

Weekly Media Updates **(2-8 October, 2017)**

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Africa

- **U.S. to Ease Decades-Old Sanctions Against Sudan¹**

The United States announced on 6 October 2017, Friday that it would end its toughest economic and trade sanctions against Sudan in a week's time, citing progress the Khartoum government has made in fighting terrorism and easing humanitarian hardships. Sudan has also agreed not to seek arms deals with North Korea. According to an unnamed senior US official cited by Reuters, the US does not believe Sudan has diplomatic ties with North Korea, and Washington does not expect that to change any time soon.

The sanctions which included a trade embargo and other penalties essentially cut off Sudan from most of the global financial system for the past 20 years. Some of the sanctions date back to 1997 and were intended to punish the Sudanese government for its the brutal tactics of its forces in a series of internal conflicts.

Explaining the end of the sanctions, US officials said the authoritarian regime had maintained a cessation of hostilities in Darfur and other old flashpoints. The government in Khartoum has also been seen by the US to improve humanitarian access to former conflict zones and ended its attempts to destabilize South Sudan, which gained independence in July 2011.

Officials also pointed to improved US and Sudanese cooperation on counterterrorism measures, in particular the regional efforts to hunt down Joseph Kony's rebel Lords Resistance Army.

- **Liberia Elections²**

After two six-year terms, post-war President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is stepping down, and 20 presidential candidates are vying to replace her and secure the country's top job. The large youth population in Liberia, including 19 percent of voters age 18-24 who are eligible to vote for the first time, want their voice to be heard when they vote on October 10. Voters young and old have told RFI they are concerned with corruption, lack of paved roads, and rapidly rising school fees.

¹ Deutche Welle, 6 October 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201710070071.html>

² The News, 4 October 2017

,http://allafrica.com/stories/201710040606.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabfzqa

- **People Power: Lessons from Togo to African leaders clinging to power³**

Thousands of citizens in Togo have marched through the streets of Togo over the past few weeks, demanding the resignation of Faure Gnassingbé, who has been in power since 2005. For the Togolese people, the message is clear, “50 years was too long.” Gnassingbé Eyadéma came to power through a coup in 1967. By the time of his death in 2005 aged 69, he had a continental record; he was the longest serving president, ruling for 38 years. Unlike his peers who’ve lived till the 90s, his stay in power was cut short earlier than probably expected. He died at 69, and he would have probably continued had death not cut short his rule. His son, Faure Gnassingbé took over and has been in power for 12 years, a continuation of his father’s legacy.

With a population of 7.6 million people, (a country of 57,000 square kilometres), Togolese people have been protesting against the Gnassingbé dynasty. For a country like Togo, the protests serve as an inspiration to other countries such as Uganda where President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni plans to use the parliament to remove the 75 years presidential age limit. A similar move was made in Togo in 2005, when it lowered the minimum age for president from 45 to 35 in order for Gnassingbé to ascend into power.

- **Visa-Free Africa by 2018⁴**

In 2013, the African Union adopted Agenda 63, as a blueprint to propel the continent to prosperity within the next 50 years. As part of the agenda, African countries committed to abolishing visa requirements for all African citizens travelling within the continent by 2018.

According to the second Africa Visa Openness Index, released mid this year, 75 per cent of the countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in either Eastern or West Africa, while 20 per cent are in Southern Africa.

Only one country in the top 20 most open to visas is in North Africa (Mauritania), while no countries in Central Africa appear in the top 20. On January 1, 2013, Rwanda eased visa requirements for African nationals.

All holders of African passports travelling to or transiting through the country are issued an entry visa upon arrival at any Rwandan entry point. And, some countries do not

³ <https://thisisafrica.me/people-power-lessons-from-togo-to-african-leaders-clinging-to-power/>

⁴ The New Times, 4 October

2017 http://allafrica.com/stories/201710040051.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabljpw

require visas at all. For Rwandans, however, of the 53 African countries, only 29 allow holders of the Rwandan passport to enter without a visa or issue it on arrival.

The Africa Visa Openness index shows that to travel to other African countries, Africans need visas to enter 55 per cent of states within the continent.

North Africa

- **Egypt Expressed Deep Concern Over Kurdish Referendum⁵**

The government of Egypt has expressed its deep concern over the referendum in Kurdish region in Iraq and has called upon all parties to resist any unilateral move which might create instability in the region. The foreign ministry in its statement said that the independent of Kurdistan and subsequent break up of Iraq would have a long term repercussion on the region. The statement lamented the fact that the Kurdish leaders went for referendum despite the call by the Arab world and international community not to take unilateral step. The statement further added that all parties must exercise self-restraint and steer clear of unilateral measures that could complicate the situation further destabilize Iraq and encourage a climate of chaos and tension. The foreign ministry statement called the Erbil and Baghdad to hold a comprehensive dialogue to reach a final solution on the issue and there should be no delay in the dialogue because it will lead to another set of crisis in the region.

- **Saudi-led Coalition Targets Houthis Concentration in Bejan⁶**

The Saudi-led coalition in recent air strikes in Yemen has target the Houthis camp in the area of Jeban in Yemen. There are reports that the strikes have destroyed many hideouts of the Houthis and it also targeted the weapons store belonging to the rebel forces. In the strikes many member of the Houthis forces were killed and huge military and economic infrastructure of the Houthis who have declared an open war against the regime of President Mansour was damages .In a related

⁵ English Ahram online: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/277815/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-voices-deep-concern-about-Kurdish-independen.aspx>

⁶ Asharqal-Awsat <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1043956/%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86>

development, the Houthis are reported to have targeted a medical aid team in town of Zamar while they were heading in the city to provide medical assistance to the victim. There are reports that the Houthis have built three secret jails and courts as well where many pro-government members have been taken prisoners. In recent weeks, they have created many check points in different towns held by them for months. In the town of Zamar only, they have taken over the control of a university and reportedly held a conferences and workshops focusing on Shiite theology and sectarian war in the country.

- **Egyptian Economy on Track: IMF⁷**

Despite all the odds, the Egyptian economy is on track and this was stated by the IMF. The statement further said that Egypt is off to good start to implement new set of economic reforms in the country. There is no doubt about surging inflation and ordinary people are making it difficult to meet their end but the nation has taken some stringent measure like cutting subsidy on the fuel and other commodities and the country has done a good job by curbing the public spending. This step of the government has increased the confidence of the investors which in long term would benefit the national economy, statement said. The IMF has also released another installment of USD 1.25 billion, bringing the total disbursement to USD 4 billion for the Egypt. In its first review after committing the US \$ 12 billion loan to Egypt, the IMF said that the reform in the micro economic sector is still desperately required but added that government's current resolve shows that it will bring the economy on track.

China

- **Xi urges solid efforts to win battle against poverty**

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for enhanced and solid efforts to win the battle against poverty on 9 October. Xi, gave the instruction ahead of the fourth National Poverty Relief Day on October 17. All-out effort should be put towards poverty relief, as it is the toughest of all battles, said Xi. Remarkable progress has been made since the CPC Central Committee made a solemn promise to lift all rural people out of poverty by 2020, the president added. Xi's remarks came as a meeting was held in Beijing on October 9 to honour people who have made great contributions to poverty relief.

