defence budget has risen every year from 192.9 billion baht to 214.3 billion baht in 2017 and is expected to reach 222.4 billion baht in 2018. Some of these defence purchases includes 28 VT-4 battle tanks and ten VT-4 battle tanks from China including one S2 6T submarine, with two more likely to be purchased at the cost of 22.5 billion baht. Other purchases included six Mi-17 helicopters from Russia, four Black Hawks from the US, and KAI-T-50 TH light combat aircraft; four in 2015, eight in 2017, and four more in 2020.³³
- **Thailand's growing Proximity to China**
On July 11, 2017, Thailand's military government approved 179 billion baht to build the first stretch of a high-speed railway that will ultimately link Bangkok to Southern China. The project is part of China's huge regional infrastructure plan to build a high-speed rail network connecting the southern city of Kunming with Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The Thai segment of the rail had been delayed for years due to tussle over the issue of financing, loan terms, and protective labour regulations. The funding approval from Thailand's cabinet came after the PM invoked his absolute power last month to clear a series of legal and technical hurdles standing in the way of the deal. Further, there have been allegations against the current government that it has been cosyng up to Beijing since it came to power in 2014, shelling out billions on Chinese arms. Thailand's defence minister has stressed that it was not buying exclusively from China and is

³¹ "Japan, U.S., S. Korea agree to pressure N. Korea", *The Japan News*, July 12, 2017, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003814833> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

³²"Thailand approves purchase of fighter jets", *The Star online*, July 12, 2017, <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2017/07/12/thailand-approves-purchase-of-fighter-jets> (accessed on July 12, 2017).

³³ Wassana Nauam and Aekarach, "PM defends B 8.8 bn jet trainer splurge", *Bangkok Post*, July 12, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1285267/pm-defends-b8-8bn-jet-trainer-splurge> (accessed on July 12, 2017).

still making purchases from other countries including the US.³⁴ On July 3, Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the 2nd meeting of the Thailand-Guangxi Working Group in Bangkok. The meeting reviewed the progress made and jointly planned the cooperation in various sectors, including economic, trade, investments, connectivity, and people-to-people contact. The meeting also stressed the significance of cooperation in S&T and innovation, as priority sectors under the Joint Action Plan under the Five-Year Development Plan on Trade and Economic Cooperation between Thailand and China.³⁵

- **One Year Anniversary of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea**

In a statement marking the first year of the judgement by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on South China Sea favouring Philippines, Foreign Secretary of Phillipines, Alan Cayetano on July 12, 2017, said that Phillipines “shall remain an enemy to none and a friend to all”. Mr Cayetano said the Phillipines has since regained access to fishing grounds around the disputed Scarborough Shoal, and received from China over US \$ 30 billion in investment pledges and thousand of firearms to fight terrorists. He further added that warming ties with China had allowed ASEAN to revive the long-stalled talks on a “code of conduct” meant to avoid conflicts in the South China Sea.³⁶

- **Indonesian President inks decree to ban Radical Groups**

On July 10, 2017, Indonesia issued a decree allowing it to ban groups that oppose its official State ideology. This has been done in order to target radical extremists. The law signed by President Jokowi comes as concerns are growing about the influence of hardliners in Indonesia, where a majority of the population practise moderate form of Islam. It empowers the government to disband without trial any group that challenges Pancasila, a set of founding national principles which promote pluralism and tolerance. Pancasila is considered to be the unifying factor for a country that is home to Christian, Hindu and Buddhist minorities.³⁷

³⁴“Thailand approves S \$ 7.2 billion for delayed China rail project”, *The Straits Times*, July 11, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/thailand-approves-s72b-for-delayed-china-rail-project> (accessed on July 12, 2017).

³⁵ “The 2nd Meeting of Thailand-Guangxi Working Group 3, July 2017, Bangkok, Thailand”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the kingdom of Thailand*, <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/79079-The-2nd-Meeting-of-Thailand-%E2%80%93-Guangxi-Working-Grou.html> (accessed on July 12, 2017).

³⁶ Raul Dancel, “With pivot to China, Duterte’s foreign policy a ‘game changer’”, *The Straits Times*, July 13, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/with-pivot-to-china-dutertes-foreign-policy-a-game-changer> (accessed on July 13, 2017).

³⁷ “Indonesia President inks decree to ban Radical Groups”, *Borneo Bulletin*, July 13, 2017, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/indonesia-president-inks-decree-ban-radical-groups/> (accessed on July 14, 2017).

Myanmar

- **22 groups launch online drive against Section 66(d)**

A Coalition of 22 civil society groups launched an online campaign on July 13, 2017, to abolish Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law. Section 66(d) provides for up to three years in prison for “extorting, coercing, restraining wrongfully, defaming, disturbing, causing undue influence or threatening any person using a telecommunications network.” In the past two years, the law has opened the door to a wave of criminal prosecutions of individuals for peaceful communications on Facebook and has increasingly been used to stifle criticism of the authorities.³⁸
- **Myanmar is key pillar in India's 'Act East' policy: PM Narendra Modi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Myanmar as a “key pillar” of India's 'Act East' policy and expressed his firm commitment to strengthen the bilateral relationship in all areas. According to a PMO statement he made the comments when Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defence Services Sr Gen. U Min Aung Hliang called on him in New Delhi on July 14.³⁹
- **Myanmar workers caught in Malaysian migrant worker crackdown**

On July 12, 2017, Malaysia has rounded up over 3,000 undocumented migrant workers including nationals from Myanmar this month in a major crackdown, prompting lawmakers across the region who said the campaign was “victimising the vulnerable”. The relatively developed country is a magnet for migrant workers from across Asia, but several million are believed to be undocumented. Bangladeshis represent the largest group among those detained, with substantial numbers also from Indonesia and Myanmar.⁴⁰
- **Concern voiced over blocking of visas for UN fact-finding team**

On July 12, 2017, *Mizzima News* reported that Human Rights Watch has expressed concern over the Myanmar government refusing to grant visas to members of a United Nations fact-finding mission. The government of Myanmar said on June 30 that it would not grant visas to members of a commission appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate human rights violations by the country's state security forces, including the recent alleged abuses in Rakhine State. John Fisher, Geneva Director at Human Rights Watch said: “Denying visas to the members of the fact-finding mission appointed by the UN Human Rights Council would be a slap in the face to victims who suffered grave human rights

³⁸ “22 groups launch online drive against Section 66(d)”, *Myanmar Times*, July 14, 2017, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26800-22-groups-launch-online-drive-against-section-66-d.html> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

³⁹ “Myanmar is key pillar in India's 'Act East' policy: PM Narendra Modi”, *Economic Times*, July 14, 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/myanmar-is-key-pillar-in-indias-act-east-policy-pm-narendra-modi/articleshow/59595462.cms> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁴⁰ “Myanmar workers caught in Malaysian migrant worker crackdown”, *Mizzima News*, July 13, 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-regional/myanmar-workers-caught-malaysian-migrant-worker-crackdown> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

violations by Myanmar's state security forces."⁴¹ Meanwhile, US Ambassador Nikki Haley ramped up pressure on the Myanmar government to accept a UN fact-finding mission tasked with investigating human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims. "It is important that the Burmese government allow this fact-finding mission to do its job," Haley said in a statement.⁴²

Latin American and Caribbean

Brazil

- **Brazil's ex-president Lula da Silva jailed for corruption**

Brazil's former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has been sentenced to 9 years and 6 months in prison on corruption charges. On July 12, 2017, Judge Sergio Moro found Lula guilty of accepting 3.7 million real (US\$1.2 million) worth of bribes from engineering firm OAS, the amount prosecutors said the company spent refurbishing a beach apartment for Lula in return for his help winning contracts with state oil company Petroleo Brasileiro. The ruling is only the first of five regarding Lula's corruption scandal, but the former President still remains free while officials wait to hear whether he will appeal. According to a representative of Lula da Silva's legal team, President Lula is innocent and he has been subject to a politically motivated investigation for over three years.

