

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(28 August – 03 September, 2017)**

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## Africa

- **Congo-Kinshasa: Opposition Leader Calls for Civil Disobedience to Force Kabila From Power**<sup>1</sup>

A Congolese opposition leader has called for widespread civil disobedience beginning on October 1 to protest the absence of elections. The protest across the Democratic Republic of the Congo would include refusing to pay taxes or pay for public services.

Felix Tshisekedi, the son of deceased opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi and president of the opposition alliance known as the Rassemblement de l'opposition Congolaise (Rassop), told that the campaign is aimed at showing President Joseph Kabila that he no longer has credibility in the eyes of the public.

Kabila has been in power for 16 years, and, although his term officially ended last December, he continues to hold power and has set no timetable for elections

An agreement negotiated last year with the help of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo stated that Kabila must organize elections and abandon any plans to modify the Constitution. However, the DRC's national elections commissioner has said elections this year was not possible due to the ongoing conflict in the Kasai region and the need for a national registry of eligible voters.

Opponents have called this a stalling tactic and said the DRC could logistically hold elections this year with the help of the United Nations and other international partners.

Some have worried that the opposition's call for disobedience and withholding taxes could further destabilize the country. Tshisekedi however has said that the taxes are stolen or misspent and they don't go toward the well-being of the state. The regional economic bloc, the Southern African Development Commission (SADC), plans to send an emissary to the Congo in the hopes of kickstarting further negotiations. The SADC has agreed with the elections commissioner that polls in 2017 are impossible. Instead, they asked the DRC's Independent National Electoral Commission to publish a revised electoral calendar and set dates for the elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Voice of America, 1 September 2017  
[http://allafrica.com/stories/201709010230.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt](http://allafrica.com/stories/201709010230.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt)

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki was among those urging the SADC to help broker a solution to the conflict, warning that “more people may very well die if the matter is not resolved.”

Tshisekedi said his party has no interest in negotiating with Kabila or his government.

- **U.S. Scraps Post of Special Envoy to Juba and Khartoum<sup>2</sup>**

The US has scrapped the position of its special envoy to Sudan and South Sudan. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in a statement posted on the official website 29 August, Tuesday, said the move was meant to improve the ability of the Department of State and USAid to achieve critical foreign policy goals that were currently the responsibility of special envoys. Mr Tillerson requested the Congress to repeal the statutory provision for the position of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, saying the Deputy Assistant Secretary in African Affairs could handle all the responsibilities.

The Secretary of State said a senior official shall conduct the diplomacy if an issue arose requiring a high-level interaction. The pronouncement comes just days after a US journalist, Mr Christopher Allen, was killed while covering clashes between rebels and government forces in South Sudan's Kaya town. It remains unclear whether the US action was prompted by the killing of Mr Allen.

- **China Pledges Support for Food Production**

China will continue supporting Zimbabwe's agrarian revolution to help increase both food production and food self-sufficiency, Beijing's envoy to Harare Mr Huang Ping has said. Speaking during the official commissioning of Shauke Weir Dam in Zvishavane yesterday, Ambassador Huang said Command Agriculture programmes had engendered new opportunities for Zimbabwe-China agricultural cooperation. The commissioned dam, with a holding capacity of 39 000 cubic metres, was built under the Chinese Food Assistance for Assets (FFA), through the World Food Programme. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Zimbabwe are the implementing partners.

Ambassador Huang said China recently donated \$5 million through WFP, which will be spent in 2017-2018 lean season on assistance and support to refugees, benefiting approximately 107 000 people.

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<sup>2</sup> The East African Nation, 30 August 2017, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201708310129.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt](http://allafrica.com/stories/201708310129.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt)

He said in boosting agriculture production in the country, China had also provided machinery and fertilizers in the form of governmental aid and concessional loans, worth an estimated \$100 million. The Shauke Weir Dam will support a 1,3 hectare horticulture garden and orchard, as well as water for livestock, while there are also plans to start a fish project. The dam will be completed by November this year.

## North Africa

- **The properties of sixteen alleged MBH members seized in Cairo<sup>3</sup>**

### EGYPTIAN STREETS

An Egyptian government committee establish to seize and manage the properties of the MBH members has in a recent raid, seized the properties and business assets of sixteen alleged members of MBH, which has been declared a terrorist group by the state of Egypt. Among those whose properties have been attached are the sons and members of the family of MBH's renowned leader Qardawi who is wanted in the country and currently residing in Qatar. The companies and offices or shops which have been confiscated include some big holding like Cairo Portal Company for Publishing and Distributions and Arab International Company for Commercial Agencies and several entities like mobile shops and computer shops.

- **Putin and El-Sisi to Discuss Resumption of Fight between Russia and Egypt<sup>4</sup>**

The Egyptian President El-Sisi will hold a summit-level meeting with the Chinese President Jinping and Russian President Putin on the sideline of BRICS summit being hosted in of city of China. According to a high-level official source in Cairo, President El-Sisi will hold a comprehensive dialogue with Russian counterpart and Egyptian side is expected to press for resumption of flight service between the two nations which was stopped after a Russian plane was shot down in the Sinai Peninsula that had killed around 220 tourists. The ISIS had taken the responsibility for shooting down the Russian plane. Egypt is reported to lose billions of dollars as

<sup>3</sup> Egyptian Street <https://egyptianstreets.com/2017/08/21/egypt-confiscates-assets-of-16-muslim-brotherhood-members-seizes-control-of-alef-bookstores-among-others/>

<sup>4</sup> Al-Hayat, An Arabic Daily  
<http://www.alhayat.com/Articles/23821753/%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A6%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1>

revenues because of the huge drop in numbers of tourist visiting the country the largest number of tourist visiting Cairo are from Russia. Both the leaders will also discuss the crisis in Syria because a noticeable level of involvement on the part of Egypt has been witnessed in recent past in Syria. President El-Sisi would also meet the Chinese counterpart and discuss series of economic project to be launched in Egypt in near future and also those Chinese projects which are already in operation in Egypt. It is worth mentioning here that Egypt has already signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with China in 2014. It is El-Sisi's third visit to China after he became president in June 2014 and Chinese President too visited Egypt in 2016. The economic engagement of China in Egypt has enhanced substantially in recent years and it has invested heavily in infrastructure sector of Egypt . According to an estimate, around hundred Chinese companies are operating in Egypt and the total volume of their investment is worth US \$ 5 billion.

## Central Asia

- **India's Home Minister Attends SCO Meeting on Disaster Management in Kyrgyzstan**

Home Minister of India Rajnath Singh visited Kyrgyz Republic to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) 9th Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management in Issyk Kul, near capital Bishkek, on 24-25 August 2017. He was leading a high-level delegation of officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Ministry of External Affairs.<sup>5</sup> India has recently become the full member of the organization.

In his address, the Minister expressed gratitude to all SCO member-states for their support to full membership of India in the organization. He said that India's membership will improve cooperation in dealing with emergencies. He added that India has enhanced its technical capabilities in forecasting and monitoring natural hazards and it would cooperate in further consolidation of SCO as an effective regional platform.<sup>6</sup>

The Home Minister made two proposals and both were accepted by all SCO members. First, to organize a 'joint urban earthquake search and rescue' exercise

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<sup>5</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Union Home Minister to visit the Kyrgyz Republic," 23 August 2017, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=170162>

<sup>6</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Union Home Minister addresses 9th meeting of Heads of Government authorities of SCO Member States dealing with the prevention and elimination of emergency situation in Kyrgyz Republic," 24 August 2017, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=170222>

to improve collective preparedness. Second, India to host the next meeting of SCO Head of Departments dealing with Disaster Prevention in 2019.

On the sidelines, Mr. Rajnath Singh held bilateral meetings with Mr. Vladimir Puchkov, Minister of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Natural Disasters, and with Kyrgyz Republic's Minister for Emergency Situations, Mr. Kubatbek Boronov. They agreed to increase cooperation in the area of disaster management and sharing experience on emergency situations.

## China

- **CPC national congress to chart out China's future development**

The 19th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress is expected to open on October 18, where the new leadership for the next five-year term will be elected. The Congress is an important meeting to be held when China is striving towards achieving a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way, and at a critical time in the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The 19th CPC National Congress will analyze the present international and domestic situations, and draw out guidelines and policies that respond to the call of the times.

“Whether we can raise comprehensive, strategic and foresighted guidelines [at the Congress] concerns the development of the causes of the Party and the nation, the destiny of socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people,” said President Xi Jinping, at a high-profile workshop in late July, which was regarded as setting the tone for the Congress.<sup>7</sup>

- **Rocky friendship: Looking back on 45 yrs of China-Japan ties**

More than 150 Chinese and Japanese dignitaries, experts, scholars and media representatives recently gathered in Beijing to provide suggestions on ways to improve China-Japan relations.

The International Symposium on the 45th Anniversary of the Normalization of Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Ties opened on Aug. 26 at the Great Hall of the People.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/02/c\\_136577141.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/02/c_136577141.htm)

It was hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and organized by the Institute of Japanese Studies under CASS.

In his opening remarks, CASS President Wang Weiguang presented an in-depth analysis of the current relationship between China and Japan. In the second decade of the 21st century, especially over the past five years, each has developed in its own way, finding new opportunities amid profound shifts in the global and regional landscapes, Wang said. At the same time, there are underlying problems, such as the lack of political mutual trust and weak national sentiments.

Wang said that some in Japan stubbornly refuse to abandon their wrong perspective of history, fail to foster a correct understanding of China's rapid development, lose sight of the objective of normalizing diplomatic ties, and shake the political foundation of bilateral relations.

Their acts belie their words and disregard the overall picture. They play up the "China threat" theory to appeal to their own political base, Wang said....

In his keynote speech, Tang Jiaxuan, former State Councilor and chairman of the China-Japan Friendly Association, pointed out that contradictions between China and Japan have begun to spill over in recent years, which can be seen in Japan's attempts to contain China by hyping the South China Sea issue and others on international occasions as well as fierce competition in regional infrastructure construction.<sup>8</sup>

- **Xi Jinping shares vision on BRICS new "golden decade"**

Chinese President Xi Jinping has shared his vision for the BRICS cooperation which he believes will enter a second "golden decade" if the emerging-market countries work together to overcome the challenges of weak growth and threats to world peace. The theme of the 9th BRICS Summit is "Stronger Partnership for a better future".