⁷ Egyptian Street, <https://egyptianstreets.com/2017/09/27/despite-obstacles-egypt-economic-reforms-on-track-imf/>

Premier Li Keqiang also congratulated them for their achievements and asked authorities to support their work and gather more strength from all of society for the goal of building a moderately prosperous society by 2020.⁸

- **China's anti-graft drive**

More than 70,000 officials at or above the county-head level have been investigated for suspected corruption since the 18th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress in 2012, the top anti-graft body of the CPC said on 7 October. The anti-graft campaign continues to gain momentum and win applause from the public, according to a statement on the website of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI).⁹

- **Documentary on PLA**

A documentary showcasing China's military development has been shown by China Central Television (CCTV) ahead of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on Oct 18.

CCTV began airing the eight-episode documentary Strong Military on Sept 28. As of October 3, six episodes focusing on the army's development as well as its anti-corruption endeavors, were available online, receiving millions of views. The series is also being aired on a dozen local channels from northeastern Jilin to southern Guangdong provinces¹⁰

- **China's J-20 fighter jet put into service**

China's latest J-20 stealth fighter has been officially commissioned into military service, according to Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense. The flight tests are being conducted as scheduled, Wu said at a press conference.

The J-20 is China's fourth-generation medium and long-range fighter jet. It made its maiden flight in 2011 and was first shown to the public at the 11th Airshow China in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, in November last year.¹¹

⁸ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/09/c_136667534.htm

⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/07/c_136663540.htm

¹⁰ http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-10/06/content_4794034.htm

¹¹ http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-09/28/content_4793397.htm

European Union

- **Hungary Criticized EC Migration Policy**

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto has criticized European Union migration policy and obligatory quota system for settlement of refugees. He noted that migration policy of the EU has not been successful so far. He argued that Central Europe is 'honest' about its stand on the migration and quota system. The western European countries have supported EU migration policy, but they have completed their quota to 25 per cent only. Therefore, as he argued, no one has actually implemented the EU migration policy and completely accepted the quota system. Hungary has been opposing the quota system of the EU.¹²

- **Conservative Party Conference 2017**

The Conservative Party conference was held on 1-4 October 2017 in Manchester.¹³ In the political dynamics of the country, conservative party and the EU, the party conference was crucial in understanding changing political dynamics. Prime Minister Theresa May did not provide detail of Brexit. She just repeated some aspects of her Florence speech. She promised the 'British Dream' for young people. She also promised to cap the energy prices as promised in the manifesto.¹⁴

- **Germany and France's Response Theresa May proposal of Transition Period**

In her Florence speech, British Prime Minister Theresa May proposed a transition period. As reported in the Financial Times, Germany and France wanted to resolve the UK's EU bill first. The UK was hoping that the Prime Minister May Florence speech would facilitate and accelerate the negotiations on transition period after

¹² Aurora Bosotti, 'They're HYPOCRITES' Hungarian minister BLASTS Brussels for 'failing' migrant policy, Sunday Express, October 8, 2017, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/863472/Hungary-European-Union-EU-migrant-policy-failure-european-commission-jean-claude-juncker>

¹³ Conservative Party Conference 2017, <https://conservativepartyconference.com/index>

¹⁴ Rowena Mason, Theresa May's speech to Conservative party conference: key points, the guardian, October 4, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/04/theresa-may-speech-conservative-party-conference-key-points>, Recap: Theresa May's eventful speech, BBC, October 2, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/live/uk-politics-41466961>

Britain's exit in 2019. However, Germany-led group of EU countries has reportedly wanted more clarity on the long-term financial commitments.¹⁵

- **India-EU Summit**

The 14th India-EU summit was held in New Delhi on 6 October 2017. The last summit was held in Brussels in 2016. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and Jean Cluade Juncker, President of the European Commission visited New Delhi to represent the EU in the summit. India and the EU recognized that they the natural partners and reaffirmed their commitment for strengthening the strategic partnership.¹⁶

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Kim Jong-un's sister promoted in party reshuffle**

On October 7, 2017 during the Second Plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, was made an alternate member of the politburo - the top decision-making body. In the reshuffle, Choe Ryong-hae, a vice chairman of the party and one of the closest aides to Kim Jong-un, was selected as a member of the party's Central Military Commission. He now holds eight high-profile positions in the government and the party. North Korea's foreign minister Ri Yong Ho, was also promoted to full vote-carrying member of the politburo.¹⁷

- **Trump says 'only one thing will work' with North Korea**

On October 7, 2017 U.S. President Donald Trump said "only one thing will work" in dealing with North Korea after previous administrations had talked to Pyongyang without results. "Presidents and their administrations have been talking to North Korea for 25 years, agreements made and massive amounts of money paid," Trump said in a tweet. "...Hasn't worked, agreements violated before the ink was dry, making fools of U.S. negotiators. Sorry, but only one thing will work!" Trump did

¹⁵Germany rejects Theresa May's Brexit transition hopes, The Financial Times, October 7, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/9229c870-aab3-11e7-93c5-648314d2c72c>

¹⁶ European Commission – Statement, Joint Statement 14th India-EU Summit, New Delhi, 6 October 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-17-3743_en.htm

¹⁷ "Second Plenum of Seventh WPK Central Committee", KCNA, October 8, 2017, <https://kcnawatch.co/newstream/1507453321-366833140/second-plenum-of-seventh-wpk-central-committee/> (Accessed on October 9, 2017)

not make clear to what he was referring, but his comments seemed to be a further suggestion that military action was on his mind.¹⁸

- **Abe Calls North Korea a “nuclear state”**

On October 8, 2017 in a debate of party heads held in Tokyo Shinzo Abe referred North Korea as a “nuclear state” in pressing his case that Japan faces a national crisis requiring a Lower House election. Abe’s remark is sharply at odds with the government’s foreign policy position, which does not recognize North Korea as a nuclear state. During the debate organized ahead of the upcoming lower house election on October 22, Abe said, “North Korea possesses nuclear weapons. It is a nuclear state.”¹⁹

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Thailand’s PM Visit to the US: Discusses South China Sea and other Security Concerns**

President Trump welcomed PM Prayut Chan-o-Cha to the White House on October 2, 2017, while describing the visit of the PM as a great honour and stated that the US and Thailand had a long and very storied history, while also adding that the relationship at present is very strong and has gone stronger over the last nine months.²⁰

The two leaders reaffirmed that a strong and thriving US-Thailand alliance is underpinned by both shared interests and common values. The two leaders shared a vision of a stronger alliance for common security, a closer economic partnership for common prosperity, and growing people-to-people ties. The two leaders emphasised that the key feature in underpinning peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and resolve to further strengthen the alliance through a broad range of measures, including enhanced dialogue, closer coordination, regular exchange,

¹⁸ "Trump: Only one thing will work to solve N.K. nuclear impasse", The Yonhap News, October 8, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/10/08/0401000000AEN20171008000400315.html> (Accessed on October 9, 2017)