Lula, Brazil's first working-class president remains a popular figure among voters after he left office six years ago with an 83-percent approval rating. The former union leader won global admiration for transformative social policies that helped reduce stinging inequality in Latin America's biggest country. The former Brazilian president Lula da Silva responded defiantly to his conviction on corruption charges by formally launching his candidacy for next year's presidential election. In an impassioned speech on July 13, 2017 at his Workers' party headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil's first working-class president warned: "Whoever thinks this is the end of Lula is in for a shock." As well as denouncing Moro's ruling he attacked the prosecutors who built the case against him, as well as the country's media and political elite.⁴³

⁴¹ "Concern voiced over blocking of visas for UN fact-finding team", *Mizzima News*, July 12, 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/concern-voiced-over-blocking-visas-un-fact-finding-team> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁴² "US pressures Myanmar to accept UN rights probe", *Mizzima News*, July 11, 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic-international/us-pressure-myanmar-accept-un-rights-probe> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁴³ "Brazil's Ex-President Lula Da Silva Jailed for Corruption," July 12, 2017, <http://santiagotimes.cl/2017/07/12/brazils-ex-president-lula-da-silva-jailed-for-corruption/>, Accessed on July 17, 2017.

- **Temer manages a first victory to avoid trial over graft charges**

Brazilian President Michel Temer looked on track on July 13, 2017 to avoid trial over graft charges, after a committee of lawmakers recommended the accusations against him be shelved ahead of a congressional vote. If the matter is put aside, Temer would win some respite. Brazil's full Chamber of Deputies is expected within days to vote on whether the Supreme Court should put Temer on trial. The president has denied the allegations that he took a US\$150,000 bribe from a meatpacking firm. Police arrested an adviser of Temer's with a suitcase full of money, which prosecutors allege was destined for Temer as a bribe. An audio recording also emerged of Temer apparently approving the payment of hush money to a jailed ally. The congressional committee on the constitution, justice and citizenship voted 40 votes to 25 to shelve the accusations. For congress to approve a trial, two-thirds of the 513 deputies have to vote in favor. The charges on July 13, 2017 were the first of several against the president made by Prosecutor General Rodrigo Janot, who has said he will present more in the coming weeks.⁴⁴

Venezuela

- **Venezuela Plebiscite: What is being Voted?**

Venezuela's opposition have organized a nationwide referendum on Sunday, July 16, 2017 which is being held outside of the official electoral system, **to reject the Constitutional Assembly** being pushed forward by President Nicolas Maduro, who is looking to rewrite the Constitution promoted by Hugo Chavez. Critics, including some inside the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela, fear that President Nicolás Maduro will use the new entity to tighten his hold on the South American country and further delay—or outright cancel—elections. The so-called “plebiscite” is a civic, voluntary initiative, conceived as a sign of disobedience, which intends to show the people's rejection of the Constitutional Assembly which will be elected on July 30th 2017. The plebiscite will be held amidst the wave of anti-government protests that have been going on for over 100 days and have left 94 people dead. The former presidents of Costa Rica, Colombia, Bolivia and Mexico are expected to act as international observers. The voting has five key objectives: (1) voting will be manual, with ballot papers and books which will collect voters' signatures aged 18 years and above from over 2,900 “sovereign” spots in the country as well as 14,000 centres, (2) the Venezuelan people will answer “yes” or “no” to three questions which were approved by the National Assembly (Congress), which is controlled by an opposition majority, (3) the opposition has placed the “sovereign spots” in churches, cultural and business centers, (4) the Government has already labeled the plebiscite “unconstitutional” and therefore has rejected it as a binding process, due to the fact that it is being organized outside of the National Electoral Council (CNE), which is the institution responsible for all

⁴⁴ “Temer Manages a First Victory to Avoid Trial Over Graft Charges,” July 14, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/07/14/temer-manages-a-first-victory-to-avoid-trial-over-graft-charges>, Accessed on July 17, 2017.

national elections. The opposition has accused the CNE of acting biasly in favor of the Government. The organizers of the plebiscite maintain that the referendum is backed by several articles in the Constitution (like Article 333) and therefore its results are binding for the Government, (5) Some people think that a “zero hour” could be summoned after the plebiscite, which would mean a national strike but there has yet to be any formal announcement made about this. The National Assembly will debate the matter in a session on July 18, 2017 when lawmakers will consider the following actions. Then, they will have to make the results of the plebiscite hold weight in front of a Supreme Court of Justice, which has overturned every law and resolution from the opposition led legislative power.⁴⁵

Venezuela Signs Deal With US Company to Improve Oil Production

Venezuela has signed an agreement between the state-owned oil company [Petroleos de Venezuela](#), PDVSA, and a U.S. oil company, which is intended to improve oil production in the South American country. The document was signed by the Minister of Popular Power for Petroleum, Nelson Martinez, and the chairman of Oklahoma-based Horizontal Well Drillers, Todd Swanson, at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas. The agreement proposes a joint venture for the development of oil in Venezuela. Martinez announced that the deal will include an initial investment of US\$200 million for a three-year project, which will eventually be expanded to US\$1.3 billion. During the ceremony, [Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro](#) said the strategic alliance will strengthen the technology of the PDVSA. He added that Venezuela is a country whose Constitution and laws create conditions of security and legal stability for these agreements, citing deals signed with China, India, Russia and other nations as examples. Maduro also reiterated his willingness to establish respectful relations with U.S. President Donald Trump, despite political and ideological differences.⁴⁶

Russia

- **Russia and Meddling in Foreign Elections**

During an interaction in a think-tank in Berlin, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on July 13 said that if Moscow really did have the power to influence foreign elections, its relations with its neighbours would be very different. Lavrov said that Moscow did not have the ability to influence the U.S. elections or Germany's

⁴⁵ “Venezuela Plebiscite: What is Being Voted,” July 15, 2017, <http://todayvenezuela.com/2017/07/15/venezuela-plebiscite-what-is-being-voted/>, Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁴⁶ “Venezuela Signs Deal with US Company to Improve Oil Production,” July 15, 2017, <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Venezuela-Signs-Deal-With-US-Company-to-Improve-Oil-Production-20170715-0011.html>, Accessed on July 17, 2017.

upcoming vote. He said if Moscow had the power to influence the elections then Russia's neighbour Ukraine would not have a government hostile to Russia.⁴⁷

- **Russia and Iran**

In a meeting between Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Abbas Araqchi and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov in Tehran on July 11, both countries discussed technical cooperation on civilian nuclear technology, particularly within the framework of the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Araqchi reaffirmed Iran's full compliance with the JCPOA and said the sustenance of the nuclear deal, as a multilateral international document, requires all sides' complete fulfillment of their commitments. The Russian diplomat, for his part, hailed Iran's full commitment to its obligations under the JCPOA and said Moscow pursues a firm stance on the deal and believes that there is no replacement for it. He also decried the US unilateral approach to international issues, particularly the JCPOA. He added that Iran and Russia have a common stance on many regional and international developments and expressed his country's determination to play a constructive role in safeguarding the JCPOA.⁴⁸

- **Russia and Georgia**

According to Belsat TV report on July 13, Russia has quietly moved one of its borders hundreds of metres further into Georgia ahead of talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at the G20 summit. According to Georgia's security agency, Russia's illegal actions affected local farmers in the Gori Municipality. Georgia's leader Giorgi Margvelashvili expressed deep outrage over the Kremlin's covert operation and urged the world to condemn the action.⁴⁹ Russian President Vladimir Putin, had signed an order in the mid week of March 2017, where he ordered Russia's military to incorporate the armed forces of Georgia's breakaway region South Ossetia into its structure. The order

⁴⁷"Russia's Lavrov rubbishes claims of Moscow swaying elections", *Reuters*, July 13, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-russia-idUSKBN19Y100> Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁴⁸"Top Iran, Russia diplomats discuss JCPOA implementation", *Press TV*, July 11, 2017. <http://presstv.com/Detail/2017/07/11/528172/Iran-Russia-US-P51-JCPOA-Abbas-Araqchi-Sergey-Ryabkov> Accessed on July 16, 2017.