Addressing the BRICS Business Forum in Xiamen on September 3 with Indian PM Narendra Modi, Russia's Vladimir Putin, Brazilian President Michel Temer and South African President Jacob Zuma in audience, Xi said after ten years a fully-fledged BRICS cooperation framework is taking shape. He refuted the assertion that BRICS is losing luster.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>[http://casseng.cssn.cn/news\\_events/news\\_events\\_news\\_briefing/201708/t20170831\\_3626780.html](http://casseng.cssn.cn/news_events/news_events_news_briefing/201708/t20170831_3626780.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/>

## European Union

- **Labour Reforms in France**

The French Government has unveiled labour reform measures. Before unveiling the measures, the government held meeting with trade unions. The measures would give more powers to companies to easily hire and fire the employees. Labour reforms were promised by President Macron during election campaign. In the proposed measures, indemnities for the employees with more than two years to employment will be three months' salary and it would be up to 20 months for employees who have employed for 30 years. Some trade unions say that reform measures are more favourable to companies.<sup>10</sup>

- **President Macron's Advisory Body on Africa**

French President Emmanuel Macron has established new Presidential Council for Africa. It will advise him on African issues and help in identifying and addressing challenges in the African continent. President Macron reiterated his plans that the African continent would be 'at the heart of his foreign policy'. He stated that "the future of the world will largely be played out in Africa". France has close, nevertheless, complex relations with African countries.<sup>11</sup> The council is an advisory body which will update the President on development in the African continent.

- **Merkel-Schulz TV Debate**

In the first and only televised debate between Chancellor Angela Merkel and SDP candidate Martin Schulz, the two candidates have expressed their opinions/views on issues of migration, relations with Turkey, social justice, Trump and North Korea and relations with Russia.<sup>12</sup> Chancellor Merkel was firm on her decision to welcome the migrants and refugees. Martin Schulz said that she could have better coordinated for a better European response. He said, "The inclusion of our European neighbors would have been better." On Turkey, Chancellor Merkel said that she would seek to end the negotiation for EU membership with Turkey. Martin Schulz also expressed the similar view. The employment in Germany, Chancellor Merkel said that unemployment has been reduced in 12 years, while Martin Schulz argued that Germany is a "clearly prosperous country," however,

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<sup>10</sup> Macron's government unveils controversial labour reforms, France 24, August 31, 2017 <http://www.france24.com/en/20170831-france-emmanuel-macron-government-unveil-controversial-labour-reforms-trade-unions>

<sup>11</sup> France's Macron sets up advisory body to help shape Africa policy, France 24, August 30, 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20170830-france-macron-presidential-council-africa-foreign-policy>

<sup>12</sup> Angela Merkel trounces election rival Martin Schulz in TV debate, DW, September 3, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-trounces-election-rival-martin-schulz-in-tv-debate/a-40347934>



benefits are not reaching to every section of society, for instance - single parents, pensioners and the long-term unemployed could not get benefits.<sup>13</sup>

- **Brexit Negotiations**

The EU negotiator Michel Barnier has called for serious negotiation. The UK's Brexit negotiator, David Davis said, "What he's (Barnier) concerned about is that he's not getting the answer on money and they've set this up to try and create pressure on us." The EU wants progress on EU citizen rights, Northern Ireland's border and the divorce bill. These are considered to be core issues in defining the EU-UK relations after the Brexit.<sup>14</sup>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Defying the world, North Korea detonates nuclear device**

In conducting its latest and most powerful nuclear test till date, North Korea defied the whole world on 3rd September 2017. North Korea said that it had detonated a hydrogen bomb that could be attached to a missile capable of reaching the United States mainland. The test 3rd September 2017 was North Korea's sixth nuclear test overall but the first one since Trump took office. The test was followed eight minutes later by a 4.1-magnitude earthquake. In a statement declaring its success, North Korean state media said the test was carried to determine "the accuracy and credibility" of its "H-bomb to be placed at the payload of the ICBM." Governments and experts are now set to continue to assess the technical aspects of the latest nuclear test; some analysts have claimed that the danger is significant.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in also called for the "strongest possible" response, including new UN Security Council sanctions to "completely isolate" the country. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he "would not tolerate" the nuclear test. Trump first tweeted that North Korea's "words and actions" were "very hostile and dangerous." He also said South Korea's "talk of appeasement" was not working and that the secretive communist state "only understands one thing."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Brexit negotiator dismisses EU's 'silly' remarks on progress, DW, September 3, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/brexit-negotiator-dismisses-eus-silly-remarks-on-progress/a-40345195>

<sup>15</sup> "Defying the world, North Korea detonates nuclear device", *North Korea Times*, 04 September 2017. <http://www.northkoreatimes.com/news/254581762/defying-the-world-north-korea-detonates-nuclear-device> accessed on 04 September 2017.

- **Trump agrees to strengthen South Korea's military arsenal**

With its long-time enemy and nuclear neighbor North Korea continuing to threaten disaster, South Korea is said to be looking at a strategy that would not be limited to the defensive. On 1st September 2017, South Korean President Moon Jae-in reportedly held a telephonic conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump. Both the leaders have agreed during the conversation that South Korea's military arsenal would have to be strengthened in a bid to equip the nation better, to deal with the constant threat from Kim Jong Un-led North Korea. According to a South Korean statement on Trump's call with Jae-in, the leaders had agreed to revise the military agreement that limits the size of Seoul's missiles. Meanwhile, the White House said in a statement, without explicitly mentioning the missile guidelines, that the leaders "agreed to strengthen" their alliance and Seoul's defense capabilities. It added that Trump provided his "conceptual approval" of South Korea's purchase of American military equipment worth billions of dollars, without adding further details. The need to fasten the process, from Seoul's perspective grew early this week, when North Korea flew a ballistic missile over Japan's northern island of Hokkaido on 29 August 2017.<sup>16</sup>

- **North Korea conducted a Nuclear Test: Claimed it to be an H-bomb to be placed at the payload of the ICBM**

On September 3, 2017, North Korean state media KCNA claimed to have successfully conducted a hydrogen bomb test. According to a statement issued by the Nuclear Weapons Institute of the DPRK, "the H-bomb test was carried out to examine and confirm the accuracy and credibility of the power control technology and internal structural design newly introduced into manufacturing H-bomb to be placed at the payload of the ICBM".<sup>17</sup> The test was North Korea's sixth nuclear test. According to South Korean sources it has not been verified whether the Pyongyang actually detonated a hydrogen bomb. However, Sunday's test was 11 times more destructive than its previous test. The latest test seemed to bring North Korea a step closer to the goal of developing a nuclear-tipped ICBM capable of reaching the continental U.S.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Trump agrees to strengthen South Korea's military arsenal", *North Korea Times*, 03 September 2017. <http://www.northkoreatimes.com/news/254574583/trump-agrees-to-strengthen-south-koreas-military-arsenal> accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>17</sup> "DPRK Nuclear Weapons Institute on Successful Test of H-bomb for ICBM", KCNA, September 3, 2017, <https://kcna.watch.co/newstream/1504452691-4220098/dprk-nuclear-weapons-institute-on-successful-test-of-h-bomb-for-icbm/> (Accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>18</sup> "N. Korea claims successful test of H-bomb mountable on ICBM", *The Yonhap News*, September 3, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/09/03/0401000000AEN20170903003156315.html> (Accessed on September 4, 2017)

- **Washington warns North Korea with “massive military response”**

In responding to North Korea’s nuclear test, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned Pyongyang that any threat to the US or its allies would be met with a “massive military response”. He said Washington and its allies are “not looking to the total annihilation of a country, namely North Korea, but we have many options to do so”. He added: “We made clear that we have the ability to defend ourselves and our allies, South Korea and Japan, from any attack. And our commitment among the allies is ironclad: any threat to the United States or its territories, including Guam, or our allies will be met with a massive military response, a response both effective and overwhelming”. Mean while President Trump twitted that, North Korea’s “words and actions continue to be very hostile and dangerous to the United States.”<sup>19</sup>

- **China, Japan and South Korea Condemns North Korea’s Nuclear Test**

North Korea’s sixth nuclear test on September 3, met strong condemnation from countries across the region including China, Japan and South Korea. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said in a statement that “showing nonchalance to the international community’s general opposition, North Korea again conducted a nuclear test ... China resolutely opposes this and strongly condemns it at the same time”.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe responded by saying "North Korea's nuclear and missile development pose a more serious, urgent, and a new stage of threat to our country's security. This is seriously compromising the peace and security of the region and the international community," he pointed out. He added that "(Japan) sternly protests North Korea and condemns (the test) in the strongest words ever".<sup>20</sup>

In a press conference in Seoul, President Moon Jae-in’s key security adviser Chung Eui-yong said that “President Moon Jae-in said the country will never allow North Korea to continue advancing its nuclear and missile technologies”. He also added that "the president ordered (the military) to prepare active measures to counter

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<sup>19</sup> "Mattis on North Korea: any threat to US will be met with 'massive military response'", The Guardian, September 3, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/03/donald-trump-condemns-very-hostile-north-korea-nuclear-test> (Accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>20</sup> "China, Japan condemn N. Korea's nuclear test", The Yonhap News, September 3, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/09/03/0401000000AEN20170903004600315.html> (Accessed on September 4, 2017)

North Korea's reckless provocations based on the strong Korea-U.S. alliance and to maintain complete readiness against additional provocations".<sup>21</sup>

- **N. Korea fires ballistic missile over Japan**

On August 29, North Korea launched a ballistic missile over Japan. According South Korea's Joint Chief of Staff, the missile was fired eastward from the vicinity of Sunan in Pyongyang.. and passed through the sky over Japan" and fell into the North Pacific Ocean. It added the missile flew more than 2,700 kilometers at a maximum altitude of around 550 km. In response Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga called it as an "unprecedented grave threat."

### (ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Indonesia- China Agree towards strengthening the vision of Global Maritime Axis and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Silk Road Initiative**

At the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting on RI-PRC Politics and Security Dialogue Mechanism in Beijing, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Wiranto and China's State Councillor Yang Jiechi, stated that the mutually bilateral cooperation between the two nations has steadily increased since the signing of the comprehensive strategic partnership in 2013. This dialogue at the level of coordinating Minister-Vice Premier is an annual meeting to encourage the development of bilateral cooperation in the fields of politics, defence, law, and security. The key issues discussed during the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting, included cooperation in law enforcement, counter-terrorism, narcotics control, cyber security, defence, and the situation in the region and globally which are of common interest. Both delegations also agreed to strengthen the alignment between the World Maritime Axis Vision initiated by Indonesia with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century maritime Silk Road initiated by China. The meetings resulted in a record of common guidelines for the development of future bilateral political, legal, and security cooperation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Seoul says will seek most powerful U.N. sanctions to 'completely' isolate N. Korea", The Yonhap News, September 3, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/09/03/0401000000AEN20170903003752315.html> (Accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>22</sup> "The 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting on RI-PRC Politics and Security Dialogue Mechanism", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, August 24, 2017, <http://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/The-6th-Meeting-on-RI-RRT-Politics-and-Security-Dialogue-Mechanism.aspx>, accessed on August 29, 2017.