¹⁹ "VOTE 2017: Abe jumps the gun and calls North Korea a ‘nuclear state’", The Asahi Shimbun, October 9, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201710090033.html> (Accessed on October 9, 2017)

²⁰ "Trump Welcomes Prayut to White House Lunch", *Bangkok Post*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1335299/trump-welcomes-prayut-to-white-house-lunch>, accessed on October 3, 2017.

and defence modernisation. On the South China Sea the two leaders highlighted the importance of a peaceful and stable South China Sea as it is vital for global commerce and freedom of navigation and over flight. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of International law and the 1982 UNCLOS; while welcoming the adoption of the framework of the COC in the SCS and called for its early conclusion. The two leaders also expressed grave concern about the situation in the Korean Peninsula while also discussing the need for expeditious humanitarian assistance to the affected communities in the Rakhine State.²¹

- **US-Philippines Launch New Counter Terror Drills**

The US and Philippines troops launched a new joint counter-terrorism exercise on October 2, days after President Duterte reversed his course in favour of pursuing its oldest military alliances in Southeast Asia and stated to become more friendlier to the US. The week-long joint operation involves live-fire training, rescues in combat situations, and mass-casualty situation aboard ships. According to the US Embassy the drills will increase the overall US and Philippines readiness, improve bilateral responsiveness to crisis in the region, and further reinforce the decades-old alliance.²²

- **Stronger Vietnam-Lao Trade and Connectivity**

Vietnam's Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong at a reception for the visiting Prime Minister of Lao's Thongloun Sisoulith in Hanoi urged the Government of Vietnam and Laos to work out measures to increase two-way trade and boost connectivity in economy, transport infrastructure and energy. The General Secretary also called on the two governments to remove difficulties and obstacles so as to ensure the progress and quality of Vietnamese investment projects in Laos. Further, he stressed on the need to improve the quality and efficiency of bilateral cooperation in education-training and human resource development. The visit of

²¹ "Joint Statement between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand: Stronger Alliance for Common Security and Closer Economic Partnership for Common Prosperity", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand*, October 3, 2017, <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/82134-Joint-Statement-between-the-United-States-of-Ameri.html>, accessed on October 5, 2017.

²²"US, Philippine Troops Launch new Counter-terror drills", *Borneo Bulletin*, October 3, 2017, <http://borneobulletin.com.bn/us-philippine-troops-launch-new-counter-terror-drills/>, accessed on October 3, 2017.

Lao's PM takes place at a time when the two countries are celebrating their 55th founding anniversary of diplomatic ties and 40 years of the signing of Laos-Vietnam Treaty of amity and Cooperation.²³

Myanmar

- **Foreign diplomats visit conflict-torn Rakhine**

Myanmar authorities took foreign diplomats and United Nations representatives on a tour on 2nd October to conflict-torn northern Rakhine State, where a security crackdown has led to an exodus of more than 500,000 Rohingya Muslims. Three groups of diplomats were taken to three different areas, said Ye Htut, district administrator of Maungdaw in Rakhine. He did not provide details on the diplomats' nationalities. Myanmar has come under international criticism for barring aid groups, journalists and other outsiders from independently travelling to the region to see the situation there. A previous guided visit for diplomats scheduled for last week was abruptly cancelled²⁴.

- **Diplomats urge government to let UN experts visit Rakhine**

Yangon-based diplomats have urged Nay Pyi Taw to allow a United Nations fact-finding mission to visit Rakhine State to demonstrate the country's commitment to addressing allegations of human rights violations. In a press release issued on 3rd October the diplomats from 16 countries and the EU pointed out that their visit to Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships was not an investigative mission. "Investigation of allegations of human rights violations needs to be carried out by experts," according to the statement²⁵.

- **Mass Exodus of Muslims from Rakhine 'Not Honest': Govt Spokesperson**

The Myanmar government's spokesperson has questioned the motives behind the mass migration of Muslims from northern Rakhine State to neighboring Bangladesh in the last month, claiming there are no clashes at all in the area. "We

²³ "Vietnam's Party Chief Requests Stronger Vietnam-Laos Trade, Connectivity", *Lao News Agency*, October 4, 2017, <http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=28537>, accessed on October 6, 2017.

²⁴ Foreign diplomats visit conflict-torn Rakhine, 3 October 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/foreign-diplomats-visit-conflict-torn-rakhine.html>

²⁵ Diplomats urge government to let UN experts visit Rakhine, 4th October 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/diplomats-urge-government-let-un-experts-visit-rakhine.html>

believe that [self-identifying Rohingya Muslims] are plotting against the government by misleading [the international community] that there is mass migration,” said U Zaw Htay, who is also director-general of the State Counselor Office²⁶.

- **Bangladesh and Myanmar Agree To Treat ARSA As Common Enemy**

Bangladesh expressed its position during a visit of Myanmar delegations to regard the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) as a common enemy of Myanmar and Bangladesh, Myanmar’s State Counselor’s Office said on 3rd Oct. Myanmar declared the ARSA an extremist terrorist group in accordance with the country’s Counter-Terrorism Law after violent attacks on security outposts on Aug. 25.

Myanmar State Counselor’s Office Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe visited Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, from 1st to 3rd October and met with the Bangladeshi Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Hassan Mahmood Ali to draft plans for the repatriation of Muslim residents who had fled to Bangladesh escaping military clearance operation after the attack by the ARSA in northern Rakhine²⁷.

- **ARSA says ceasefire to end on October 9**

ARSA whose attacks triggered an army crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state unleashing a huge wave of refugees said on 7th October that their one-month ceasefire would end in two days, but added they were open to a peace deal if the government offered it. In a statement released through its Twitter account, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) said its unilateral truce would end at midnight on October 9. “The humanitarian pause was conducted in order to enable humanitarian actors to assess and respond to the humanitarian crisis in Arakan (Rakhine),” the statement said²⁸.

²⁶ Mass Exodus of Muslims from Rakhine ‘Not Honest’: Govt Spokesperson, 6th October 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/mass-exodus-muslims-rakhine-not-honest-govt-spokesperson.html>

²⁷ Bangladesh and Myanmar Agree To Treat ARSA As Common Enemy: State Counselor’s Office, 3rd October 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/bangladesh-myanmar-agree-treat-arsa-common-enemy-state-counselors-office.html>

²⁸ ARSA says ceasefire to end on October 9, 9th October 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/arsa-says-ceasefire-end-october-9>

North America

Canada

- **Trudeau Warns Against 'National Divisions' After Energy East Pipeline Decision**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has received much criticism in the heated debate on energy following TransCanada's decision to scrap two major pipeline projects. PM Trudeau has issued a statement on October 7th warning against "stoking national divisions" over the corporation's business move. Trudeau says that the false premise is that the failure of the Energy East pipeline is a result of federal regulation.²⁹ He references the two major oil export pipeline that are currently under construction, with a third expected to move forwards in the near future, saying that is three more pipelines than the previous government managed to initiate in a decade. The pipeline would have carried western crude from the Alberta oilsands to the Irving Oil refinery in Saint John, NB, as well as an export terminal, but TransCanada cancelled it Thursday, citing changed circumstances. TransCanada said in a letter to the National Energy Board that it was abandoning the project because of the board's decision to allow hearings to consider greenhouse gas emissions from producing and processing the oil it transports in the pipeline. The premiers of Alberta and New Brunswick have expressed disappointment, while Quebec politicians, along with Indigenous and environmental groups, welcome the project's demise.²⁹