⁴⁹"Russia quietly moves border further into occupied territory of Georgia", *Belsat.eu*, July 13, 2017. <http://belsat.eu/en/news/the-independent-russia-quietly-moves-border-further-into-occupied-territory-of-georgia/> Accessed on July 16, 2017.

instructs both the Russian defence and foreign ministries to work with the separatists to conclude and sign the agreement.⁵⁰

- **Syria and China**

During the Syria Day Expo on July 10, organized by the China-Arab Exchange Association and the Syrian Embassy to promote the upcoming Damascus International Fair, as well as the the Reconstruction Expo, Qin Yong, deputy chairman of the China-Arab Exchange Association, announced that Beijing plans to invest \$2 billion in an industrial park in Syria for 150 Chinese companies. Before the civil war in Syria, the Syrian merchants were active in the small-goods Silk Road between Yiwu and the Levant. Syrian Ambassador to China Imad Moustapha during the event said that China, Russia and Iran will have priority over anyone else for all infrastructure investment and reconstruction projects when the war is over.⁵¹

- **Russia and US**

During the meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on July 7, US President Donald Trump on July 9 tweeted that both the leaders discussed about “forming an impenetrable Cyber Security unit so that election hacking, & many other negative things, will be guarded”. However, on July 10, he again tweeted saying “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 & did!”.⁵²

- **Russia and China**

Russia's largest, state-owned bank Sberbank announced on July 13 that its Swiss subsidiary had begun trading physical gold on the Shanghai Gold Exchange. The bank said that the Sberbank was granted international membership of the Shanghai exchange in September last year and in July completed a pilot transaction with 200 kg of gold kilobars sold to local financial institutions. Sberbank plans to expand its presence on the Chinese precious metals market and anticipates total delivery of 5-6 tonnes of gold to China in the remaining months of 2017. Gold bars will be delivered directly to the official importers in China as well

⁵⁰“Vladimir Putin expands Russian army by absorbing Georgian rebels”, *Independent*, March 15, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia-army-expansion-georgia-rebels-a7631236.html> Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁵¹Pepe Escobar, “The New Silk Road Will Go through Syria”, *Russia Insider*, July 13, 2017. <http://russia-insider.com/en/politics/new-silk-road-will-go-through-syria/ri20365> Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁵²Katie Roof, “Trump discussed forming ‘impenetrable’ cyber security unit with Russia”, *Techcrunch*, July 10, 2017. <https://techcrunch.com/2017/07/09/trump-discussed-forming-impenetrable-cyber-security-unit-with-russia/> Accessed on July 17, 2017.

as through the exchange, Sberbank said. Russian officials have repeatedly signaled their desire to conduct transactions with China using gold. In April, Sberbank expressed interest in financing the direct import of gold to India also a BRICS member. A BRICS gold marketplace could be used to bypass the dollar in bilateral trade.⁵³

- **Russia's secret satellite launches from Arctic**

According to Daily Mirror report published on June 23, Russia launched a Soyuz-2-iv rocket from the Plesetsk space center (Plesetsk Cosmodrome) in the country's northwest Arctic region. The light-weight [Soyuz spacecraft](#) reportedly carried a Russian Defense Ministry orbiting satellite called Kosmos 2519, however, there is no confirmation to the news from the Russian side till date. The Napryazhenie program, which may be part of Russia's Nivelir-ZU project, could have a purpose that goes beyond benign scientific data collection or communications purposes. *Geodetic satellites are designed to serve as precise reference points needed for accurate measurements of the Earth's shape and the properties of its gravitational field. In military applications, the geodetic information can help in the development of highly accurate geodetic coordinate systems which could be used for guidance of long-range ballistic missiles.*⁵⁴

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **EU Calls for Transparent Probe Into Dostum Case**

EU ambassador to Afghanistan Franz-Michael Mellbin said allegations related to violations of human rights and misuse of authority by first vice president general Abdul Rashid Dostum must be investigated transparently and fairly and that legal and judicial processes upheld. He said there should be no impunity in terms of investigating the case. According to him, allegations against Dostum were serious. He also highlighted the issue of corruption in Afghanistan and hailed the government for its continued efforts to combat the scourge.⁵⁵

⁵³“Russia's Largest Bank Makes First Transaction on Shanghai Gold Exchange as Moscow, Beijing Prepare for Trade in Gold”, *Russia Insider*, July 14, 2017. <http://russia-insider.com/en/politics/russias-largest-bank-makes-first-transaction-shanghai-gold-exchange-moscow-beijing-prepare>. Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁵⁴Robert Jonathan, “Russia just launched a secret military satellite into orbit from its new Arctic base of operations... the “high ground” for planet Earth”, *Natural News*, July 15, 2017. <http://www.naturalnews.com/2017-07-15-russia-just-launched-a-secret-military-satellite-into-orbit-from-its-new-arctic-base-of-operations-the-high-ground-for-planet-earth.html> Accessed on July 17, 2017.

⁵⁵ Nabila Ashrafi, "EU Calls for Transparent Probe Into Dostum Case", *Tolonews*, 13 July 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/eu-calls-transparent-probe-dostum-case> accessed on 14 July 2017.

- 4th Afghanistan-Central Asia Dialogue Kicks Off In Bamiyan**
 The fourth conference of Afghanistan-Central Asia dialogue was kicked off in Bamiyan province on 14 July 2017 where high ranking foreign and Afghan officials including Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah attended. The two-day session will discuss the mechanisms to improve Afghanistan's trade and political ties with the Central Asian countries. The conference will also discuss ways to improve regional countries' cooperation in the fight against terrorism.⁵⁶
- EU to Finance Construction of 7th Bridge on Tajik-Afghan Border**
 The seventh bridge connecting Tajikistan and Afghanistan will be financed by the European Union which is ready to donate 16 million euro (\$18 million) for that purpose, Mahbuba Abdulloeva, the press secretary of the EU Delegation to Tajikistan, told Sputnik. The bridge will connect the Farkhor District of Tajikistan with the north-eastern Afghan province of Takhar.⁵⁷
- Afghanistan reacts at ICBM test by North Korea, calling for a halt to such tests**
 The Afghan government in reaction to the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) test by North Korea has called a halt of further such tests, calling it a move against the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in a statement said the ministry condemns the test of the ICBM by North Korea. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said negotiations to find peaceful solution to the issues is the only logical way.⁵⁸
- Afghan Reacts at the Remarks and Accusations of Sartaj Aziz**
 The Afghan government has strongly reacted at the remarks of Sartaj Aziz, the foreign affairs adviser of the Pakistani Prime Minister, accusing President Ghani of supporting the Taliban. A presidential palace spokesman Najibullah Azad told RFE/RL that such remarks are only reflecting the concerns and panic among the Pakistani officials.⁵⁹
- US Defense Secretary Mattis Asked to Present Long-Term Afghan Strategy**
 The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2018, as passed by the US House of Representatives on July 14, 2017, requires the Defense Secretary to provide an Afghan strategy beyond five years. "It directs the Secretary of Defense to provide an Afghanistan strategy that will look beyond the next five years to describe the trajectory of US efforts in Afghanistan and assess the timeline and total resources necessary to achieve US objectives".⁶⁰

⁵⁶ "4th Afghanistan-Central Asia Dialogue Kicks Off In Bamiyan", *Tolonews*, 14 July 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/4th-afghanistan-central-asia-dialogue-kicks-bamiyan> accessed on 14 July 2017.