- **Thailand Opening its Borders for the displaced population from the Rakhine State**

PM Prayut Chan-ocha stated that Thailand is preparing to receive people from the ethnic minority group Rohingya, who are escaping from the ongoing fighting in Myanmar's Rakhine State. The PM also made it clear that the displaced population would be send back to their homeland when they are ready. Thailand does not recognise the status of refugees and thus, does not recognise the Rohingya as legitimate migrant workers. According to Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Asia Divisions, if the PM is serious, he should instruct that there be a long overdue re-evaluation of Thai policy to ensure that the displaced ethnic group are treated with dignity during their temporary settlement.<sup>23</sup> The Indonesian government while condemning the ongoing unrest in the Rakhine State urged the government of Myanmar to take immediate steps to restore security and provide inclusive human protection. According to Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Indonesia will continue cooperation with Myanmar, in the process of reconciliation, democratisation, and inclusive development, including the implementation of Kofi Annan's report recommendation. Further, the Minister also stated that a peaceful, secure, and stable situation in Myanmar, including in Rakhine State, is important to support the stability in ASEAN and sustainable development in the region.<sup>24</sup>

- **For the First time Malaysia Burns Foreign Fishing Vessel in Public View**

In a move to deter illegal fishing Malaysian maritime authorities for the first time in public view set fire to a foreign boat. The foreign fishing vessel was set ablaze at sea off the northern Malaysian state of Kelantan. The disposal by burning method according to Malaysian Maritime Authority Deputy Director General, Mohamad Taha Ibrahim, was aimed at sending a clear message to the domestic and international community that the Malaysian government is serious in battling the incursion of foreign fishermen. Authorities have described illegal fishing by foreign vessels as a serious issue that has depleted resources in Malaysian waters and cost the government an estimated RM 6 billion in revenue annually. The Fisheries Department's DG, Ismail Abu Hassan, recently stated that big fishing vessels,

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<sup>23</sup> "Thailand preparing to receive those fleeing Myanmar violence", *Bangkok Post*, August 29, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1315227/thailand-preparing-to-receive-those-fleeing-myanmar-violence>, accessed on August 30, 2017.

<sup>24</sup>"Indonesia Urges All Parties to stop violence in Rakhine State", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, August 29, 2017, <http://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/Indonesia-Urges-All-Parties-to-Stop-Violence-in-Rakhine-State.aspx>, accessed on August 30, 2017.

mainly from Vietnam and Thailand, steal some 980,000 tonnes of fish from Malaysian waters annually.<sup>25</sup>

- **ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on Implementation of the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties (JWG-DOC) held in Manila**

Representatives from member-states of ASEAN and China began their meeting in Manila to kick –off the discussions that could open up negotiations on the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. According to Philippines Foreign Secretary, Alan Peter Cayetano; the meeting in Manila is to build on the positive momentum that ASEAN and China have achieved in implementing the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties (DOC) resulting in moving forward on the talks for the establishment of COC. The dialogue is aimed at confidence-building and would also identify practical areas for cooperation in the South China Sea. The JWG-DOC is expected to discuss the working approach which would lay the ground work for the negotiations on the COC, which the leaders of ASEAN and China are expected to announce at their summit in Manila in November. Further, according to Mr Cayetano, there is also an agreement to explore the application of the principles of the Code for unplanned encounters at the Sea in the South China Sea.<sup>26</sup>

## Myanmar

- **Government warns local, foreign supporters of terrorists**

The government warned local and foreign supporters of the terrorists and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) that it would use the full force of the law to go after them in the aftermath of the attacks that killed 89 people. The State Counsellor Office Information Committee said it has sought Interpol’s help to take action against foreign supporters of the terrorist groups amid reports that some staff of the international non-government organisations in the area had been involved when Taung Bazar village was besieged by terrorists on August 26. “On July 30, the government has already stated that energy biscuits which the World Food Programme has distributed has been discovered at the camp where terrorists sheltered in Ma Yu mountains,” the office said in a statement. “As counter-terrorism is a common interest of global families, international organisations and

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<sup>25</sup>“Malaysia burns foreign trawlers to curb illegal fishing”, *Borneo Bulletin*, August 31, 2017, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/malaysia-burns-foreign-trawler-to-curb-illegal-fishing/>, accessed on September 1, 2017.

<sup>26</sup>“ASEAN, China meet to set stage for negotiations on South China Sea Code of Conduct”, *The Straits Times*, September 1, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-china-begin-meetings-to-set-stage-for-negotiations-for-south-china-sea-code-of>, accessed on September 1, 2017.

governments, including the United Nations, it is crucial to counter terrorists and the ARSA terrorist group,” it added.<sup>27</sup>

- **FPNCC willing to attend 3rd Panglong Conference**

The Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC) has expressed a willingness to attend the third session of the 21st Century Panglong Conference if invited and has also urged China to get more involved in Myanmar’s peace process, after the group’s first permanent committee meeting. “We couldn’t have had a chance to attend the second 21st Panglong Conference if there had been no Chinese involvement and negotiations. We believe that talks between us and the government will be successful if China gets involved,” said Tar Joke Jar, vice chair of the Ta Ta’ang National Liberation Army, on August 27. The meeting, held from August 18 to 24, was led by the United Wa State Army and held at Pangkham, where UWSA has its headquarters.<sup>28</sup>

- **Strong regional response on Rakhine**

For the first time, Bangladesh has offered to start joint military operations with Myanmar to curb and control the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). Officials in Bangladesh foreign ministry said the offer has been conveyed to Nay Pyi Taw through Myanmar's charge d'affairs in Dhaka. It was not yet clear how Myanmar, especially its army, would react to the offer. Sheikh Hasina's government is against receiving Rohingyas or against backing any ARSA terrorist activity.<sup>29</sup>

- **Worsening cycle of violence in Rakhine must be broken, UN expert warns**

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned on 1<sup>st</sup> September of a looming humanitarian catastrophe in western Myanmar and urged security forces to show restraint after hundreds were reported dead in communal violence and thousands continued to flee. "The secretary-general is deeply concerned by the reports of excesses during the security operations conducted by Myanmar's security forces in Rakhine State and urges restraint and calm to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe," said a UN spokesman. Guterres recalled that it was the government's responsibility to provide security and allow aid agencies to reach those in need.<sup>30</sup>

- **Rohingya Flee as more than 2,600 Houses Burned in Rakhine**

About 58,600 Rohingya have fled into neighboring Bangladesh from Myanmar, according to UN refugee agency UNHCR, as aid workers there struggle to cope. Myanmar officials blamed the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) for the

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<sup>27</sup> “Government warns local, foreign supporters of terrorists”, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/government-warns-local-foreign-supporters-terrorists.html>

<sup>28</sup> “FPNCC willing to attend 3rd Panglong Conference”, 29 August 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/fpncc-willing-attend-3rd-panglong-conference.html>

<sup>29</sup> “Strong regional response on Rakhine”, 29 August 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/strong-regional-response-rakhine>

<sup>30</sup> “Worsening cycle of violence in Rakhine must be broken, UN expert warns”, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/worsening-cycle-violence-rakhine-must-be-broken-un-expert-warns>

burning of the homes. The group claimed responsibility for coordinated attacks on security posts last week that prompted clashes and a large army counter-offensive. But Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh say a campaign of arson and killings by the Myanmar Army is aimed at trying to force them out. The treatment of Myanmar's roughly 1.1 million Rohingya is the biggest challenge facing leader Aung San Suu Kyi, accused by Western critics of not speaking out for the Muslim minority that has long complained of persecution. The clashes and army crackdown have killed nearly 400 people and more than 11,700 "ethnic residents" have been evacuated from the area, the government said, referring to the non-Muslim residents.<sup>31</sup>

## North America

### Canada

- **Justin Trudeau condemns North Korean missile testing**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has condemned North Korea's latest nuclear weapon testing and is urging the United Nations to take further steps to contain the country's nuclear proliferation efforts. North Korea's nuclear test and "aggressive" missile testing program "represents a clear and present threat to the safety and security of its neighbours and the international community," Trudeau said in a statement released by his office. Trudeau also said Canada would continue to work with allies including South Korea, Japan and the U.S., but did not provide more details on his government's involvement. The statement called on the UN Security Council "to take further decisive action to effectively constrain North Korea's proliferation efforts."<sup>32</sup>

- **Canada should consider missile defence amid North Korea threat: Tory critic**

The new Conservative foreign affairs critic says the time has come for Canada to consider joining the controversial U.S. ballistic missile defence system for North America. Erin O'Toole tells The Canadian Press that North Korea's increased capability to potentially reach North America with a long-range missile is a game changer. O'Toole's remarks come after fellow Conservatives MPs refused to stake out a position for their party on missile defence last week when the House of Commons defence committee held a special meeting on North Korea. O'Toole criticized Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for shutting the door on Canada's

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<sup>31</sup> "Rohingya Flee as More Than 2,600 Houses Burned in Rakhine", 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/rohingya-flee-2600-houses-burned-rakhine.html>

<sup>32</sup> The Canadian Press, "Justin Trudeau condemns North Korean missile testing," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-condemns-north-korea-test-1.4274072>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.



participation in the U.S. missile shield program, saying he was being naive in the face of an escalating threat.<sup>33</sup>

- **Justin Trudeau ‘will make no apologies’ for proposed tax changes that anger small business owners**

Prime Minister Trudeau says he’s paying attention to the growing dissent over his government’s controversial plan to eliminate tax incentives that he insists only benefit wealthy small business owners. Entrepreneurs, major industry associations, tax experts and political rivals have warned the three-part plan would hurt the economy and small businesses, including many whose owners would be considered middle class. The potential changes under scrutiny include ending a practice that allows business owners to lower their tax rate by sprinkling income to family members in lower brackets, even if those relatives are not active in the business. Another proposal calls for limits on the use of private corporations as a way to gain tax advantages when making passive investments in things like stocks or real estate. The third change would limit the conversion of a corporation’s regular income into capital gains that are typically taxed at a lower rate.<sup>34</sup>

- **Canada demands U.S. end ‘right to work’ laws as part of NAFTA talks**

Canadian negotiators are demanding the United States roll back so-called "right to work" laws – accused of gutting unions in some U.S. states by starving them of money – as part of the renegotiation of the North American free-trade agreement. The request is part of a push by Ottawa to get the U.S. and Mexico to adopt higher labour standards under the deal. Mexico, meanwhile, is campaigning to include its oil and gas sector in the deal. These major moves on the labour and energy files came over the weekend at the second round of NAFTA renegotiations in Mexico City. Government and industry sources familiar with the United States and Canadian thinking on the subject say both countries like the idea of Mexico putting its energy market under NAFTA, as it would allow American and Canadian companies more opportunities to do business there. Among the subjects dealt with, said one source with knowledge of the discussions, was wine, a potentially touchy subject for Canada, where some provinces have tightly controlled distribution systems that make it harder for other countries to import their product.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Canadian Press, "Canada should consider missile defence amid North Korea threat: Tory critic," <http://globalnews.ca/news/3710930/north-korea-missile-defence-canada/>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Andy Blatchford, "Justin Trudeau ‘will make no apologies’ for proposed tax changes that anger small business owners," <http://globalnews.ca/news/3714143/justin-trudeau-no-apologies-tax-changes/>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Adrian Morrow, "Canada demands U.S. end ‘right to work’ laws as part of NAFTA talks," <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/canada-demands-us-end-right-to-work-laws-as-part-of-nafta-talks/article36160015/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