- **Conservatives urge PM to 'explore' joining U.S. missile defence system**

The Conservatives called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to "explore the option of Canada joining the (U.S.) anti-ballistic missile program" and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan suggested he's not ruling it out. The Conservatives said in a press release that Canada must consider joining the program that aims to shoot down warheads at high altitudes as the "North Korean threat continues to intensify." Sajjan later told reporters that "when we look at what BMD (ballistic missile defence) is, what the threats are, we need to actually spend more time to making sure that we do get this right."³⁰

²⁹ Canadian Press, "Trudeau Warns Against 'National Divisions' After Energy East Pipeline Decision," http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/10/07/trudeau-pipeline-decision_a_23236202/?utm_hp_ref=ca-homepage, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

³⁰ Josh Dehaas, "Conservatives urge PM to 'explore' joining U.S. missile defence system," <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/conservatives-urge-pm-to-explore-joining-u-s-missile-defence-system-1.3618627>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

- **EU and Canada settle cattle battle at the WTO**

The European Union and Canada have ended a 21-year dispute over hormone-treated meat after agreeing a wider trade agreement, they said in a filing published by the World Trade Organization on Tuesday.

The settlement of the dispute at the WTO, which began in 1996, was facilitated by a liberalization of trade under the EU/Canada Comprehensive Economic and Free Trade Agreement (CETA) which came into force on Sept. 21. Under the terms of the deal, Canada gives up any right to retaliate over the decades-old complaint, which alleged the EU was breaking WTO rules by banning hormone-treated beef. The eventual deal allowed Canada to raise its exports to the EU in stages to 50,000 tonnes of duty-free beef, as well as 80,000 tonnes of pork and 100,000 of wheat.³¹

The United States

- **Thaad: US to sell \$15bn missile defence to Saudi Arabia**

The US government has approved the sale to Saudi Arabia of its advanced Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (Thaad) missile defence system. The State Department said the \$15bn (£11.5bn) deal furthered US national security and foreign policy interests. It would boost Saudi and Gulf security against Iranian and other regional threats, the state department added. The announcement comes a day after Saudi Arabia agreed to buy air defence systems from Russia. The deal would not alter the military balance in the region, the Pentagon's Defense Security Co-operation Agency said.³²

- **Mattis: US will try to work with Pakistan on terrorism 'one more**

The United States will try to work with Pakistan on terrorism “one more time” before taking punitive action to pressure them to do more, Defense Secretary James Mattis. Mattis was testifying in front of the committee alongside Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford, the pair’s second hearing of the day on the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. The U.S. relationship with Pakistan has ebbed and flowed over the course of the 16-year war in Afghanistan, getting most tense after U.S. special forces killed al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011. In his August speech outlining his new strategy for Afghanistan, President Trump said the United States would do more to pressure Pakistan to combat terrorist safe havens in its borders. Reported options for pressuring Pakistan to do more include

³¹ Tom Miles, “EU and Canada settle cattle battle at the WTO,” Accessed on 09 October 2017.

³² BBC News, “Thaad: US to sell \$15bn missile defence to Saudi Arabia,” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41532889>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

curtailing or conditioning aid, sanctioning Pakistani officials, stepping up drone strikes inside the country, taking away its status as a major non-NATO ally or naming it as a state sponsor of terrorism. Asked Tuesday at the House hearing whether taking away Pakistan's status as a major non-NATO ally is an option on the table, Mattis said he's "sure it will be." Mattis said assistant secretaries and national security staff will visit Pakistan to discuss the issue, followed by himself and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.³³

- **Trump should not scrap the Iran nuclear deal: Defense Secretary James Mattis**

U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis on Tuesday said it would not be in the country's national security interest for President Donald Trump to abandon the Iran nuclear deal.

The secretary's assessment marks one of the strongest public defenses of the deal by an administration official in recent weeks. Trump has lately begun hinting that he may soon take steps to leave the landmark 2015 accord, which put limits on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The White House is approaching an Oct. 15 deadline, when Trump must either certify to Congress that Iran is complying with the deal or give lawmakers the choice to reimpose sanctions.³⁴

- **Trump Rattles Saber at North Korea: 'Only One Thing Will Work'**

President Donald Trump returned to saber-rattling against North Korea, saying that "only one thing will work!" after years of diplomacy have failed, even as his counterpart in Pyongyang termed nuclear weapons a powerful deterrent. The remarks came two days after Trump cryptically said during a dinner with American military leaders that observers were witnessing "the calm before the storm." He refused to clarify the comment, adding only that "you'll find out." Later he stated there was "nothing to clarify." North Korea's Kim has heightened global tensions this year with a series of increasingly provocative missile launches and an underground nuclear test. The country's foreign minister even floated the idea of exploding a warhead over the Pacific Ocean.³⁵

³³ Rebecca Kheel, "Mattis: US will try to work with Pakistan on terrorism 'one more time,'" <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/353724-mattis-us-will-try-to-work-with-pakistan-on-terrorism-one-more-time>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

³⁴ Tom DiChristopher, "Trump should not scrap the Iran nuclear deal: Defense Secretary James Mattis," <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/03/trump-should-not-scrap-iran-nuclear-deal-sec-james-mattis-says.html>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

³⁵ Andrew M harris, "Trump Rattles Saber at North Korea: 'Only One Thing Will Work,'" <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-07/trump-rattles-saber-at-north-korea-only-one-thing-will-work>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

Mexico

- **Mexico Peso Slumps on Nafta Concern, Zavala's Potential Split**

The Mexican peso slid to a four-month low as speculation rose that Nafta talks will be delayed and local journalists said the former first lady would split from the nation's largest opposition party, potentially boosting the chances of leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The peso fell 1.2 percent to 18.4962 at close of markets Thursday, partly reflecting tumult in Mexican politics, said Bank of America strategist Claudio Irigoyen, who recommends shorting the peso. Zavala, the wife of Felipe Calderon, has been threatening to leave the PAN if she doesn't get the nomination. Several media outlets reported Thursday that she'll leave, citing unidentified sources, while Zavala herself said she'd make an announcement regarding the July 2018 election later in the week.³⁶

- **Anti-corruption push key to economic growth in Mexico**

Better economic prospects for Mexico depend on a concerted push to end corruption in the country, the governor of the central bank said in an interview. "The (Mexican) society's demand is for the rule of law, legal certainty and an end to corruption," Agustin Carstens said in an interview with leading daily newspaper Reforma. Mr Carstens said the urgency for the current anti-corruption push mirrors a push to tame rampant inflation a generation ago. "This is the issue that we need to solve in order to close the circle and really have a much better economic performance," he said. Corruption is shaping up to be a key issue in next year's presidential election, with opinion polls showing President Enrique Pena Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) faces a serious risk of being voted out of office.³⁷

Argentina

- **Argentina preparing to auction offshore hydrocarbons exploration next year**

Argentina plans to auction offshore oil and gas exploration rights next year (2018), in the hope of developing fields off its Atlantic coast like those in neighbouring Brazil. Earlier this year (2017) Argentina hired Norway's Spectrum to do a seismic

³⁶ Nacha Cattan, "Mexico Peso Slumps on Nafta Concern, Zavala's Potential Split," Accessed on 09 October 2017.