⁵⁷ "EU to Finance Construction of 7th Bridge on Tajik-Afghan Border", *Daily outlook Afghanistan*, 17 July 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18636 accessed on 17 July 2017.

⁵⁸ "Afghanistan reacts at ICBM test by North Korea, calling for a halt to such tests", *Khaama Press*, 12 July 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-reacts-at-icbm-test-by-north-korea-calling-for-a-halt-to-such-tests-03135> accessed on 14 July 2017.

⁵⁹ "Afghan reacts at the remarks and accusations of Sartaj Aziz", *Khaama Press*, July 11, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-reacts-at-the-remarks-and-accusations-of-sartaj-aziz-03120> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁶⁰ "US Defense Secretary Mattis Asked To Present Long-Term Afghan Strategy", *The Pashtun Times*, July 15, 2017, <http://thepashtuntimes.com/us-defense-secretary-mattis-asked-to-present-long-term-afghan-strategy/> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

- **New Party Launched as Elections Draw Closer**
A new political party by the name of Mehwar-e-Mardum-e-Afghanistan was officially launched on July 16, 2017, in Kabul. The new party was formed by a number of political figures who have in the past worked for government. Around 100 individuals - including Rahmatullah Nabil, the former head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Rangin Dadfar Spanta, the former adviser to the national security council - are included in the leadership of the new party.⁶¹

Bangladesh

- **'At any cost', AL wants victory in 6 city polls**⁶²
Ruling Awami League is adamant that its candidates win the pending elections in six city corporations so that the party can show the countrymen the strength of its 'popularity' before the next parliamentary polls. AL policymakers also indicate their experience in the city corporation polls will be used in finalising the strategies or the blueprint to be applied in the general elections.
- **Suspension of VAT will reduce revenue collection**⁶³
The suspension of the uniform 15% VAT rate would bring down the revenue collection by Tk20,000 crore in the current fiscal year, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday (July 13). "The postponement of the VAT law will result in the reduction of Tk20,000 crore of the targeted revenue as we have formulated our budget considering the new rate," she said at parliament.
- **BNP to finalise election roadmap in Dec**⁶⁴
Keeping its eyes fixed on the next general elections, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is currently busy with three major tasks. Party leaders said that they are collecting new members, preparing to hold talks with the election commission (EC) and chalking out an outline of the supportive poll-time government. The BNP leaders will then in December finalise the roadmap of the 11th parliamentary polls, expected to be held between October 2018 and January 2019.
- **Al-Qaeda activity steps up in Bangladesh**⁶⁵

⁶¹ Massoud Ansar, "New Party Launched As Elections Draw Closer", *Tolo News*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/new-party-launched-elections-draw-closer> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁶² "Anwar Hossain, "At any cost', AL wants victory in 6 city polls," *Prothom Alo*, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/153419/At-any-cost-AL-wants-victory-in-6-city-polls> (accessed July 12, 2017)

⁶³ "PM: Suspension of uniform VAT will reduce revenue collection by Tk20,000cr," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 14, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2017/07/14/suspension-vat-reduce-revenue/> (accessed July 17, 2017)

⁶⁴ Selim Zahid, "BNP to finalise election roadmap in Dec," *Prothom Alo*, July 15, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/153723/BNP-to-finalise-election-roadmap-in-Dec> (accessed July 15, 2017)

⁶⁵ Golam Mortuja, "Al-Qaeda activity steps up in Bangladesh," *Prothom Alo*, July 15, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/153729/Al-Qaeda-activity-steps-up-in-Bangladesh> (accessed on July 15, 2017)

The RAND Corporation report, presented during the hearing of a US House of Representatives sub-committee, has underlined al-Qaeda's increasing presence in Bangladesh. During the hearing it was also said that the terrorist organisation has appointed a hundred of its members in the subcontinent this year. Speaking on the issue, a senior official of Dhaka metropolitan police's counter terrorism unit seeking anonymity said according to the reports collected from other intelligence agencies, they are also sure that the activities of the Al Qaeda followers has increased in India and Pakistan. However, information about activities of the terrorist group in Bangladesh is not correct in the present scenario.

- **Muhith: Revised budget early this fiscal year⁶⁶**

Finance Minister AMA Muhith has said the budget for Fiscal Year 2017-18 passed on June 29 will be revised in February, earlier than scheduled, as non-implementation of uniform VAT law shoots up deficit. The finance minister spoke of economy and budget to a group of journalists in his secretariat on Saturday (July 15).

नेपाल

एमाले संशोधन बिल के खिलाफ :

जब सरकार ने संविधान संशोधन बिल को पास करने की प्रक्रिया प्रारम्भ की तो मुख्य विपक्षी दल एमाले ने इसका विरोध किया और कहा कि इस बिल को संसद द्वारा पुनः वापस लेना चाहिए और बातचीत के बाद नए बिल का निर्माण करना चाहिए एमाले ने कहा कि मधेशियों की मांगों को पूरा करने वाले इस बिल को केवल सत्ताधारी दल ही तैयार करे यद्यपि सत्ताधारी दलों ने इसके लिए एमाले से बातचीत भी .यह हमें मंजूर नहीं है , एमाले के प्रवक्ता ने कहा कि हमारी पार्टी स्थानीय चुनावों के दोनों चरणों की लेकिन कोई नतीजा नहीं निकला में जीती है और विशेषकर तराई क्षेत्र में भी अच्छे वोट मिले है और वहाँ सत्ताधारी दलों को जनता का साथ नहीं मिला.यदि वे संशोधन बिल को एकपक्षीय बनायेंगे तो तीसरे चरण के चुनाव में भी यही नतीजा होगा ,⁶⁷

देउबा ने केबिनेट बढ़ाने का कार्य शुरू किया:

नेपाल प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा ने दूसरे चरण के चुनाव के बाद केबिनेट बढ़ाने का कार्य शुरू करने की बात कही है मंत्रालयों को आवंटित करने के लिए नेपाली कांग्रेस और माओवादी केंद्र ने एक जाइंट टास्कफोर्स गठित .

पहले देउबा और प्रचंड में यह बात हुई थी कि संविधान संशोधन के ब . की हैाद ही केबिनेट का विस्तार करेंगे.⁶⁸

नेपाल प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा :अगस्त को भारत यात्रा का प्रस्ताव 19-17

नेपाल के विदेश मंत्रालय ने अगस्त को प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा की भारत यात्रा का प्रस्ताव दिया है 19-17 इसके लिए नेपाल के विदेश मंत्रालय ने काठमांडू स्थित भारत के दूतावास में संज्ञान हेतु सूचना भेजी है .

⁶⁶ Asif Showkat Kallol, "Muhith: Revised budget early this fiscal year," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2017/07/16/muhith-revised-budget-early-fiscal-year/> (accessed July 16, 2017)

⁶⁷ Sanjeev Giri, "UML firm against charter revision bill", *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-10/1>

⁶⁸ "Deuba starts homework to expand cabinet", *The Kathmandu Post*, 12 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-12/1>

जून को नेपाल के चौथी बार प्रधानमंत्री बने और दूसरे चरण के चुनाव के बाद यह बात उठी कि उन्हें 7 देउबा इस यात्रा की औपचारिक रूप से घोषणा भारत द्वारा पुष्टि . अपने दक्षिणी पड़ोसी देश की यात्रा करनी चाहिए होनेके बाद ही की जाएगी.⁶⁹

संविधान संशोधन के लिए सभी तरकीबे अपनाई जाएँगी यादव :