## The United States

- **Mattis warns of 'massive military response' to NK nuclear threat**

US Defense Secretary James Mattis warned of "a massive military response" to any threat from North Korea against the United States or its allies in a statement outside the White House after a meeting with President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and top national security advisers. Secretary Mattis called on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to "take heed" of the UN Security Council's unanimous position against North Korea's nuclear program and again stressed the US military's position. After speaking with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for the second time in two days, Trump reaffirmed the US commitment to defending the US and allies "using the full range of diplomatic, conventional and nuclear capabilities at our disposal," according to a White House readout of the call. US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley joined her counterparts from Japan, France, the United Kingdom and South Korea in requesting an emergency UN Security Council meeting on North Korea Monday . At the meeting, the US and its allies are looking to push through a new sanctions package, senior administration officials said.<sup>36</sup>

- **White House threatened with subpoena over draft letter from Trump to Comey**

A leading member of a congressional intelligence committee is threatening to subpoena the White House in order to obtain a draft letter that Donald Trump reportedly wanted to send to James Comey when he fired him as FBI chief.

The move comes amid growing questions over whether the president tried to obstruct justice and has misled people about his business interests in Russia. Special counsel Robert Mueller is understood to have a copy of the letter already as part of his independent investigation into Russian attempts to interfere with the 2016 presidential election and into whether Trump has in any way obstructed justice.<sup>37</sup>

- **US Orders Closure of Russian Consulates and Annexes**

The US has told Russia to close its consulate in San Francisco and buildings in Washington and New York that house trade missions, the State Department said, in retaliation for Moscow cutting the US diplomatic presence in Russia. The announcement was the latest in tit-for-tat measures between the two countries that have helped to drive relations to a new post-Cold War low, thwarting hopes

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<sup>36</sup> Angela Dewan, Taehoon Lee and Eli Watkins, "Mattis warns of 'massive military response' to NK nuclear threat, k, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Walters, "White House threatened with subpoena over draft letter from Trump to Comey," <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/03/white-house-threatened-with-subpoena-over-draft-letter-from-trump-to-comey>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

on both sides that they might improve after US President Donald Trump took office in January. Last month, Moscow ordered the US to cut its diplomatic and technical staff in Russia by more than half, to 455 people to match the number of Russian diplomats in the US, after Congress overwhelmingly approved new sanctions against Russia. The sanctions were imposed in response to Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election and to punish Russia further for its 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. The latest US move caps eight months of back-and-forth retaliatory measures between the two countries spanning two US administrations.<sup>38</sup>

- **Trump's new Afghanistan policy has Pakistan angry and alarmed**

A wave of anti-American anger has swept Pakistan this past week, triggered both by President Trump's threat to punish the country for harboring insurgents and by his invitation to India, Pakistan's longtime rival, to become more involved in Afghanistan's future. Afghan officials welcomed Trump's message, but Pakistanis accused him of "bullying" their country despite its history of cooperating with the United States in foreign conflicts. They said he had betrayed them by reaching out to India, which Pakistan views as a persistent threat to its existence. Tribal and religious leaders have held protests at border crossings, and banners urging "Say no to America!" have appeared across the capital. Pakistani officials took other steps to show their unhappiness. They requested that a planned visit by Alice Wells, the senior State Department official dealing with the region, be indefinitely postponed. Pakistan's foreign minister, who had been planning a trip to Washington, instead announced that he would travel to China, Russia and Turkey.<sup>39</sup> In responding to questions on Pakistan's reaction to the Afghan and South Asia policy announced by US President Donald Trump, defence secretary Jim Mattis said, the US intends to work with Pakistan to take down terrorists asserting that this is what a "responsible" nation does. He did not respond to questions on timeline, if any, for Pakistan to take action against terrorists and terrorist groups.

## Mexico

- **2nd round of NAFTA talks opens in Mexico City**

A second round of NAFTA renegotiations began Friday with officials expressing optimism despite President Donald Trump's suggestions he could withdraw the United States from the 23-year-old trade pact. Mexico has also said it won't stay at the table if it doesn't get a fair shake or if Washington triggers an exit clause, and

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<sup>38</sup> Yeganeh Torbati, "US Orders Closure of Russian Consulates and Annexes," <https://thewire.in/172952/us-orders-closure-of-consulates-and-annexes-to-retaliate-against-russia/>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Pamela Constable, "Trump's new Afghanistan policy has Pakistan angry and alarmed," [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/trumps-new-afghanistan-policy-has-pakistan-angry-and-alarmed/2017/08/29/40e2de88-8cb9-11e7-9c53-6a169beb0953\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e9f7a7bf0411](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/trumps-new-afghanistan-policy-has-pakistan-angry-and-alarmed/2017/08/29/40e2de88-8cb9-11e7-9c53-6a169beb0953_story.html?utm_term=.e9f7a7bf0411), Accessed on 04 September 2017.

the uncertainty has raised fears among businesspeople on both sides of the border that billions of dollars in trade and investment could be threatened. President Trump said: "We've got to change this deal, and hopefully we can renegotiate it, but if we can't we'll terminate it and we'll start all over again with a real deal." Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Luis Videgaray responded to that by saying, "if the result of the negotiations isn't beneficial for Mexico, of course, Mexico won't stay." The current agreement allows binational panels of private experts to decide differences, making it harder for one nation to unilaterally impose tariffs on another. The United States wants to eliminate those panels, but Canada and Mexico fear that would allow it to throw its greater weight around and impose tariffs on imports that allegedly harm local producers or are being "dumped," or sold below their real price. Talk of more such tariffs drew concern from a newly formed alliance of U.S. and Canadian fruit and vegetable companies.<sup>40</sup>

- **Sharp differences over labor surface at NAFTA talks in Mexico**

Tensions over sharp differences in pay between Mexican workers and their Canadian and U.S. counterparts surfaced on Sunday as negotiators discussed labor market rules in talks to overhaul the North American Free Trade Agreement. Mexican political and corporate leaders firmly resist demands to bring wages into line with U.S. and Canadian levels, arguing the big cost advantage the country enjoys over richer peers should decrease as economic development advances. Worker pay is a sensitive issue in Mexico, a country riven by sharp inequality and which has struggled for years to alleviate poverty, which affects well over 40 percent of the population.<sup>41</sup>

- **As NAFTA Negotiations Continue, Mexican President Peña Nieto Attends BRICS Summit** With an eye toward expanding its international relations and diversifying trade initiatives, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto will be taking part in this week's BRICS summit in China as the country seeks to diversify its trade relationships in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" economic policies. Since BRICS members began to meet annually eight years ago, Peña Nieto told Xinhua in an interview, "we have seen important progress in the goals it set, particularly in the area of cooperation and coordination in multilateral forums on economic and political governance." Mexico is one of a group of countries taking part in the Dialogue of Emerging Market and Developing Countries on the sidelines of the ninth annual BRICS summit taking place from Sept. 4 to 5, where leaders from Egypt, Guinea, Tajikistan and Thailand will join BRICS leaders to discuss global development cooperation and South-South cooperation in the city of Xiamen in east China's Fujian province. The BRICS

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<sup>40</sup> The Associate Press, "2nd round of NAFTA talks opens in Mexico City," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/nafta-trump-mexico-1.4271492>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Dave Graham, Sharay Angulo, "Sharp differences over labor surface at NAFTA talks in Mexico," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-nafta-labor/sharp-differences-over-labor-surface-at-nafta-talks-in-mexico-idUSKCN1BF00H>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

meeting is seen as another opportunity for Mexico to broaden bilateral trade with China, its second largest trading partner after the United States, especially as China tackles its Belt and Road initiative, a major development push uniting over 100 countries and international organizations.<sup>42</sup>

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Ghani informs regarding investments worth billions of dollars on Afghan Air Force**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on 3rd September 2017 informed regarding the investment plans worth billions of dollars on the Afghan Air Force. He said with the announcement of the new US strategy for Afghanistan, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission's activities have increased. President Ghani further added that six billion dollars will be invested on the Air Force in the next four years. The Afghan President made the remarks during his visit to eastern Nangarhar province where he met with the 201st Silab Corps of the Afghan army. The remarks by President Ghani came as the United States has also stepped up approving new contracts for the Afghan Air Force as well as the ground forces. The United States Department of Defense during the recent weeks informed regarding the award of at least two contracts worth \$727 million and \$69.3 million.<sup>43</sup>

- **US Defense Secretary Orders New Troop Deployment to Afghanistan**

US Defense Secretary James Mattis has said that he has signed deployment orders to send more troops to Afghanistan, days after President Donald Trump announced a new strategy to prolong war in the strategically important country located within South Asia and Central Asia. The Pentagon chief did not say how many troops would be dispatched as part of the deployment orders. On 30 August 2017, the US military officially acknowledged there are nearly 3,000 more troops to Afghanistan than the 8,400 previously reported. The additional forces would join the 11,000 troops already in the country. On 21 August, Trump announced his new Afghanistan

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<sup>42</sup> ----, "As NAFTA Negotiations Continue, Mexican President Peña Nieto Attends BRICS Summit," <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/As-NAFTA-Negotiations-Continue-Mexican-President-Pena-Nieto-Attends-BRICS-Summit-20170903-0018.html>, Accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>43</sup> "Ghani informs regarding investments worth billions of dollars on Afghan Air Force", *Khaama Press*, 04 September 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/ghani-informs-regarding-investments-worth-billions-of-dollars-on-afghan-air-force-03365> accessed on 04 September 2017.

policy and said he would raise the number of US forces in Afghanistan, citing fight against the Taliban and other terrorist groups.<sup>44</sup>

- **US Discusses New War Strategy With Russians**

The US Ambassador to Russia John Tefft has provided explanations regarding the new US strategy in Afghanistan at a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, the Russian Foreign Ministry reported on 29 August 2017. In a statement issued by the ministry earlier, the Russian side outlined a number of issues that needed to be specified with regard to both the parameters and the modality of the US military presence in Afghanistan. It was noted that the new strategy was aimed at solving the Afghan problem by force and that it was consonant with the Obama administration's "prescriptions, which, had not led to any positive results," the statement read. The statement indicated that the Russian side "focused on the lack of transparency in the US military actions, something that evoked justified concern in Russia and other regional partners." It was stressed that Moscow did not share Washington's pressure policy directed at certain states in the region, and called for "equitable interaction and coordination of approaches to the Afghan settlement with regard for the interests of all states in the region without exception."<sup>45</sup>

- **Top Afghan Security Officials in Regular Contacts With Taliban in Pakistan and Qatar**

Top Afghan security officials are in regular contact with the Taliban leadership in Pakistan and Qatar as efforts are underway to encourage the group to participate in peace talks, it has been reported. The Associated Press reported regarding the regular contacts between the top Afghan security officials and the Taliban leadership, citing the credible documents the agency has seen.<sup>46</sup>

- **US Confirms About 11,000 American Troops In Afghanistan**

The US Defense Department said on Wednesday (August 30, 2017) it already has an estimated 11,000 troops in Afghanistan, despite routine reports of 8,400. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, Joint Staff Director Lieutenant General Kenneth F. McKenzie said the previous administration authorized the increase of the force manning level to 8,448, adding that so far the department has reported approximately 8,400 forces.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "US Defense Secretary Orders New Troop Deployment to Afghanistan", *Outlook Afghanistan*, 04 September 2017. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=18931](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18931) accessed on 04 September 2017.