³⁷ "Anti-corruption push key to economic growth in Mexico," <http://www.business-times.com.sg/government-economy/anti-corruption-push-key-to-economic-growth-in-mexico>, Accessed on 09 October 2017.

survey in cooperation with state-run oil firm YPF SA. A spokesman for the energy ministry said Australia's Searcher Seismic was also surveying the area, which to date has been little explored. According to Energy Minister Juan Jose Aranguren, "There is a high probability that the subsalt basin that exists on the coast of Brazil continues south and so we see the discovery of any formation of oil and conventional gas in the area as very attractive. It could be very profitable for the country." In the first week of October 2017, Brazil attracted a record US\$1.19 billion in its 14th round of bidding for oil exploration and production rights. Since taking office in late 2015 business-friendly President Mauricio Macri's government has prioritized investment in the energy sector to try to reverse a costly energy deficit. Attention has mostly been focused on Argentina's Vaca Muerta shale fields, rather than off-shore exploration.³⁸

Brazil

- **Brazil's Top Prosecutor Asks Permission to Question Temer**

Less than a month in her post, Brazil's new top prosecutor, Raquel Dodge has asked the country's Supreme Court for permission to obtain testimony from President Michel Temer in an investigation where he is suspected of passive corruption and money laundering. Temer is investigated for allegedly issuing a decree to benefit company Rodrimar. Dodge wants Temer's testimony as well as Presidential Palace entry records of those linked to Rodrimar during 2017. The deal is said to have been brokered by former presidential special adviser Rodrigo Rocha Loures. This is one of Dodge's first decisions after taking over as Brazil's top prosecutor and replacing Rodrigo Janot at the beginning of September 2017. She will now be in charge of high profile cases, including those related to the Lava Jato (Car Wash) corruption scandal. Unlike her predecessor (Janot) who called Temer the 'head of a criminal organization', Dodge is adopting a more technical posture to the complaints against Brazil's political class. She has, however, said she will not dismiss the charges filed by Janot against Temer and his allies. "The Public

³⁸ "Argentina Preparing to Auction Offshore Hydrocarbons Exploration Next Year," October 8, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/10/08/argentina-preparing-to-auction-offshore-hydrocarbons-exploration-next-year>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

Ministry must promote justice and promote democracy, watch over the common good and the environment, assure a voice to those who do not have it," she said.³⁹

- **In Rio, Ex-President Lula Claims He Is "No Longer Just Lula, but an Idea"**

In a speech on October 3, 2017, in front of the Petrobras headquarters in downtown Rio, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva compared himself to Tiradentes (a national hero and leading member of a revolutionary movement in the 18th century who was hanged) and said that currently, he represents "an idea that millions of people have". "Lula is no longer just Lula. Lula is an idea that millions of people have", he said, in an event promoted by labour unions against the privatization of state-owned companies. The former president said that he would resist the "lies" promoted by the Federal Police, the Prosecutor General's Office and the press, and that he would return to the presidency in 2018 "alongside the working people of this country". Lula compared himself to Tiradentes, claiming that the latter was also persecuted, but the ideas that he embodied persisted after his death. "They killed the flesh, but they failed to kill off his libertarian ideas". Lula criticized the Temer administration for the privatization program that they have announced - the very program that the worker's union was demonstrating against. They marched from the Eletrobras headquarters to the Petrobras headquarters, singing chants against the privatization of the electric power company and the pre-salt layer. "These rulers that are out there, they don't appear to be rulers, they seem more like sales managers at Casas Bahia", the former president said, referring to a popular retail chain. He then said that, of all the presidents, he was the one "who invested the most money in the petroleum industry". The demonstrators, most of whom worked in the petroleum industry, didn't forget to bring up Petrobras's anniversary, which turned 64 on October 3, 2017. Lula said that the company shouldn't just be viewed as an oil company, but as an instrument for economic policies. "There are over 20 thousand companies that depend on it", said the former president, who is accused of profiting off of a corruption scheme that was implemented in the company.⁴⁰

³⁹ Lise Alves, "Brazil's Top Prosecutor Asks Permission to Question Temer," October 3, 2017, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/brazils-top-prosecutor-asks-permission-to-question-temer/>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

⁴⁰ Nicola Pamplona, "In Rio, Ex-President Lula Claims He is "No Longer Just Lula, but an Idea,"" October 4, 2017, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2017/10/1924207-in-rio-ex-president-lula-claims-he-is-no-longer-just-lula-but-an-idea.shtml>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

- **UK and Brazil sign MoU to enhance cooperation and promote direct investment**

Apex-Brasil, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, announced on October 6, 2017 that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) that aims to enhance cooperation to promote foreign direct investment between Brazil and the UK. The agreement seeks to encourage bilateral investments between the two countries. Under the agreement, both countries have agreed to share relevant market intelligence industry information, knowledge, expertise and best practices on key industrial sectors, as well as regulatory information. The agreement has a key focus on, but is not limited to, sectors such as energy, oil & gas, life sciences, infrastructure, and agricultural technology. The agreement anticipates the active participation of stakeholders from the private and public sectors as well as unions. The Memorandum was signed at a ceremony in the Department for International Trade in Whitehall, London by Catherine Raines, Director General of the Department for International Trade, and by Roberto Jaguaribe, president of Apex-Brasil. Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Apex-Brasil President Roberto Jaguaribe said: "This is an important day for both Brazil and the UK, as we seek to extend and enhance our trading relationship. By signing this memorandum of understanding we have taken a concrete step to sharing the intelligence, insights and expertise that will benefit both countries as we seek to deep and strengthen our trading ties". Minister for Investment, Mark Garnier, said: "The UK is already the 4th largest foreign investor in Brazil and some our most successful companies operate in the country. We want to build on this relationship in the coming years and this new partnership with Apex-Brasil will help us strengthen the ties between our two countries."⁴¹

Guyana

- **Guyana en route to become a top oil producer in Latin America**

Exxon Mobil Corp. has discovered more oil on the Staborek block offshore Guyana, northeast South America, with the Turbot-1 well. ExxonMobil affiliate Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Ltd. began drilling the Turbot-1 well on Aug. 14, 2017, and encountered a reservoir of 23 m of high-quality, oil-bearing sandstone