संघीय समाजवादी फोरम नेपाल के अध्यक्ष उपेंद्र यादव ने कहा — “संविधान संशोधन प्रस्ताव को पारित करने के लिए जरूरी सभी तरकीबें अपनाई जाएँगी .” काठमांडू में पार्टी की राजनीतिक समिति की बैठक में ये बताते हुए कि संविधान संशोधन प्रस्ताव को पारित कराने में पार्टी सहयोगी भूमिका निभाएगी, अध्यक्ष यादव ने ये भी कहा कि फिलहाल सरकार में शामिल होने की पार्टी की कोई योजना नहीं है स्थानीय तह के चुनाव में पार्टी . को प्राप्त नतीजे को संतोषजनक बताते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि तीसरे चरण के चुनाव में अच्छे नतीजे लाने के लिए पार्टी संगठन को गंभीरता के साथ लगना होगा.ये जानकारी नेता लालबाबु राउट ने दी .⁷⁰

Pakistan

- **Terrorism and Pakistan** – In a suicide blast on July 10th carried out by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), District Police Officer (DPO) of Qilla Abdullah, his security guard and driver were killed and over 10 other people, including five police personnel were injured in the border town of Chaman.⁷¹Two Iranian civilians were killed in a cross-border attack by suspected militants on July 15th, according to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani wrote to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif calling for greater efforts to prevent militant attacks along the border.⁷² As a counter terrorist operation, Director General (DG) Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor on July 16th announced the launch of Operation Khyber-4 under Radd-ul-Fasaad (RuF) to “wipe out terrorists” in the Rajgal Valley area of Khyber Agency. Khyber 4 seeks to target terrorist hideouts in what the DG ISPR called “the most critical area in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata)”. The army had informed Afghan forces ahead of the launch of the Khyber-4 operation in Rajgal, he said, which the Afghan army would be able to support on their side of the border if they wished.⁷³
- **FO on Amarnath Terrorist Attack** -The Foreign Office spokesman Nafees Zakaria on July 13th accused Indian authorities of carrying out the AmarnathYatraterrorist attack to divert the attention from the ongoing problems in Kashmir.Responding to a question, he said, visa request by the mother of Kulbhushan Jadhav was under consideration.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Anil Giri, "PM Deuba's India visit proposed for Aug 17-19", The Kathmandu Post, 14 July 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-14/1>

⁷⁰ "संविधान संशोधन के लिए सभी तरकीबे अपनाई जाएँगी,"यादव :हिमालिनी 16 ,जुलाई २०१७, <http://www.himalini.com/>

⁷¹SaleemShahid, “DPO among three killed in Chaman suicide blast”, *Dawn*, July 11, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1344486> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

⁷² “2 Iranian civilians killed in alleged cross-border attack”, *Dawn*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345682/2-iranian-civilians-killed-in-alleged-cross-border-attack> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

⁷³ “Army launches Operation Khyber-4 in Rajgal Valley”, *Dawn*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345690/army-launches-operation-khyber-4-in-rajgal-valley> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁷⁴BaqirSajjad Syed, “Attack on Hindu pilgrims a bid to discredit Kashmiri uprising: FO”, *Dawn*, July 14, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345197> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

- **Pakistan and Iraq** -Pakistan was among a number of countries that supported Iraq in fighting the IS, said Ambassador of Iraq Ali Yasin Muhammad Karim at a press conference at the embassy on July 15th.Pakistan's contribution to the fight against the IS in Iraq has never been mentioned earlier either by Pakistani officials or Iraqis. He recalled some of the Iraqi pilots, who took part in action against the IS, had been trained in Pakistan.⁷⁵
- **Drinking Water in Sindh** -More than 80 per cent of water samples collected from surface and groundwater sources in 14 districts of Sindh for an analysis have shown that water quality in these areas has worsened over the past few months, it emerged on July 15th.Earlier, 75pc drinking water samples collected from 13 districts were found unfit for human consumption.⁷⁶
- **Pakistani Patients in India** -Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj "has said that Pakistani nationals seeking medical treatment in India will be issued visas on the recommendation of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz."⁷⁷

Indian Ocean Region

- **Warship built in India to be largest in Sri Lankan Navy's fleet**

The Sri Lankan Navy is set to commission its largest warship built by an Indian company Goa Shipyard Limited. The contract of Rs. 1000 crore was signed between the two countries in 2013 for two such warships.⁷⁸ According to Hindustan Times, "the manufacturer, state-owned Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), will deliver the first offshore patrol vessel to the Sri Lankan Navy at a ceremony at the yard on July 22."⁷⁹ The 105-metre long made in India warship is scheduled to be commissioned into the Sri Lankan Navy on August 2, 2017.⁸⁰

- **INS Kalvari to strengthen Indian Navy**

INS Kalavari, first among the six Scorpene class submarines being built with the collaboration of French company at Mazagaon dock in Mumbai, is expected to be handed over to the Indian Navy in August 2017.⁸¹ Commodore Rakesh Anand (retd), chairman & managing director of Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL) said "We are aiming to hand over the submarine to the Navy next month

⁷⁵BaqirSajjad Syed, "Pakistan helped Iraq in defeating IS, says Iraqi envoy", *Dawn*, July 15, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345432> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

⁷⁶Faizallyas, "Over 80pc water samples in 14 districts of Sindh found unfit for human consumption: report", *Dawn*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345659/over-80pc-water-samples-in-14-districts-of-sindh-found-unfit-for-human-consumption-report> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

⁷⁷ "Pakistani patients to be issued visas on Sartaj's recommendation: Sushma Swaraj", *Geo News*, July 10, 2017, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/148791-pakistani-patients-to-be-issued-indian-visas-on-sartaj-azizs-recommendation-sushma-swaraj> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

⁷⁸ Made-in-India warship to be largest in Sri Lankan Navy's fleet, 16 July 2017, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/made-in-india-warship-to-be-largest-in-sri-lankan-navy-s-fleet/story-lsINlt8N0GQeQ79BTFuwKL.html>, accessed on 17 July 2017.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ INS Kalvari gears up to strengthen Navy power, 17 July 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/ins-kalvari-gears-up-to-strengthen-navy-power/articleshow/59623296.cms>, accessed on 17 July 2017.

as all the trials have been conducted successfully. The date of the commissioning is yet to be finalised."⁸² These six Scorpene class of submarines are being built under the project 75- a joint project between Mazagaon dock Ltd. and French shipbuilder DCNS for the Indian Navy.

Maldives

- **Government behind Nasheed's verdict, Adeb tells Supreme Court**

Jailed former Vice President Ahmed Adeb has alleged that the government engineered former President Mohamed Nasheed's 13-year prison sentence in March 2015. Nasheed's legal team told the press on 16th July that Adeb has asked the Supreme Court to review the opposition leader's controversial terrorism conviction in a letter sent to Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed.

Adeb alleged that Nasheed was prosecuted because he was leading a political campaign to free former Defence Minister Mohamed Nazim, who was arrested on a weapons smuggling charge in early February 2015. Nasheed was arrested less than two weeks later. "I know that the verdict passed on [Nasheed] was not written by a judge from a judicial court and I know who prepared that verdict as well," Adeb wrote, adding that the "first draft" sentenced Nasheed to 10 years in jail with a three-year suspension.⁸³

- **MPs will forfeit seat for leaving party, Supreme Court rules**

The Supreme Court has granted an anti-defection ruling sought by the Attorney General to strip MPs of their seats if they cross the floor. Delivering a three-judge panel's unanimous decision Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed declared that MPs will lose their seats if they switch parties, quit or is expelled after winning on a political party ticket. The apex court ordered state institutions to enforce the new rule with effect from July 13 until parliament enacts an anti-defection law, exempting MPs who switched parties after the March 2014 parliamentary elections to hand the ruling party a clear majority.⁸⁴

- **Former presidents vow to back lawmakers that lose parliament seats**

Former presidents Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Mohamed Nasheed declared their support for any lawmakers who may lose their parliament seats as a result of the Supreme Court's verdict on parliamentarians who shift political parties. Nasheed told lawmakers not to worry about consequences they may have to face should they vote in favour of the opposition lobbied motion of no confidence

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Government behind Nasheed's verdict, Adeb tells Supreme Court", 13 July 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/mps-will-forfeit-seat-for-leaving-party-supreme-court-rules-131486> (accessed on 17th July 2017)