<sup>45</sup> "US Discusses New War Strategy With Russians", *Tolonews*, 30 August 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/us-discusses-new-war-strategy-russians> accessed on 31 August 2017.

<sup>46</sup> "Top Afghan security officials in regular contacts with Taliban in Pakistan and Qatar", *Khaama Press*, August 30, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/top-afghan-security-officials-in-regular-contacts-with-taliban-in-pakistan-and-qatar-03375> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>47</sup> "US Confirms About 11,000 American Troops In Afghanistan", *Tolo News*, August 31, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-confirms-about-11000-american-troops-already-afghanistan> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

- **Pakistan Fears Afghanistan May Block Transit Route to Central Asia**

Officials in Islamabad are concerned regarding the possible blocking of the transit route to Central Asia and Europe by the Afghan government, it has been reported. The concerns have been shared by the authorities in Islamabad amid deteriorating diplomatic ties between the two neighbors. Sources within the Pakistani government have said the step could be taken due to the Convention on the Contract for International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) not accepted by the two countries so far.<sup>48</sup>

- **Afghanistan's Neighbors Asked To Support New US Strategy**

The Afghan government on Friday (September 1, 2017) said Afghanistan's neighbors and countries in the region should not worry about the new US strategy and instead, they need to join the anti-terror campaign with Kabul and its allies.

"Pakistan is mostly worried about the new US strategy more than any other country in the region," said Mujib Rahman Rahimi, spokesman for Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. "Pakistan should use the chance and cooperate with the Afghan government and the United States; otherwise, actions will be taken that would worry Pakistan."<sup>49</sup>

- **MPs Call For Truce Between Noor and Hekmatyar**

Following a war of words between the leaders of Hizb-e-Islami group and Jamiat-e-Islami party, a number of lawmakers in parliament on Saturday (September 2, 2017) called on the two sides to put their differences aside as it would have a negative effect on the country. MPs said that the political rift between politicians and parties could lead to the escalation of the crisis in the country. The development takes place a few days after Hekmatyar called leaders of the Coalition to Rescue Afghanistan slaves of the Americans, which sparked a strong retaliation by Noor.<sup>50</sup>

## Bangladesh

- **Govt, WB ink \$55 m deal<sup>51</sup>**

The government of Bangladesh on Tuesday ( August 29) signed a \$55 million loan agreement with the World Bank to monitor the country's annual development

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<sup>48</sup> "Pakistan Fears Afghanistan May Block Transit Route to Central Asia", *The Pashtun Times*, August 31, 2017, <http://thepashtuntimes.com/pakistan-fears-afghanistan-may-block-transit-route-to-central-asia/> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>49</sup> Sharif Amiri, "Afghanistan's Neighbors Asked To Support New US Strategy", *Tolo News*, September 1, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan%E2%80%99s-neighbors-asked-support-new-us-strategy> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>50</sup> Gulabuddin Ghubar, "MPs Call For Truce Between Noor and Hekmatyar", *Tolo News*, September 2, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mps-call-truce-between-noor-and-hekmatyar> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>51</sup> "Govt, WB ink \$55 m deal to monitor dev projects, public procurement," *Prothom Alo*, August 29, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/economy/news/157961/Govt-WB-ink-55-m-deal-to-monitor-dev-projects> (accessed August 29, 2017)

programs and improve the performance of public procurement using digital technology. The Digitizing Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project (DIMAPPP) will help Bangladesh expand electronic government procurement (e-GP) to all public sector organisations as well as improve capacity to monitor implementation of development projects and programs using digital technology.

- **FTA with Sri Lanka in current tenure: Tofail**<sup>52</sup>

Commerce minister Tofail Ahmed said Bangladesh will sign free trade agreement (FTA) with Sri Lanka within the current tenure of the present government. "Terms of reference of a joint study have been finalized and preparations are going on in this regard," he said after a bilateral meeting with Sri Lankan Development Strategies and International Trade Minister Malik Samarawickrama, MP, in Colombo, said a ministry release today.

- **Awami League made Bangladesh role model: PM**<sup>53</sup>

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday (August 31) said Bangladesh has become a role model of development as the Awami League came to power thrice despite orchestrated conspiracies to dislodge it from power. "The world recognition to Bangladesh as a role model of development didn't come without any cause behind it. It became possible as the country is under the patriotic and dedicated leadership of Awami League," she said.

- **Bangladesh protests violation of air space**<sup>54</sup>

Bangladesh on Friday (September 1) strongly protested the recent instances of violation of the country's air space by Myanmar helicopters. In a Diplomatic note sent to the Embassy of Myanmar in Dhaka today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested the repeated instances of violation of Bangladesh's air space by a number of Myanmar helicopters on 27 and 28 August, and September 01, 2017, said a press release of Foreign Ministry.

- **38,000 Rohingyas flee to Bangladesh**<sup>55</sup>

Around 400 people—most of them Rohingya Muslims—have died in violence searing through Myanmar's Rakhine state, the army chief's office said Friday (September 1), with tens of thousands forced to flee across the border into Bangladesh. The office of Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing gave an updated death toll, sketching out the details of an insurgency that has escalated sharply.

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<sup>52</sup> "FTA with Sri Lanka in current tenure: Tofail," *The Independent*, August 31, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/112234> (accessed August 31, 2017)

<sup>53</sup> "Awami League made Bangladesh role model of development: PM," *The Independent*, August 31, 2017 <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/112206> (accessed August 31, 2017)

<sup>54</sup> "Bangladesh protests violation of air space by Myanmar helicopters," *The Independent*, September 1, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/112378> (accessed September 1, 2017)

<sup>55</sup> "38,000 Rohingyas flee to Bangladesh as Myanmar death toll mounts," *Prothom Alo*, September 2, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/158251/38-000-Rohingyas-flee-to-Bangladesh-as-Myanmar> (accessed September 2, 2017)



The UN says 38,000 Rohingya have reached Bangladesh, some using overland routes and others crossing the Naf River.

## नेपाल

- यात्रा सफल रही: देउबा  
रविवार शाम नेपाल प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा भारत की पांच दिवसीय यात्रा करके नेपाल पहुंचे , उन्होंने कहा कि भारत यात्रा सफल रही रही . देउबा ने कहा कि इस यात्रा से दोनों देशों के मध्य विश्वास का एक सकारात्मक माहौल स्थापित हुआ है . उन्होंने पत्रकारों से यह भी कहा कि कोई पार्टी या व्यक्ति मुझे यह नहीं बताये कि विदेश भ्रमण पर मुझे क्या बोलना है और क्या नहीं . उन्होंने आगे कहा कि आठ सूत्री समझौतों पर हस्ताक्षर से इस यात्रा का अपना महत्व बढ़ जाता है.<sup>56</sup>
- नेपाल की राजनीति के सहज विकास पर ही बोला: देउबा  
भारत यात्रा के बाद नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री ने संसद को संबोधित किया और कहा कि संविधान संशोधन और उसका लागूकरण हर देश का अंदरूनी मामला होता है और वे इस पर किसी प्रकार का समझौता नहीं कर सकते. उन्होंने कहा कि भारत में संयुक्त वक्तव्य के दौरान संविधान संशोधन पर जो बोला वह अप्राकृतिक दूर पर नहीं बोला गया यह केवल अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समुदाय के समक्ष नेपाल के एजेंडे को प्रकट करना है और उन्होंने मात्र नेपाल की राजनीति के सहज विकास को ही साझा किया है.<sup>57</sup>
- पंचेश्वर महाकाली की डी पी आर शीघ्र पूरी होगी:  
प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा ने कहा कि पंचेश्वर और महाकाली प्रोजेक्ट की विस्तृत प्रोजेक्ट रिपोर्ट (डी पी आर ) जल्द ही एक महीने में पूरी की जाएगी . जिससे सुदूर मध्य पश्चिमी क्षेत्र के विकास में जबरदस्त परिवर्तन होगा.<sup>58</sup>
- प्रांतीय चुनाव 26 नवम्बर को और संघीय चुनाव 7 दिसंबर को होंगे:  
नेपाल के सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने बताया कि चुनाव आयोग के सुझाव के आधार पर सरकार ने शेष बचे दो स्तर के चुनाव , प्रांतीय और संघीय की तिथि निश्चित कर दी है . इस साल 26 नवम्बर को प्रांतीय स्तर के 7 दिसंबर को संघीय स्तर के चुनाव पूरे देश में होंगे.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> "Visit Highly Successful", The Rising Nepal, 28 August 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-08-28/d752dbad4d51c427a35dd35b4fa15cd3.jpg>

<sup>57</sup> "Updating int'l community about political development natural: PM", 29 August 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-08-29/e8b48219c33e9d8d62a59541aa41d68a.jpg>

<sup>58</sup> "DPR of Pancheshwar, Mahakali project to complete soon", The Rising Nepal, 30 August 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-08-30/76421ffb8d0fc322d56584ab28806587.jpg>

<sup>59</sup> "Provincial elections on Nov 26, federal on Dec 7", The Rising Nepal, 31 August 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-08-31/dd124035caf4ec9555040309e9621e1f.jpg>