⁴¹ "UK and Brazil Sign MoU to Enhance Cooperation and Promote Direct Investment," October 7, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/10/07/uk-and-brazil-sign-mou-to-enhance-cooperation-and-promote-direct-investment>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

in the primary objective. The well was drilled to 5,622 m in 1,802 m of water on Sept. 29, 2017. Turbot-1 well is located in the south-eastern portion of the 26,800-sq km Stabroek block, approximately 50 km to the southeast of the Liza Phase one project. Turbot is ExxonMobil's latest discovery to date in the country, adding to previous discoveries at Liza, Payara, Snoek, and Liza Deep. Following completion of the Turbot-1 well, the Stena Carron drillship will move to the Ranger prospect. An additional well on the Turbot discovery is being planned for 2018, the company said. Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Ltd. is operator and holds 45% interest in the Stabroek block. Hess Guyana Exploration Ltd. holds 30% interest and CNOOC Nexen Petroleum Guyana Ltd. holds 25% interest. Pablo Medina, Wood Mackenzie's senior analyst, Latin America Upstream, said this latest discovery puts Guyana on the map as the country currently does not produce any oil. "We expect around 350,000-400,000 b/d of oil production by 2026," said Medina, "making Guyana one of top oil producers in Latin America."⁴²

Venezuela

- **Venezuelan Oil Subsidiary in Nicaragua May Face Sanctions from US** A prominent activist fighting the Maduro regime in Venezuela has asked the United States government to investigate Alba de Nicaragua S.A. (Albanisa), a subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA. Carlos Vecchio, a member of the Voluntad Popular party in Venezuela, said on October 4, 2017 that Albanisa is involved in PDVSA-related corruption, and the financing of the regime of President Nicolás Maduro. "In principle, we are requesting that Albanisa be included among those countries sanctioned for relations with Venezuela," Vecchio said. "Albanisa is being used to launder money, which is not only benefiting the Ortega family and their leaders, but also a group of Venezuelans linked to Maduro." US President Donald Trump's administration has already slapped sanctions on high-standing members of the Venezuelan government — including Maduro himself — as well as parts of the country's oil industry, but if officials find that a subsidiary of PDVSA is an accomplice crimes committed by the dictatorship, it may also receive sanctions. Officials in Nicaragua have been concerned about possible economic sanctions for most of 2017, due to President Daniel Ortega's sympathy for the Maduro regime. But activity from Albanisa may prove to

⁴²"Guyana En Route to become a Top Oil Producer in Latin America," October 8, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/10/08/guyana-en-route-to-become-a-top-oil-producer-in-latin-america>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

be the convincing factor for US officials, who are looking for other routes for stifling Maduro.⁴³

- **Maduro and Putin Agree to Strengthen Cooperation at Talks in Moscow**

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro has thanked his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for his support during a meeting between the two leaders in the Kremlin. Maduro said he is confident that his visit will reinforce his nation's strong ties with Moscow. He also stressed the importance of Russia's wheat supplies, which have helped Venezuela during difficult times. President Putin affirmed that Venezuela is going through a delicate stage, but acknowledged the Maduro government's efforts to facilitate dialogue with the opposition. Addressing Maduro, Putin said, "We see that Venezuela is going through difficult times," but he added "it seems that you have managed to establish contacts with the opposition political forces." Speaking earlier at the second day of the International Energy Forum in Moscow, Maduro called for international cooperation to stabilize oil prices and overcome the challenges facing the Venezuelan economy. He said that, to the detriment of oil producing economies, the global oil market has been destabilized partly due to the increase in natural gas and oil production in the United States. The fracking method of natural gas production in particular has allowed the U.S. to flood the market with millions of barrels of oil outside the main production agreements of the OPEC member countries, the President pointed out. "It is the most abrupt and extensive fall in price in 100 years of oil production history, which affected the economies of important countries in various regions," Maduro said. He said he was optimistic that diplomatic efforts would bear fruit soon and expected to see "positive results" in oil prices by the first months of 2018. He said in spite of the fact that Venezuela is in the midst of an economic war and a "communications war," the country has managed to fulfill its debts and obligations on the international front.⁴⁴

⁴³ Orlando Avendano, "Venezuelan Oil Subsidiary in Nicaragua May Face Sanctions from US," October 6, 2017, <https://panampost.com/orlando-avendano/2017/10/06/venezuelan-oil-subsidiary-in-nicaragua/>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

⁴⁴ "Venezuela Seeks to Stabilize Global Oil Prices Fight Economic War," October 4, 2017, <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Venezuela-Seeks-to-Stabilize-Global-Oil-Prices-Fight-Economic-War-20171004-0004.html>, Accessed on October 9, 2017.

Russia

- **Russia and Europe**

In a sign of just how seriously countries are taking Moscow's attempts to destabilize them, 11 European governments plus the United States have now joined forces to build a special think tank about new kinds of war. Based in Finland's capital Helsinki, the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats launched on 2 October to research "hybrid war" — the strategic use of diplomacy, politics, media, cyberspace and military to destabilize and undermine an opponent's government. Similar centers already exist in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and NATO has two dozen accredited [centers of excellence](#). But the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki is the first to link the military alliance with the auspices of the EU. Moreover, the new center in the far north is meant to function as a complement to the other centers and highlight the increased cooperation underway between the EU and NATO since Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine in 2014. Speaking at the event, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that Moscow's actions have sparked new cooperation in the region and that the center was evidence that "Europe is moving quickly to respond to Russia." Similarly, Federica Mogherini, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said the center is a sign that the two organizations are cooperating at "an unprecedented level," as evidenced by Finland, an EU country that is not a NATO member, being the host. For Finland, hosting the center is another point in the country's slow foreign policy shift since the early 1990s.⁴⁵

- **Russia and Military Exercise**

Russia held its largest tank exercises in the last thirty years that ended in the Chelyabinsk region, bordering Kazakhstan. In bilateral maneuvers, up to 3,000 servicemen, about 250 T-72 tanks, and more than 800 units of equipment were involved.⁴⁶

⁴⁵"Finland opens a new center to fight 'hybrid threats' from Russia and beyond", *PRI*, October 3, 2017. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-10-03/finland-opens-new-center-fight-hybrid-threats-russia-and-beyond> (Accessed on October 9, 2017).

⁴⁶"The largest tank exercises in the last thirty years ended in the Urals", *TASS*, October 3, 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4611078> (Accessed on October 9, 2017).

- **Russia and Saudi Arabia**

On October 5, the Kremlin hosted the King of Saudi Arabia. The arrival of Salman Ben Abdul Aziz Al Saud is significant not only because it is the first visit of the monarch, but also because the negotiations with the Keeper of the two holy places (the mosques of al-Haram in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina) were to dot the i, related to the oil market and military-technical cooperation. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubair of Saudi Arabia said that "Russia is an important player in the world and regional arena. It can play a positive role in the Middle East. We stand for joint work to combat existing challenges. Politically, our positions are closer than many people." The foreign minister also noted that the ties between the two countries will be strengthened through trade. He added that in Russia at the moment the Saudi officers are studying, which could not be imagined even ten years ago.⁴⁷

Russia and Saudi Arabia announced on 7 October that, if necessary, they are ready to extend the OPEC + deal on limiting the extraction of black gold after March 2018. But it is not worthwhile to fall into premature optimism - the details of the new oil consensus have yet to be discussed, and there are enough pitfalls. It is possible that a ready solution will appear at the next ministerial meeting of OPEC + in November this year in Vienna. Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid al-Falih said that the catalyst between the 24 countries to reduce oil production at the end of 2016 was the partnership between Russia and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁸

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Taliban Splinter Group, Govt. Reps Meet in Turkey**

Led by Mullah Rasool, the Taliban splinter group calls itself the High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate met High Peace Council representatives in Turkey

⁴⁷“Media: Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry announced plans to strengthen military cooperation with Russia”, *Rambler*, October 9, 2017. <https://news.rambler.ru/politics/38071373-saudovskaya-araviya-ukrepit-voennoe-sotrudnichestvo-s-rossiey/?lentaform=1> (Accessed on October 9, 2017).