⁸⁴ "MPs will forfeit seat for leaving party, Supreme Court rules", 13 July 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/mps-will-forfeit-seat-for-leaving-party-supreme-court-rules-131486> (accessed on 17th July 2017)

against Parliament Speaker Abdulla Maseeh. He vowed that, should they be ousted, he will return them to their parliament seats with God's will.⁸⁵

Sri Lanka

- **Tamil Nadu reiterates demand to get back Katchatheevu**

Reiterating its stand on Katchatheevu, the Tamil Nadu Government strongly opposed the recent legislation passed by the Sri Lankan Government, which restricts certain fishing practices, and asserted that it would retrieve the ceded islet Katchatheevu from the neighbouring island nation.⁸⁶

- **UN Special Rapporteur Emmerson meets PTA detainees**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism Ben Emmerson met Tamil political prisoners arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Emmerson had talks in Vavuniya with officials on the human rights situation in the North. Emmerson was in Sri Lanka on an official visit to gather first-hand information on initiatives in the area of counter-terrorism and assess how they affect the promotion and protection of human rights.⁸⁷

- **President returns after successful visit to Bangladesh**

President Maithripala Sirisena returned to the Island on 15th July after completing a successful three-day State Visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The visit helped strengthening the foreign relations and bringing many developmental benefits to the country by signing several MoUs between the two countries. The President and the Bangladesh Prime Minister drew their special attention regarding entering into a trade agreement between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as well as setting up special economic zones.

During the meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister, it was discussed in detail regarding introducing a new programme to exchange experiences in agricultural and fisheries sectors of both the countries as well as to jointly take actions against combating terrorism and to cooperate in the field of information technology. Furthermore, the attention was drawn to get the technical knowhow of Bangladesh to increase rice production in Sri Lanka. The President also met with the Speaker of Bangladesh, Opposition Leader as well as the Minister of Health.

⁸⁵ "Former presidents vow to back lawmakers that lose parliament seats", 13 July 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/former-presidents-vow-to-back-lawmakers-that-lose-parliament-seats/> (accessed on 17th July 2017)

⁸⁶ "Tamil Nadu reiterates demand to get back Katchatheevu", 12th July 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/07/12/tamil-nadu-reiterates-demand-to-get-back-katchatheevu/> (accessed on 16th July 2017)

⁸⁷ "UN Special Rapporteur Emmerson meets PTA detainees", 13th July 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/07/13/un-special-rapporteur-emmerson-meets-pta-detainees/> (accessed on 15th July 2017)

The Speaker of Bangladesh commended the steps taken by the new Government to achieve the democratic goals.⁸⁸

- **Abduction, torture of Tamils remain systematic: Sooka**

Abduction and torture of Tamils by the Sri Lankan security forces remain systematic because in 30 months the new Government has failed to dismantle the networks of the 'deep state'. This includes torture chambers in one of the country's largest army camps, immigration fraud, human smuggling and extortion by government allies, a press release issued by Johannesburg-based, International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) said.

"It is hardly surprising that Sri Lanka's white van abductions continue as those in charge of past system crimes have been promoted and rewarded by this Government, which reassures perpetrators that they will never be held accountable. In addition, torturing Tamils has become a highly lucrative business," the release quoted ITJP's Executive Director, Yasmin Sooka as having said.⁸⁹

West Asia

Israel

- **Netanyahu departs for France and Hungary**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu left for a five-day day trip to Europe on July 15th that will include his first interaction with new French President Emmanuel Macron and about half a dozen meetings with Hungary's leader Viktor Orban in Budapest. Macron hosted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Paris last week. In a press conference following their meeting, the French president reiterated his country's support for a two-state solution and denounced Israeli settlement expansions. On July 17th, Netanyahu is slated to fly to Hungary, marking the first visit to the country by an Israeli premier since the end of Communism.⁹⁰ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on July 16th that Israel opposes the US-Russian-brokered cease-fire in Syria because it perpetuates Iran's military presence in the country and told French President Emmanuel Macron that Iran wants to establish air, land and sea bases in Lebanon, something Jerusalem cannot tolerate. Netanyahu stated that he asked France – which has a special, historical relationship with Lebanon – to use its influence in Lebanon to work against efforts to turn the country into a base for more terrorist organizations, something that would have grave consequences. Regarding the Palestinian issue, Macron said France wanted to see a resumption of negotiations between Israel and the

⁸⁸ "President returns after successful visit to Bangladesh", 15th July 2017, <http://www.president.gov.lk/president-returns-after-successful-visit-to-bangladesh/> (accessed on 16 July 2017).

⁸⁹ "Abduction, torture of Tamils remain systematic: Sooka", 16 July 2017, http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=168413 (accessed on 16th July 2017)

⁹⁰ Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu departs for 5-day trip to France and Hungary", *The Times of Israel*, July 15, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-to-depart-for-4-day-trip-to-france-and-hungary/> (accessed on July 16, 2017)

Palestinians in the context of a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side-by-side, having Jerusalem as a shared capital. Netanyahu will travel July 17th from Paris to Budapest, for meetings with the leaders of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. He is scheduled to return to Israel on July 20th.⁹¹

Turkey

- **Millions mark first anniversary of failed coup attempt in Turkey**⁹²

Millions of people took the streets across Turkey on July 15 and early July 16 to mark the anniversary of last year's failed coup attempt, blamed on the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), commemorating the 250 people killed and more than 2,000 others injured by the coup soldiers.

Hundreds of thousands of people waving Turkish flags and chanting anti-coup slogans began to pour into the streets to attend the "July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day" event in Istanbul at the July 15 Martyrs Bridge in the early hours of the morning amid tight security.

The July 15 Martyrs Bridge, previously called Bosphorus Bridge, was closed to traffic in the afternoon hours ahead of the program. It had been blocked by coup plotters during the failed coup attempt and 34 people were killed by soldiers there.

Accompanied by high-level government officials, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım began to march toward the bridge from the Çengelköy neighborhood while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan marched from his residence in the Kısıklı neighborhood with families of the coup victims in the evening hours.

- **Turkey's main opposition leader slams intel agency for 'not giving sufficient info' on coup bid**⁹³

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has slammed Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MİT) for "not giving sufficient information" regarding the July 15, 2016, failed coup attempt.

"I also said this in the parliament's General Assembly on July 16, 2016; the coup attempt's all aspects should be put on the table and the truth should be revealed," Kılıçdaroğlu said in the special session in the parliament's general assembly with the participation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara on July 15, as he added that it's unacceptable for MİT chief Hakan Fidan and Chief of the General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar to not testify at the parliamentary commission formed to investigate the thwarted coup.

⁹¹ Rina Bassist and Herb Keinon, "Netanyahu: Israel won't tolerate Iranian bases in Lebanon, Syria", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Netanyahu-Israel-wont-tolerate-Iranian-bases-in-Lebanon-Syria-499889> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

⁹² <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/millions-mark-first-anniversary-of-failed-coup-attempt-in-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115551&NewsCatID=338>

⁹³ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-main-opposition-leader-slams-intel-agency-for-not-giving-sufficient-info-on-coup-bid.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115545&NewsCatID=341>

“The determination shown under this roof didn’t reflect on the coup commission’s works unfortunately. MIT chief and army chief, who have a grasp on all details of the coup attempt, couldn’t be made to give information to the representatives of national will. It’s unacceptable for these two valuable bureaucrats to hand a written response to the national will’s questions rather than coming to the commission. For what reason was this prevented?” he also said.

- **Turkey, France, Italy to cooperate on missile system⁹⁴**

Turkey has signed an agreement with fellow NATO members France and Italy to develop its national missile defense systems, the Turkish Defense Minister said on July 14.