## Pakistan

- **Pakistan and US relations** - Foreign Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif said on 28<sup>th</sup> August that Pakistan had suspended talks and bilateral visits with the United States as a mark of protest over the recent anti-Pakistan diatribe by US President Donald Trump.<sup>60</sup> Both houses of parliament on August 30<sup>th</sup> unanimously rejected the targeting of Pakistan by US President Donald Trump and denounced his complete disregard for Pakistan's vast sacrifices in countering the scourge of terrorism. Read out by Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, the resolution termed the recent statements of Trump and his Afghan commander Gen John Nicholson as "hostile and threatening" and called on the government to consider suspending cooperation with the US, particularly the provision of air and ground lines of communication. Before the resolution was adopted, Mr Asif told the house that he was not in favour of mentioning the money America claimed to have paid Pakistan to fight terrorism. "We just want international support and recognition for Pakistan's efforts in this fight."<sup>61</sup>
- **Pakistan Census and its Impact on Elections 2018** - Amid a chorus of objections from the provinces and opposition parties, Chief Statistician Asif Bajwa said on August 29<sup>th</sup> that the final census report would not be compiled before April 2018. This was alarming for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which believes that such a delay in the release of final census data may render the next general elections illegal, since the Constitution mandates fresh delimitations after every census. The ECP is worried that if the next elections are to be held in mid-2018, it will not have enough time to redefine constituencies, in line with the new election law, recently passed by the National Assembly. Opposition parties, most notably the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM), have been quite vocal with their concerns over the preliminary results of the national census, questioning the authenticity of the figures released by the statistics division.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan, "Talks with US suspended in protest, Senators told", *Dawn*, August 29, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354652/talks-with-us-suspended-in-protest-senators-told> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>61</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan, "Parliament rejects Trump's tirade against Pakistan", *Dawn*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1355020> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

<sup>62</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan & Mubarak Zeb Khan, "April deadline for census results worries ECP", *Dawn*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354825> (accessed on September 4, 2017)

## Indian Ocean Region

### India Calls for the development of a security architecture in the Indian Ocean region

On 31 August, 2017, in a speech at the Indian Ocean Conference in Colombo, External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj said that Indian Ocean littoral states should bear the primary responsibility for maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the region.<sup>63</sup> She said, "we consider it an imperative that those who live in this region bear the primary responsibility for the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indian Ocean."<sup>64</sup> Underling the importance of peaceful, stable and secure Indian Ocean for global economic growth, she said, " if the revitalized maritime economy of the Indian Ocean region is to be force for global economic growth in the coming years, it is essential that the waters remain peaceful, stable and secure. It is imperative too, that all stake holders abide by rules- based global order."<sup>65</sup>

In her speech, recalling the concept of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR)- India's Indian Ocean vision "enunciated" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Mauritius in March 2015, she said, "security is fundamental to the SAGAR vision."<sup>66</sup> She said " The principles enshrined in SAGAR provide us with a coherent framework to address some of the challenges relating to economic revival, connectivity, security, culture and identity, and India's own evolving approach to these issues. The challenge before us is to ensure intra-ocean trade and investment, and the sustainable harnessing of the wealth of the seas, including food, medicines and clean energy."<sup>67</sup>

Realising the importance of development of Ocean Economy in the region, she said " the 'Blue Economy' as a promising new pillar of prosperity in the region, with immense economic and employment potential. We are already engaging our neighbours in Blue Economy initiatives, particularly in the areas of marine bio-

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<sup>63</sup> India calls for tighter security in Indian Ocean, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/UKRvqhDHCjavS4dxtHQw0H/India-calls-for-tighter-security-in-Indian-Ocean.html>, (accessed on September 04, 3017).

<sup>64</sup> Maritime peace, prosperity our priority: Full text of Sushma Swaraj's speech at Indian Ocean Conference, August 31, 2017, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/peace-prosperity-of-indian-ocean-our-priority-full-text-of-sushma-swarajs-speech-at-indian-ocean-conference-3995193.html>, (accessed on September 03, 3017).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

technology, exploration and sustainable exploitation of ocean mineral resources, sustainable fishing practices, and harnessing of ocean energy."<sup>68</sup>

She mentioned that India is implementing targeted programmes for re-energising economic activity in the islands and coastal areas of the country.<sup>69</sup> She said, "there is also a renewed focus on strengthening marine research, developing eco-friendly marine industrial technologies, promoting sustainable fisheries and, ensuring the protection of the maritime environment."<sup>70</sup>

EAM said that India is committed to extending port connectivity among the littoral states of the Indian Ocean and beyond.<sup>71</sup> "We continue to work on a range of projects to improve maritime logistics in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles", further she said.<sup>72</sup> Underlining the importance of maritime cooperation to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean region, she said "the success of maritime cooperative action against piracy in the Gulf of Aden is an example of the benefits of a cooperative approach which resulted in a dramatic decline in piracy incidents in the region." "India is prepared to bear its share of responsibility in this regard."<sup>73</sup>, further she said.

### **Sri Lankan President emphasized the need of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace**

Addressing the valedictory session of 2nd Indian Ocean Conference 2017 on September 01, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said that Indian Ocean region must be transformed into maritime zone of peace.<sup>74</sup> During his address, he recalled "how the world's first woman prime minister Madam Sirimavo Bandaranaike presented a proposal in 1960 at the UN Summit to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace."<sup>75</sup>

He said that Sri Lanka is ready to support all friendly states to move forward with new technology for building a better society for the people.<sup>76</sup> As mentioned in a

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<sup>68</sup> Address by External Affairs Minister at the 2nd Indian Ocean Conference (August 31, 2017), [http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28907/Address\\_by\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Minister\\_at\\_the\\_2nd\\_Indian\\_Ocean\\_Conference\\_August\\_31\\_2017](http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28907/Address_by_External_Affairs_Minister_at_the_2nd_Indian_Ocean_Conference_August_31_2017), (accessed on September 03, 2017)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> President emphasizes importance of making Indian Ocean a zone of peace, [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=President\\_emphasizes\\_importance\\_of\\_making\\_Indian\\_Ocean\\_a\\_zone\\_of\\_peace\\_20170904\\_01](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=President_emphasizes_importance_of_making_Indian_Ocean_a_zone_of_peace_20170904_01), (accessed on September 04, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

media report, "the President also called recalled the proposal made by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the importance of the Indian Ocean region and again emphasized the collaboration of all countries on the security of the Indian Ocean."<sup>77</sup>

### **Sri Lanka for Indian Ocean Treaty for free navigation and over flight**

Sri Lanka seeks an international arrangement to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean region. Addressing the Indian Ocean Conference in Colombo, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe said, "in our view, the vital Sea Lanes of Communication in the Indian Ocean that fuels the global economy needs to be open for all and must be used for mutual benefit in a sustainable manner. It is essential to maintain peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region which ensures the right of all states to the freedom of navigation and over flight."<sup>78</sup> He said, "we remain convinced that a code of conduct that ensures the freedom of navigation in our Ocean will be an essential component of this vision."<sup>79</sup> "Sri Lanka will soon commence exploratory discussions on convening a meeting to deliberate on a stable legal order on freedom of navigation and over flight in the Indian Ocean,"<sup>80</sup> further he said.

## **Sri Lanka**

- **US lauds Sri Lanka's ambitious reforms agenda and reconciliation**

United States Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Alice Wells praised the progress made by Sri Lanka under the leadership of President Maithripala Sirisena in the democratic reforms and reconciliation process. She said that the US highly appreciates the "ambitious reforms agenda and historic steps towards reconciliation boldly under taken by President Sirisena."She said that the US would continue to extend fullest support to Sri Lanka's development process and reconciliation. Ms Wells made this statement when she called on President Maithripala Sirisena at the President's Official Residence in Colombo on 30<sup>th</sup> August.

President Sirisena pointed out that few extreme elements in the North and South level baseless allegations against the government to take undue political advantages, but the government is determined to implement its programs for

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Sri Lanka's PM addresses Indian Ocean Conference 2017, <http://www.lankabusinessonline.com/sri-lankas-pm-addresses-indian-ocean-conference-2017/>, (accessed on September 04, 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

reconciliation and development undeterred. Though the progress is slow, it is steady and stable, he said.<sup>81</sup>

- **IOR must be transformed into a maritime zone of peace -President**

President Maithripala Sirisena says that the Indian Ocean Region must be transformed into a maritime zone of peace, to become a hub, which functions for the advancement of the entire humankind. He made these remarks addressing the valedictory session of the Indian Ocean Conference 2017 held at the Temple Trees, on 1st September.

Sri Lanka is vital center to strengthen the trade and naval activities of the region as well as to prosper the entire humankind due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, the President said that adding Sri Lanka is extending its hands to all the friendly States to move forward with the new technology while building a better society for the people.<sup>82</sup>

- **Indonesian authorities detect boat with 33 people from Sri Lanka**

Indonesian authorities had last week detected a boat with 33 people from Sri Lanka, an Australian Minister said. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says the asylum seeker boat found off Indonesia with dozens on board bound for Australia or New Zealand is a “really significant wake-up call”, The Australian reported.<sup>83</sup>

- **Concern in Colombo over delay in Indian projects**

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on 1<sup>st</sup> September met Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and discussed bilateral matters, including the perceived delay in implementing India backed projects in the island. The meeting took place at President Sirisena’s residence, a top source in Colombo told The Hindu . While Ms. Swaraj assured President Sirisena that New Delhi appreciated the domestic political challenges facing his government, she urged Colombo to expedite decision-making on Indian projects. India assured Sri Lanka of its continued and fullest support, a statement from the President’s office said.<sup>84</sup>

- **SL emerging as transit hub for cocaine smugglers: officials**

International cocaine smugglers are increasingly turning to Sri Lankan as a transit hub in Asia, authorities say, after they made a series of seizures of the drug, some smuggled in containers of sugar from Brazil, Reuters news agency reported. Sri Lankan customs have seized six shipments of high-purity South American cocaine in 14 months, including Asia’s largest-ever haul of the drug in December, at its main port. “Sri Lanka is becoming a hub for cocaine as it is a risk-free location with

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<sup>81</sup> “US lauds Sri Lanka’s ambitious reforms agenda and reconciliation steps”, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017, <https://news.lk/news/political-current-affairs/item/17882-us-lauds-sri-lanka-s-ambitious-reforms-agenda-and-reconciliation-steps>

<sup>82</sup> IOR must be transformed into a maritime zone of peace, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2017, <https://news.lk/news/politics/item/17895-ior-must-be-transformed-into-a-maritime-zone-of-peace-president>

<sup>83</sup> Indonesian authorities detect boat with 33 people from Sri Lanka, 3 September 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/09/03/indonesian-authorities-detect-boat-with-33-people-from-sri-lanka/>

<sup>84</sup> Concern in Colombo over delay in Indian projects, 2 September 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/concern-over-delay-in-indian-projects/article19605791.ece>

less legal restrictions,” a top police official who is aware of investigations into the smuggling told.<sup>85</sup>