⁴⁸“Russia and Saudi Arabia: a broken deal will blow up the world“, *Rambler*, October 7, 2017. <https://news.rambler.ru/politics/38094044-rossiya-i-saudovskaya-araviya-sorvannaya-sdelka-vzorvet-mir/?lentaform=1&updated> (Accessed on October 9, 2017).

and are said to have held several rounds of negotiations. Another round will take place in the coming days in Istanbul. But Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, when approached by Daily Times, declined commenting on the development. At the talks, Mullah Abdul Rauf and Maulvi Abdul Haleem are leading the Taliban breakaway faction while Abdul Baseer is heading the HPC. Hamyoon Jareer, son-in-law of Hekmatyar, and Feroz, Hekmatyar's nephew, are among the mediators, according to the new report. However, the talks will not have any significant effect on the security situation in the country. Arrested in March 2016 after fleeing infighting in Zabul province, Rasool is still in Pakistan's custody.⁴⁹

- **US Hands Over Two More Black Hawks To AAF**

As part of the US's ongoing support program to the Afghan defense forces, two more Black Hawks were handed over to Afghanistan Air Force (AAF). President Ashraf Ghani and US Forces Commander Gen. John Nicholson attended the event at the Kandahar Airport, the Presidential Palace said in a statement on October 7, 2017. The first UH-60s Black Hawks for the Afghan Air Force arrived in Kandahar airport last month. Other Black Hawk helicopters will be handed over to the Afghan forces in the near future. Resolute Support said at the time that the new Black Hawks will increase the Afghan Air Force's capability and sustainability and will eventually replace the Russian Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters currently in use by the AAF. A few months ago, the United States announced that it will provide the Afghan Air Force with 150 Black Hawks and other aircraft over the next four years.⁵⁰

- **Direct Flights between Delhi and Mazar-e-Sharif Started**

Afghanistan and India on October 2, 2017 opened a new direct flight route for the passengers between Mazar-e-Sharif city in northern Balkh province of Afghanistan and the capital city of India, New Delhi. The private airliner, Kam Air, kicked off the first flight between Mazar and New Delhi. The officials of the airline are saying that two flights will take place between Mazar city and New Delhi on weekly basis. The flights will resolve the issues of the people by a large extent, specifically those visiting Delhi for the treatment purposes. The new route will hopefully open new doors for the traders to boost commercial activities between the two countries.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Taliban Splinter Group, Govt. Reps Meet in Turkey", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 8, 2017, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19110 (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁵⁰ Gulabuddin Ghubar, "US Hands Over Two More Black Hawks To AAF", *Tolonews*, 07 October 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-hands-over-two-more-black-hawks-aaf> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁵¹ "Afghanistan and India open direct flights between Delhi and Mazar city", *Khaama Press*, October 3, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-and-india-open-direct-flights-between-delhi-and-mazar-city-03565> (accessed on October 5, 2017)

- **Hekmatyar Opposes Closing Taliban Office in Qatar**

The leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has opposed with the bid to close the Taliban office in Qatar as he insisted that his party supports the legitimate demands of the group. Hekmatyar made the remark during a meeting with the tribal elders of Hood Khel in his office on October 1, 2017. He said we want the government [to make sure] that the office remain in its place and the peace process with the group should be launched in a serious manner.⁵²

- **Consultative Talks on New US Strategy**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on October 3, 2017, started consultative talks with the Jihadi and political leaders on the new US strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia as well as the relations with Pakistan in the aftermath of Pakistani army chief's visit to Kabul. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, in a statement said President Ghani briefed the leaders regarding the recent visit of General Qamar Javed Bajwa to Kabul.⁵³

- **Russia to Host 'Afghan Peace Talks Meeting'**

Representative from more than 50 countries and international organizations will attend the International Contact Group's meeting in Moscow on October 11, where they will discuss the issues around the Afghan peace process and the peace talks with the Taliban. In response to a question about the meeting and Russia's role in Afghanistan's peace, the United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, said Russia could play a vital role in supporting peace efforts in the region.⁵⁴

- **EU Forcibly Returns Afghan Asylum-Seekers**

Amnesty International (AI) said the increasing forced return of Afghan asylum-seekers by European Union to Afghanistan which it described it as a dangerous country due to worsening security situation, is unlawful and a brazen violation of international law, and must stop immediately as it puts the returnees at serious risk of torture, kidnapping, death and other horrors. Amnesty International

⁵² "Hekmatyar Oppose Closing Taliban Office in Qatar, Support Legitimate Demands of Group", *Khaama Press*, October 2, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/hekmatyar-oppose-closing-taliban-office-in-qatar-support-legitimate-demands-of-group-03562> (accessed on October 8, 2017).

⁵³ "Consultative talks start on US strategy and Pak army chief's visit to Kabul", *Khaama Press*, October 4, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/consultative-talks-start-on-us-strategy-and-pak-army-chiefs-visit-to-kabul-03572> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁵⁴ Karim Amin, "Russia To Host Afghan Peace Talks Meeting", *Tolo News*, October 6, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/russia-host-%E2%80%98afghan-peace-talks-meeting%E2%80%99-within-week> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

released a report on October 5, 2017, revealing that they returned nearly 10,000 Afghans to Afghanistan between 2016 and 2017.⁵⁵

- **Taliban to Soften up Against Daesh**

Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah has ordered his followers not to deal with the Islamic State (IS) fighters in an aggressive manner, a reliable security official in the southern zone revealed on Saturday (October 7). The source, wishing anonymity, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Haibatullah issued the instruction to Taliban's shadow governors and field commanders during a gathering in the Musa Qala district of southern Helmand province.⁵⁶

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh, India Sign \$4.5b LoC**

Bangladesh on Wednesday (October 4) signed a US\$4.5 billion line of credit (LoC) agreement with India. This is the third LoC between the two countries that is also the second largest loan agreement in Bangladesh history. India's visiting finance and corporate affairs minister Arun Jaitley and his local counterpart AMA Muhith witnessed signing of the agreement. It was signed between Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division (ERD) and India's Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) at the finance ministry office in Dhaka.⁵⁷

- **Dhaka Differs with New Delhi on OBOR**

Disagreeing with India's opposition to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR), Bangladesh yesterday said there are times when economic benefits outweigh issues of sovereignty. Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said this at a press conference at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi. He told the media that it is for individual countries to decide whether an initiative for economic benefit impinged on their sovereignty.⁵⁸