Speaking at a reception for Bastille Day at the French Embassy in Ankara, Defense Minister Fikri Işık said Turkish companies will work with the Italian-French consortium Eurosam.

Işık described the move as one of the most concrete developments of Turkey’s alliance in the defense industry.

On July 4, Işık announced that Ankara and Moscow had agreed on the “technical issues” relating to the purchase of a Russian missile system.

“All technical issues, both by the Russian side and the Turkish side, are over,” he said in an interview with state-run broadcaster TRT Haber.

Yemen

- **Yemen's Houthi rebels fire artillery on Saudi border city⁹⁵**

Yemen's Houthi rebels said they fired a barrage of artillery shells on their enemy military bases deep inside the Saudi border city of Jizan on Sunday, the rebels said in a statement in state Saba news agency, which is under their control.

Houthis said they targeted al-Miktaba and Kharshab bases, which are inside Jizan and under control of Saudi army.

"The shelling killed dozens of Saudi enemy soldiers and wounded other scores," Houthis said in the statement.

However, the state Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported that Sunday shelling from inside Yemen killed a Yemeni expatriate in Jizan.

- **UAE 'looking to ditch' Yemen's President Hadi for Saleh⁹⁶**

⁹⁴ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-france-italy-to-cooperate-on-missile-system--.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115569&NewsCatID=345>

⁹⁵ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/17/c_136448321.htm

⁹⁶ <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/7/15/uae-looking-to-ditch-yemens-president-hadi-for-saleh>

The Prince of Abu Dhabi is reportedly lobbying the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia to ditch the elected President of Yemen, Abd Rabbuh Hadi, in favour of former president and recent ally of the Houthi rebels, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan reportedly discussed with Mohammed bin Salman the possibility of forming a new Yemeni government to end the ongoing war, Intelligence Online reported.

Mohammed bin Salman's right hand man, Ahmed al-Assiri, travelled to Abu Dhabi at the end of June to meet and discuss the issue with Ali Abdullah Saleh's son, Ahmed.

The UAE and Hadi have been at loggerheads in recent months, after Hadi accused Mohammed bin Zayed of acting like an occupier in Yemen in February.

This incident, allegedly ending in an angry argument, saw Hadi distance himself further from the UAE, leading to Dubai's security chief calling for his replacement earlier this year.

Dhahi Khalfan Tamim tweeted: "The first steps toward a solution in Yemen would be to end Hadi's reign, which has eroded with time."

Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are reportedly becoming tired of the ongoing conflict in Yemen – a disaster for the two countries, both financially and reputationally – and diplomats are now looking for preferable outcomes.

Also under consideration is the former Yemeni prime minister, Khaled Bahah, who was dismissed from his role by Hadi in April 2016. Bahah at the time called the decision a 'coup'.

Hadi is currently living in exile in Riyadh, despite claiming to be the leader of Yemen, but there have been increasing calls for him to step aside to bring about peace.

Cyber Security

- **UAE behind Qatar hacks: report⁹⁷**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was behind a series of hacks that sparked regional discord and isolated Qatar from its neighbors, according to a media report Sunday.

Abu Dhabi orchestrated the cyber offensive, hacking Qatar's state-run news and social media sites "to post incendiary false quotes attributed to Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani", the Washington Post reported based on information it said was provided by anonymous U.S. intelligence officials. The cyber campaign ultimately resulted to a rupture in ties between Doha and five of its Gulf Arab neighbors led by Saudi Arabia. Since June 5, Qatar has been under a

⁹⁷ <http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/uae-behind-qatar-hacks-report/863006>

land, sea and air blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen, who accuse Doha of supporting terrorism.

The hacks took place nearly two weeks earlier on May 24, one day after senior Emirati officials allegedly discussed the plan. The hacked reports said Qatar's emir called Iran an "Islamic power", and heaped praise on Palestine's Hamas organization, among other controversial claims.

The comments prompted the Saudi-led bloc to ban all Qatari media before ultimately severing ties with Doha. Abu Dhabi denied the accusation, with its Washington envoy calling the Post story "false" in a statement. "The UAE had no role whatsoever in the alleged hacking described in the article," according to the statement.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 15	Zhob / Balochistan	Four suspected terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire with the Frontier Constabulary (FC) after they attacked a post in Zhob District. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) confirmed the incident. ⁹⁸	4	0
2	July 16	Khyber Agency / FATA	Director General (DG) Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Asif Ghafoor announced the launch of Operation Khyber-4 under Radd-ul-Fasaad (RuF) to "wipe out terrorists" in the Rajgal Valley of Khyber Agency. Khyber-4 seeks to target terrorist hideouts from "the most critical area in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)." ⁹⁹	Operation Khyber-IV Launched	

⁹⁸ Naveed Siddiqui, Four terrorists killed in Balochistan as FC foils attack: ISPR, *Dawn*, July 16 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345697/four-terrorists-killed-in-balochistan-as-fc-foils-attack-ispr>, accessed on July 17, 2017

⁹⁹ Army launches Operation Khyber-4 in Rajgal Valley, *Dawn*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1345690/army-launches-operation-khyber-4-in-rajgal-valley>, accessed on July 16, 2017

3	July 11	Lyari Town / Karachi	A suspected gangster and younger brother of Ghaffar Zikri, the alleged ringleader of one of the Lyari gangster's operating in the area, was killed in a Police encounter. A Police constable, identified as Mohammed Ali, was injured in exchange of fire. ¹⁰⁰	1	1
4	July 10	Kurram Agency / FATA	Two officials of the Frontier Constabulary (FC) were killed and two others were injured in a bomb blast in Laka Tika area of Lower Kurram Agency. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹⁰¹	2	2
5	July 13	Quetta / Balochistan	A superintendent of Police, identified as Mubarak Shah, and three of his security guards were shot dead in a targeted attack near the Killi Deba area of Joint Road in provincial capital Quetta. ¹⁰²	4	0
6	July 10	Qilla Abdullah / Balochistan	A Police chief and his guard were killed while 11 others were injured in a bomb blast in Chaman town of Qilla Abdullah District. No outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. ¹⁰³	2	11

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	July 15	Helmand	The Afghan security forces recaptured the control of Nawa District from the Taliban in southern Helmand Province. The control of the district fell to	ANSF recapture Helmand District	

¹⁰⁰ Ghaffar Zikri's brother killed in 'encounter', *Dawn*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1344699/ghaffar-zikris-brother-killed-in-encounter>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰¹ Ali Akbar, Two FC personnel martyred in Kurram Agency blast, *Dawn*, July 10, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1344407/two-fc-personnel-martyred-in-kurram-agency-blast>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰² SP, three police guards martyred in Quetta gun attack, *The Express Tribune*, July 13, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1456965/4-policemen-martyred-quetta-firing/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰³ Bomb kills police chief, guard in Chaman: officials, *Daily Times*, July 11, 2017, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/balochistan/11-Jul-17/bomb-kills-police-chief-guard-in-chaman-officials>, accessed on July 16, 2017

			Afghan forces after days of clashes and months after it was captured by the Taliban insurgents. ¹⁰⁴		
2	July 14	Uruzgan	As many as 70 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers have been rescued from the Taliban's siege in central Uruzgan province. Ahmad Sadiq, spokesman for the 205th Atal Military Corps said that the troop were under the Taliban siege from the past 10 months in the Meharabad area of provincial capital Tarinkot. ¹⁰⁵	Soldiers rescued	
3	July 11	Kunduz	Five Taliban militants were killed in a NATO-led coalition forces airstrike in Janat Bagh locality of Khan Abad District of Kunduz Province. The strike also destroyed the targeted militants' hideout and one militant was injured in the raid. ¹⁰⁶	5	1
4	July 11	Kabul	The leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar asked the tribal elders across the country to maintain security in their respective regions. He said one of the easiest ways to ensure security and stability in the country is to use the influence of the tribal elders. ¹⁰⁷	Hekmatyar calls tribal elders to ensure security	