## Maldives

- **Government renews invitation for political party talks**

The government has extended invitations to opposition parties and former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to revive failed all-party talks amid a deepening political crisis. Briefing the press at the president’s office on 30<sup>th</sup> August, Fisheries Minister Dr Mohamed Shainee, the government’s chief negotiator, blamed the opposition’s “preconditions” demanding the release of jailed leaders for the lack of progress since the first attempt to hold talks in July 2015. “But lately we’re seeing through the media opposition parties or opposition leaders calling for and very much encouraging positive changes or reforms,” he said. “So the government believed that the opposition is once again ready to sincerely participate in this without preconditions.” Letters were sent out on 30<sup>th</sup> morning asking the opposition to propose reforms within seven days, Shainee said, after which the government would consult with parties in the ruling coalition to reconvene talks.<sup>86</sup>

- **India visit a signal from Delhi to Maldives, says Nasheed**

Former President Mohamed Nasheed’s invitation to a New Delhi conference sponsored by the Indian foreign ministry is a signal of dissatisfaction with the Maldivian government, the exiled opposition leader told the Indian press. “I’m a convict and I was sentenced to 13 years in jail for terrorism. And yet, I’ve been invited to India. There is a message here, you have to be blind if you don’t see it,” Nasheed was quoted as saying during an interactive session with the media at Brookings India. “India is the world’s biggest democracy and it is difficult to see it remaining quiet or idle. We have high expectations from India, and I believe India will deliver. In fact, it is delivering.” Asked about the former president’s remarks, Ahmed Mohamed, the Maldivian ambassador to India, told The Hindu that bilateral relations are not under strain and that both governments are in regular contact.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> SL emerging as transit hub for cocaine smugglers: officials, 2 September 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/SL-emerging-as-transit-hub-for-cocaine-smugglers-officials-135872.html>

<sup>86</sup> Government renews invitation for political party talks, 30 August 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/government-renews-invitation-for-political-party-talks-132345>

<sup>87</sup> India visit a signal from Delhi to Maldives, says Nasheed, 30 August 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/india-visit-a-signal-from-delhi-to-maldives-says-nasheed-132270>

- **The Maldives condemns the atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims and decides to cease all trade ties with Myanmar.**

#### **Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maldives**

The Maldives condemns in the strongest terms, the atrocities committed against the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar, and is deeply concerned by the recent cycle of violence that resulted the death of dozens of Rohingya Muslims and displacing several thousands. The Rohingya Muslim minority continues to suffer under systematic repression and the United Nations has in the past documented such human rights violations against this minority group in Myanmar. <sup>[P7 SEP]</sup> The Maldives believes that the international community must act swiftly and firmly to stop the bloodshed.

The Government of Maldives has decided to cease all trade ties with Myanmar, until the Government of Myanmar takes measures to prevent the atrocities being committed against Rohingya Muslims. The Government of Maldives requests the United Nations Secretary General and the United Nations Human Rights Council to look into the grave violations of human rights against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.<sup>88</sup>

- **AG appeals court order to send Jumhoory Party leader abroad**

The Attorney General's (AG) Office appealed the Criminal Court's order, to send the former Maamigili MP Qasim Ibrahim abroad for medical treatment, at the High Court. The Criminal Court found opposition Jumhoory Party (JP)'s leader Qasim Ibrahim guilty on bribery charges and sentenced him to three years, two months and 12 days of imprisonment. As a result, Qasim has lost his seat in the parliament. During Qasim's trial earlier on 31<sup>st</sup> August, he collapsed in the courtroom in the middle of the hearing and was rushed to the hospital. He was later sentenced in absentia in the early hours of Friday morning. The verdict ordered the state to make arrangements for Qasim to be sent abroad to receive the medical treatment he needs immediately.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maldives, "The Maldives condemns the atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims and decides to cease all trade ties with Myanmar", 3 September 2017, <http://www.foreign.gov.mv/index.php/en/mediacentre/news/4063-the-maldives-condemns-the-atrocities-committed-against-rohingya-muslims-and-decides-to-cease-all-trade-ties-with-myanmar>

<sup>89</sup> AG appeals court order to send Jumhoory Party leader abroad, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/ag-appeals-court-order-to-send-jumhoory-party-leader-abroad/>



## West Asia

### Iran

- **South Africa pushing for Iran's membership at BRICS, Mbete says**

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani on September 2, 2017 praised South Africa's stance on defending the Palestinian people's rights. Larijani made the remarks during a joint press conference with South African National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete in Tehran. Larijani also said the visit to Tehran by the South African parliament speaker will help expand bilateral relationship. The Iranian parliament speaker also insisted on the need for cooperation between Tehran and Pretoria in the campaign against terrorism. For her part, Mbete said her country will make efforts to bring Iran to the club of BRICS which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. She said during the visit by the South African president to Tehran in April 2016 the issue of Iran's membership in BRICS was raised and "we are interested in Iran's membership... and believe that by inclusion of new countries" the bloc will see more economic development. She added her country is aware of that Iran's strategic situation in the region with an 80 million population and that Iran has made great advances in many areas including education. During a separate meeting with the top South African lawmaker on Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani also said Iran is determined to strengthen ties with African countries especially South Africa. Rouhani said "Tehran welcomes expansion of cooperation with Pretoria in economic area and energy sphere." Rouhani also said, "Iran and South Africa can make valuable efforts in line with serving international peace and stability and the interests of the developing countries through cooperation at global stage."<sup>90</sup>

- **EU reiterates support for Iran nuclear deal**

In their first meeting after the summer recess, the European Union defended the Iran nuclear agreement, aka the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a response to a new wave of pressure from the White House to undercut the international pact. Addressing the opening session of the 2017 EU Ambassadors Conference in Brussels on August 28, 2017, Federica Mogherini said "This was not an agreement between two countries, I have repeated it time and again and I have the impression that we will need to repeat it time and again in the months to come." Elsewhere, the French president became the latest world leader to come out in support of the JCPOA, saying France sees "no alternative" to the agreement. Emmanuel Macron said the deal has facilitated a constructive relationship with Iran. U.S. President Donald Trump has called the JCPOA — which was negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama — "the worst deal ever" and repeatedly

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<sup>90</sup> "South Africa Pushing for Iran's Membership at BRICS, Mbete Says," September 2, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/416476/South-Africa-pushing-for-iran-s-membership-at-BRICS-Mbete-says>, Accessed on September 4, 2017.

threatened to tear it up. The Trump administration is actively seeking a pretext to potentially withdraw from the JCPOA. The EU's top diplomat further hailed Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's "personal commitment to continue to implement their part of the deal. This is what is counting the most for us in this moment."<sup>91</sup>

- **Zarif, UN envoy discuss Syrian crisis**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura met in Tehran on August 28, 2017 to discuss political initiatives to settle the protracted Syrian conflict. De Mistura who arrived in Tehran late on August 27 also attached great importance to the Astana talks in settling the conflict in Syria which has been raging on for more than six years. Iran, Turkey and Russia brokered the Astana talks on Syria and the first three rounds of the talks were held on January 23-24, 2017, February 15-16, 2017 and March 14-15, 2017. The fourth round of the talks was held in May 2017 during which a document on creating de-escalation zones in Syria was signed. The fifth round of talks was held on July 4-5, 2017. The 6th round of Astana talks is scheduled to be held in mid-September, 2017. De Mistura also said that the Syrian crisis will be discussed in annual meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York which will start on September 12, 2017. In a significant policy shift on the civil war in Syria, Britain and its Western allies have finally dropped their long-standing demand that Syrian President Assad must step down — and may even accept elections in which he is allowed to stand again.<sup>92</sup>

- **Zarif: Iran to fortify ties with world in next 4 years**

Mohammad Javad Zarif who has succeeded to win the confidence of the parliament and the trust of the president to again lead Iran's foreign policy has said Iran will expand comprehensive relations with the outside world in the next four years. He said "Comprehensive interaction with the world is in our mind and hopefully the next four years will be the years of expanding all-out ties with the world given the fact that the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] has facilitated Iran's interaction with other countries." Zarif further said that it is essential to have relations and interaction with the outside world, not just one region, in order to have a "successful foreign policy". The chief diplomat also said that Iran has always sought good neighborliness in the region. He added, "We should have a safe and powerful region. We believe that our region can gain power through reliance on the people and relations and coordination among regional countries."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "EU Reiterates Support for Iran Nuclear Deal," August 29, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/416380/EU-reiterates-support-for-iran-nuclear-deal>, Accessed on September 4, 2017.

<sup>92</sup> "Zarif, UN Envoy Discuss Syrian Crisis," August 28, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/416330/Zarif-UN-envoy-discuss-syrian-crisis>, Accessed on September 4, 2017.

<sup>93</sup> "Zarif: Iran to Fortify Ties with World in Next 4 Years," September 2, 2017, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/416480/Zarif-iran-to-fortify-ties-with-world-in-next-4-years>

## Turkey

- **Merkel: ‘Turkey should not become an EU member’<sup>94</sup>**

Angela Merkel on Sunday unexpectedly promised to try to end Turkey’s EU accession talks in a live televised German election debate, amid escalating tensions between Berlin and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The German chancellor was seemingly bounced into making this unusually bold pledge by Martin Schulz, her social democrat challenger, who was the first to say he would break off the talks if he won the parliamentary poll on September 24.

The exchanges came with 12 German citizens now under arrest in Turkey in a crackdown by Mr Erdogan on regime critics and journalists that is widely seen in the EU as politically motivated and anti-democratic.

“The fact is clear that Turkey should not become an EU member,” said Ms Merkel, in an unprecedentedly clear rejection of Ankara’s accession hopes. She pledged to talk to EU partners about “a joint position so that we can end these accession talks”.

The exchange over Turkey was the high point of a wide-ranging debate in which Mr Schulz attacked Ms Merkel with surprising force over Turkey and also over refugee policy. Turkey to Bangladesh: Open your doors to Rohingya Muslims, we’ll cover all expenses<sup>95</sup>

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has called on Bangladesh to open its doors to Rohingya Muslims fleeing violence in Myanmar’s western Rakhine state. Speaking at a Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Eid al-Adha celebration event in the Mediterranean province of Antalya on Friday, Çavuşoğlu reiterated Turkey’s call to Bangladesh to open its doors to Rohingya people, and said that Turkey would pay all the expenses.

"We have also mobilized the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We will hold a summit regarding the Rakhine state this year. We need to find a decisive and permanent solution to this problem," the minister added. He said that no other Muslim country other than Turkey is showing sensitivity towards the massacres happening in Myanmar. In terms of humanitarian aid in the world, Turkey ranks 2nd after the United States with \$6 billion and \$6.3 billion respectively, Çavuşoğlu added.