¹⁰⁴ Afghan forces recapture Nawa district from Taliban in Helmand, *Khaama Press*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-forces-recapture-nawa-district-from-taliban-in-helmand-03149>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰⁵ Uruzgan Offensive: 70 Besieged Soldiers Rescued, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 15, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2015,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 16, 2016

¹⁰⁶ 5 militants killed in N. Afghan airstrike, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 12, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2012,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰⁷ Hekmatyar Asks Tribal Elders to Maintain Security in their Regions, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 11, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2011,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 16, 2017

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	June 16	Salah al Din	Six Islamic State militants were killed after attacking security troops at the outskirts of a village, in northwest of Shirqat town in Salah ad Din Governorate. IS attackers attempted lifting the siege imposed by security troops on al-Imam Gharbi village. ¹⁰⁸	6	NS
2	July 15	Mosul	The Iraqi Army captured over 25 female Islamic State terrorists inside Mosul while conducting a cleansing operation. Among the 25 female Islamic State members captured were three terrorists from Turkey, five were German, three were Russian, two were Canadian, one was Chechen, and the remaining were Libyan and Syrian. ¹⁰⁹	Female ISIS terrorists captured	
3	July 15	Baghdad	A civilian was killed in an IED blast in western Baghdad. According to Police source, "A bomb, placed under a car of a civil servant who works for Health Ministry, exploded as he was passing on the highway in Abu Ghraib region in western Baghdad, which caused his immediate death." ¹¹⁰	1	0
4	July 11	Mosul	US Coalition military forces conducted five strikes consisting of 45 engagements against ISIS targets. Near Mosul, three strikes	18 ¹¹²	NS

¹⁰⁸ Nehal Mostafa, Six IS members killed in attempt to attack security troops, south of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/six-members-killed-attempt-attack-security-troops-south-mosul/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹⁰⁹ Leith Fadel, Over 25 female ISIL terrorists captured in Mosul, *Al Masdar*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/25-female-isil-terrorists-captured-mosul/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹¹⁰ Nehal Mostafa, IED blast kills civil servant in western Baghdad, *Iraqi News*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/ied-blast-kills-civil-servant-western-baghdad/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹¹² Nehal Mostafa, Eighteen IS militants killed in U.S.-led coalition airstrike, south of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, July 15, 2017, <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/eighteen-militants-killed-u-s-led-coalition-airstrike-south-mosul/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

			<p>engaged three ISIS tactical units; destroyed 18 fighting positions, seven medium machine guns, and two rocket-propelled grenade systems; and damaged 12 fighting positions.</p> <p>Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged two ISIS tactical units and destroyed two mortar systems and two vehicles.¹¹¹</p>		
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Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
	July 16	Latakia	Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham launched an attack by firing a barrage of Katyusha missiles and artillery shells at the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in Latakia District, violating terms of the ceasefire that was mediated between Russia, Turkey, and Iran. ¹¹³	Ceasefire breach	
	July 16	Damascus	Two shells hit the Russian Embassy in Damascus causing material damage. One hit the compound while the other fell nearby. ¹¹⁴	Shelling	
	July 16	Idlib	<p>Harakat Ahrar Al-Sham and Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham made a truce in the Idlib Governorate following a turbulent two weeks that involved heavy clashes between these <i>jihadi</i> factions.</p> <p>Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham's Shari'ah spokesmen, 'Abdullah Al-</p>	Truce between two factions	

¹¹¹ Leith Fadel, US Coalition carries out 11 airstrikes in Deir Ezzor, *Al Masdar News*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/us-coalition-carries-11-airstrikes-deir-ezzor/>, accessed on July 16, 2017

¹¹³ Leith Fadel, Ahrar Al-Sham breaches ceasefire to attack Syrian Army troops in Latakia, *Al Masdar News*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/ahrar-al-sham-breaches-ceasefire-attack-syrian-army-troops-latakia/>, accessed on July 17, 2017

¹¹⁴ Shells hit Russian embassy compound in Syria, *Al Jazeera*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/shells-hit-russian-embassy-compound-syria-170716143636779.html>, accessed on July 17, 2017

			Muhaysni, announced via his social media page that he welcomes the truce between the two factions after weeks of fighting, promising a new offensive against the Government forces that would involve both <i>jihadist</i> factions. ¹¹⁵	
	July 16	Raqqa	<p>The Syrian Arab Army (SAA), led by their elite Tiger Forces, liberated Islamic State-controlled oil field in the Al-Raqqa Governorate.</p> <p>The Tiger Forces began the day by storming the Al-Fahd Oil Field and nearby Al-Fahd Oil Station. Finally, by the late afternoon, the SAA was able to impose full control over the Al-Fahd Oil Field and Oil Station, forcing the remaining IS terrorists to retreat south.¹¹⁶</p>	SAA liberates oil field

International Economic Issues

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

On July 13, Fitch Ratings (“Fitch”) in its press release announced that it has assigned the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) its highest possible rating and a stable outlook. According to the press release, Fitch provided AIIB with a long-term issuer default rating of ‘AAA’ and a short-term issuer default rating of ‘F1+’. Fitch stated that the ratings of AIIB are based on its existing and expected intrinsic strengths. It further added that AIIB has been endowed with a substantial capital base which will support the projected rapid expansion in lending; exposure to risk will be mitigated by a comprehensive set of policies and by high quality governance. It also noted that the AIIB enjoys an excellent level of liquidity and should benefit from easy access to capital markets.

The ‘AAA’ intrinsic rating reflects Fitch's long-term projections for capitalisation, risks and liquidity indicators, based on the bank’s business plan. Capitalisation is

¹¹⁵ Leith Fadel, Jihadists make peace in Idlib, promise offensive against Syrian Army, *Al Masdar News*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/jihadists-make-peace-idlib-promise-offensive-syrian-army/>, accessed on July 17, 2017

¹¹⁶ Leith Fadel, Breaking: Syrian Army liberates new oil field in southern Raqqa, *Al Masdar News*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-syrian-army-liberates-new-oil-field-southern-raqqa/>, accessed on July 17, 2017

assessed as Excellent, as the 80 existing member states have committed to subscribe \$ 100 billion (bn) of capital, of which \$ 20 bn will be paid-in. As the bank expands its operations - the loan portfolio should reach \$ 50 bn by 2027 - the equity to assets ratio will progressively erode, but will remain above the 25% threshold consistent with our Excellent capitalisation assessment. Based on the bank's strategy and policies, Fitch anticipates that the average rating of the loan portfolio will be around 'BB' over the 10-year forecast period. Approximately 60% of the loans will be extended to sovereign-backed borrowers, and will benefit from the preferred creditor status of AIIB. Liquidity is assessed as Excellent, reflecting the very large liquidity buffer set by the bank, which should remain above 150% of short-term debt in the forecast period.¹¹⁷

- **Another financial crisis cannot be ruled out, says IMF's Lagarde**

On the sidelines of a joint conference with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Croatian National Bank in Dubrovnik on July 11, 2017, Managing Director of IMF, Christine Lagarde, said that she would not rule out another financial crisis in her lifetime. Lagarde's comments responded to a statement made by Federal Reserve Chair, Janet Yellen, a fortnight earlier in which she said she does not expect to see another financial crisis in her lifetime. Noting that the unpredictability of financial crises, she said that finance ministers and policymakers should act with caution to prepare for such eventualities.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ "Fitch Assigns Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank 'AAA'; Outlook Stable", July 13, 2017, <https://www.fitchratings.com/site/pr/1026413> (accessed on July 17, 2017)

¹¹⁸ Karen Gilchrist and Karen Tso, "I wouldn't rule out another financial crisis, says IMF's Lagarde", CNBC News, July 12, 2017, <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/12/imf-lagarde-financial-crisis-janet-yellen.html> (accessed on July 17, 2017)