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<sup>94</sup> Financial Times, 4 September, <https://www.ft.com/content/cf9f2566-90cc-11e7-a9e6-11d2f0ebb7f0>

<sup>95</sup> Daily Sabah, 1 September <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/09/01/turkey-to-bangladesh-open-your-doors-to-rohingya-muslims-well-cover-all-expenses>

- **Germany declines Turkish request to freeze Gülen assets: Spiegel<sup>96</sup>**

Germany has rejected a formal request from Turkey to freeze the assets of members of the network of U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen, widely believed to have been behind the failed July 15, 2016 coup attempt, the Spiegel magazine reported on Sept. 2.

The move is likely to worsen already strained ties between the two NATO allies after Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Sept. 1 that Germany should react decisively to Turkey's detention of two more German citizens on political charges. Without naming its sources, the magazine said the Turkish government had asked the Foreign Ministry in Berlin at the end of April to freeze the assets of people linked to the Gülen movement in Germany. It attached a list with 80 names, it added.

The German government officially rejected the request at the end of June, telling Ankara that there were no legal grounds for Germany's financial watchdog BaFin to crack down on the Gülen movement and its supporters, Spiegel reported.

The Foreign Ministry in Berlin declined to comment. The report also said the number of Turkish extradition requests sent to Germany had jumped to 53 since the beginning of the year, already exceeding the total in the whole of 2016.

- **Eid Meetings of Turkish Political Parties: Opposition MHP/CHP support for government on three issues<sup>97</sup>**

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has pledged support to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) on three issues, namely the fight against terror, foreign policy and adjustment laws for constitutional amendments, MHP deputy chairman Mevlüt Karakaya has said. Meeting with AKP lawmakers who visited the MHP for Eid al-Adha on Sept. 2, Karakaya said they would lend support to the government on the three issues. "First is the fight against terror. The MHP has been supporting and will continue to do so until the end of the fight against terrorism," Karakaya said.

He added that foreign policy was another issue in which they supported the government. "Our point of view regarding foreign policy may differ from the perspectives of other political parties. We want to express that we are extremely proud of this difference," he said. "Because there is a single Turkey," he said, without elaborating further.

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<sup>96</sup> Daily Hurriyet, 3 September <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/germany-declines-turkish-request-to-freeze-gulen-assets-spiegel.aspx?pageID=238&nID=117489&NewsCatID=510>

<sup>97</sup> Hurriyet Daily, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opposition-mhp-pledges-support-for-government-on-three-issues.aspx?pageID=238&nID=117510&NewsCatID=338>

- **Syrians now make up almost 4 percent of Turkey's population<sup>98</sup>**

Nearly four percent of Turkey's population now consists of Syrians, following the influx of refugees since the start of the civil war in the neighboring country in March 2011. Over three million Syrians are estimated to be in Turkey, daily Milliyet reported on Sept. 3. Among the Syrian migrants in Turkey, 1.68 million are male and 1.46 million are female. The Syrian population in Turkey is also overwhelmingly young, with 2.22 million being aged 30 and younger. Some 464,886 are between the ages of 19 and 24.

The overall three million figure almost corresponds to the total populations of Armenia, Lithuania and Albania. The first step of the massive refugee influx into Turkey came on April 29, 2011, when around 400 Syrians entered Turkey through the Cilvegözü Border Gate in the Yayladağı district of the southern border province of Hatay.

The General Staff, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Foreign Ministry prepared a scenario amid the start of this refugee flow in 2011, with a plan focusing on a possible migration wave from the Syrian provinces of Aleppo and Idlib.

## Cyber Security

- **US Arrests Chinese Man For Multiple Cyber-Attacks<sup>99</sup>**

The 36-year-old was arrested in Los Angeles on hacking charges linked to the high-profile hacks of the US Office of Personnel Management and insurer Anthem US authorities have arrested a Chinese national on hacking charges related to security breaches at the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the insurer Anthem and other high-profile cases.

Yu Pingan was arrested last week shortly after disembarking at Los Angeles International Airport, according to the US Department of Justice.

The move is one of the first such actions against a Chinese citizen since a September 2015 hacking accord between the US and China. Computer security firms have said that the number of Chinese state-sponsored attacks on US companies appear to have dropped significantly since that deal, but industry observers have argued this may only signal a shift towards methods that are more difficult to detect.

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<sup>98</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrians-now-make-up-almost-4-percent-of-turkeys-population-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=117507&NewsCatID=341>

<sup>99</sup> [http://www.silicon.co.uk/workspace/us-arrests-chinese-multiple-cyber-attacks-220689?inf\\_by=59ace0d8681db8ff2a8b49fe](http://www.silicon.co.uk/workspace/us-arrests-chinese-multiple-cyber-attacks-220689?inf_by=59ace0d8681db8ff2a8b49fe)

In October 2015 Chinese president Xi Jinping and then-British prime minister David Cameron jointly announced a comparable agreement during a state visit by Xi to the UK.

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	August 30	Nushki / Baluchistan	At least 12 Baloch Republican Army (BRA) militant surrendered to security forces and relinquished their weapons and ammunition in Nushki district, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). <sup>100</sup>	Surrender	
2	August 30	Karachi / Sindh	Mohammad Shakirullah <i>alias</i> Mufti Shakir, who was arrested over charges of killing policemen and carrying out the suicide attack on Crime Investigation Department (CID) Superintendent of Police (SP) Chaudhry Aslam in 2014, was released on bail and subsequently fled to Afghanistan and is now running an active training camp for militants, according to reports. <sup>101</sup>		
3	August 31	Harnai / Baluchistan	At least 10 suspected militants were killed in an operation carried out by security forces in Harnai district. Three camps being used by militants in the area were also destroyed, and a large cache of	10	0

<sup>100</sup> 12 Baloch Republican Army militants surrender to security forces, *Dawn*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354941/12-baloch-republican-army-militants-surrender-to-security-forces>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>101</sup> Imtiaz Ali, Confessions of TTP's Mufti Shakir reveal dark underbelly of militancy in Karachi, *Dawn*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1354971/confessions-of-ttpps-mufti-shakir-reveal-dark-underbelly-of-militancy-in-karachi>, accessed on September 4, 2017

			arms and ammunition was recovered during the operation. <sup>102</sup>		
4	September 1	Mohmand Agency / FATA	At least three people were killed and two others were wounded in a landmine explosion near Shati Mena area of Ambar <i>tehsil</i> (revenue unit) in Mohmand Agency. <sup>103</sup>	3	2

### **Afghanistan**

S.N o.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	August 28	Nangarhar	At least 140 militants were killed and more than 50 others were injured during joint and special offensives in the month of August in Nangarhar province, according to provincial police chief Lieutenant General Abdul Rahman Rahimi. He said that 18 clearing and airstrikes operations were carried out against militants in Nangarhar last month. <sup>104</sup>	140	50
2	August 29	Nangarhar	At least 14 Daesh militants were killed in drone strikes by the US forces in Mamand Dara, Marghay and Owsatkhan areas of Achin district Nangarhar province. <sup>105</sup>	14	NS
3	August 29	Kabul	The ongoing conflict has forced more than 212,000 people to leave their homes in Afghanistan	Displacement	

<sup>102</sup> Syed Ali Shah, 10 suspected militants killed in Balochistan operation, *Dawn*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1355170/10-suspected-militants-killed-in-balochistan-operation>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>103</sup> Ali Akbar, 3 killed in Mohmand landmine blast, *Dawn*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1355360/3-killed-in-mohmand-landmine-blast>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>104</sup> 140 Militants Killed in Nangarhar Last Month, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, August 29, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/August%2029,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 2, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>105</sup> 14 Daesh Militants Eliminated in Nangarhar Drone Strike, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, August 30, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/August%2030,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 1, accessed on September 4, 2017

			so far in 2017, said United Nations. Some 212, 439 people have been displaced since January, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). <sup>106</sup>		
4	September 2	Uruzgan	One civilian was killed and nine others, including a Policeman, were injured in a bomb blast in Tirinkot District. <sup>107</sup>	1	9
5	September 2	Kandahar / Paktika	At least nine Taliban militants were killed and four others were injured during Afghan security forces-led operations in Kandahar and Paktika provinces. <sup>108</sup>	9	4

### Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	September 2	Anbar	Warplanes from the United States-led coalition killed 22 Islamic State militants in western Anbar, Qatari al-Obaidi, a commander at the tribal forces in Anbar. <sup>109</sup>	22	0
2	September 3	Anbar	Islamic State executed 16 civilians in western Anbar towns of Annah, Qaim and Rawa over spying for security troops. <sup>110</sup>	16	0
3	September	Anbar	A lone pickup truck carrying	3	0

<sup>106</sup> Conflict in Afghanistan has displaced 212,439 people since January: UN, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, August 29, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/August%2030,%202017/Front%20page.pdf> , p. 1, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>107</sup> 1 Killed, 12 Injured in Uruzgan Violence, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, September 4, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/September%2004,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 1, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>108</sup> Taliban insurgents suffer casualties in Kandahar and Paktika operations: MoD, *Khaama Press*, September 2, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-insurgents-suffer-casualties-in-kandahar-and-paktika-operations-mod-03366>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>109</sup> Mohamed Mostafa, Coalition warplanes kill 22 Islamic State fighters in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, September 2, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/coalition-warplanes-kill-22-islamic-state-fighters-anbar/>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>110</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Sixteen civilians executed in Islamic State-held towns in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, September 3, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/sixteen-civilians-executed-islamic-state-held-towns-anbar/>, accessed on September 4, 2017



	3		fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) was ambushed in the vast desert of Anbar province. Subsequently, ISIS militants beheaded all three detained PMU troops in the Said area of western Iraq. <sup>111</sup>		
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### Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	August 31	Raqqah	The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights informed that 13 members of the Syrian Democratic Forces were killed, in battles with the Islamic State militants in the city of Raqqah and countryside of Hasakah. <sup>112</sup>	13	0
2	September 2	Deir Ezzor	Units from the Syrian Arab Army continued their campaign against ISIS in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor. The soldiers conducted a raid in the direction of Tallet Alloush and the surrounding areas, attacking IS militants and seizing their weapons and ammunition. <sup>113</sup>	SAA campaign	

<sup>111</sup> Chris Tomson, ISIS captures Iraqi troops off-guard, beheads them immediately, *Al Masdar News*, September 3, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-captures-iraqi-troops-off-guard-beheads-immediately-18-graphic/>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>112</sup> Loaa Adel, SOHR: 13 SDF members killed in battles with ISIS in Raqqah, *Iraqi News*, August 31, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/sohr-13-sdf-members-killed-battles-isis-raqqah/>, accessed on September 4, 2017

<sup>113</sup> Leith Fadel, Syria: SAA makes further advances in Deir Ezzor, *Al Masdar News*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syria-saa-makes-advances-deir-ezzor-video/>, accessed on September 4, 2017