- **Indian LoC 'Not Good' for Bangladesh: BNP**

⁵⁵ "Brazen violation of international law; EU forcibly returns Afghan asylum-seekers", *The Pashtun Times*, October 6, 2017, <http://thepashtuntimes.com/brazen-violation-of-international-law-eu-forcibly-returns-afghan-asylum-seekers/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁵⁶ "Taliban Decide to Soften Position against Daesh", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 8, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19108 (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁵⁷ "Bangladesh, India sign \$4.5b LoC," *Prothom Alo*, October 4, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/economy/news/161847/Bangladesh-India-sign-4.5b-LoC> (accessed on October 4, 2017)

⁵⁸ "Dhaka differs with New Delhi's stance," *Daily Star*, October 7, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/dhaka-differs-new-delhis-stance-1472776> (accessed on October 7, 2017)

BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi on Saturday (October 7) alleged that the credit deal with India is not 'good' for Bangladesh due to its tough conditions and slow disbursement. In a briefing at the BNP's Nayapaltan central office, Rizvi pointed out that the projects taken under the Indian line of credit (LoC) are yet to see the light due to imposition of tough conditions. He also said the disbursement of the second LoC of \$200 crore signed in 2016 is yet to begin while only \$37.6 crore out of the first credit of \$100 crore has been released over the last seven years.⁵⁹

- **Rohingyas to Return Through Diplomatic Efforts**

The Rohingya issue will dominate at the minister-level meeting to be held this month in Myanmar as Bangladesh expects the return of all Rohingyas living in Bangladesh. "We believe we'll be able to help Rohingyas return to their homeland through diplomatic efforts," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters on Sunday (October 8).⁶⁰

- **TIB Slams UN Failure to Act on Expert Report**

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has strongly condemned the United Nations failure to take into cognisance and act upon a report of an independent expert it commissioned before the military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhain state. TIB expressed deep disappointment that the UN not only suppressed the report it received in May, 2017 but also ignored the prediction of the report that security forces were going to be "heavy-handed and indiscriminate" in dealing with the Rohingyas, which came true in August-September.⁶¹

नेपाल

राजनीतिक दल आगामी चुनावों की तैयारी में:

अभी नेपाल में सभी राजनीतिक दल आगामी प्रांतीय और संसदीय चुनावों की रणनीति बनाने में व्यस्त है .
नेपाली कांग्रेस ने कहा कि आगामी चुनावों में वह संविधान में संशोधन चाहने वाले दलों से गठबंधन कर चुनाव

⁵⁹ "\$4.6b Indian LoC 'not good' for Bangladesh: BNP," *Prothom Alo*, October 7, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/162221/4.6b-Indian-LoC-'not-good'-for-Bangladesh-BNP> (accessed on October 7, 2017)

⁶⁰ "Rohingyas to return thru' diplomatic efforts: Minister," *The Independent*, October 8, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/117782> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁶¹ "TIB slams UN failure to act on expert report," *The Independent*, October 9, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/117917> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

लड़ सकती है. नेपाली कांग्रेस के नेता प्रकाश शरण महत ने कहा कि वे संशोधन विरोधी एमाले के साथ गठबंधन नहीं करेंगे.⁶²

एमाले, माओवादी और नया शक्ति ने आगामी चुनाव के लिए गठबंधन किया:

नेपाल में अभी एक बड़ा राजनीतिक परिवर्तन हुआ है जिसका असर आगामी चुनावों पर भी पड़ेगा . मुख्य विपक्षी दल एमाले के साथ माओवादी केंद्र और नया शक्ति पार्टी ने आगामी चुनावों में एक जुट हो कर लड़ने के लिए गठबंधन कर लिया है. वाम दलों ने इस गठबंधन को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए आठ सदस्यीय संयुक्त पैनल बनाने की भी घोषणा की गयी.⁶³

समझौता अप्राकृतिक: नेपाली कांग्रेस

मुख्य सत्ताधारी दल नेपाली कांग्रेस ने कहा कि चुनावों से ठीक पहले वाम दलों के मध्य चुनावी गठबंधन बनाने का यह कदम बिलकुल अप्राकृतिक कदम है.⁶⁴

मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त ने समय से चुनाव होने की बात कही:

मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त अयोधी प्रसाद यादव ने कहा कि प्रतिनिधि सभा और प्रांतीय विधानसभाओं के चुनाव निर्धारित समय में होने पर कोई शक नहीं है यद्यपि वर्तमान में कुछ राजनीतिक में अस्थिरता का माहौल बना हुआ है.⁶⁵

Pakistan

- **Corps Commander Seven Hour Long Meeting**

A special corps commanders' conference that reportedly lasted around seven hours was held at the military's General Headquarters (GHQ) on October 4, 2017. Chaired by Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, the huddle reviewed the security challenges facing the country, as well as the preparedness of the armed forces to deal with any situation that may develop. However, the army's PR

⁶² "Parties preparing for upcoming election", The Kathmandu Post, 3 October 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-10-03/e81f106338ef68229ff7d2b7238a9ee1.jpg>

⁶³ Purshottam Khatri, "UML, MC, Naya Shakti announce poll alliance", The Kathmandu Post, 4 October 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-10-04/aa7b1831d60175bd07ada621b72f0539.jpg>

⁶⁴ "pact Unnatural: NC", The Kathmandu Post, 4 October 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-10-04/aa7b1831d60175bd07ada621b72f0539.jpg>

⁶⁵ "CEC Yadav Asuures timely election", The Kathmandu Post, 8 October 2017, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2017-10-08/5cb5ece2d50e4c7d52740edd637861fb.jpg>

wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) did not issue any official statement, which remains unusual.⁶⁶

- **US and Pakistan**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said after a meeting with Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif on October 4, that Washington wanted a stable government in Islamabad. This marks the first time a US official has publicly addressed the political conflict in Islamabad, clearly backing the political setup.⁶⁷ In an attempt to soften the possible blow of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's remarks regarding the stability of the government of Pakistan, Foreign Office spokesman Nafees Zakariya on October 5, claimed that the statement was in the context of threats of terrorism in the region.⁶⁸ The Trump administration has also informed Congress that it too believes the CPEC passes through a disputed territory...“that in itself shows the vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate,” US Defence Secretary James Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee.⁶⁹ The United States and Pakistan are sending two key visitors — Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal — to each other's capitals, as efforts to mend their troubled relations.⁷⁰

- **The Case of the Missing Turkish Family**

The Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights on October 5, took up the issue of a Turkish family (Mesut Kacmaz family) affiliated with the Pak-Turk schools allegedly abducted from Lahore and decided to summon relevant officials of the federal and provincial governments at its next meeting. The Turkish family, including two children, were abducted by unknown men in plain clothes on Sept 27. “The style and manner of kidnapping bears the signatures of all too familiar kidnappings brazenly taking place in the country with alarming impunity,” the notice says.⁷¹

⁶⁶Iftikhar A. Khan, “COAS Bajwa chairs ‘seven-hour’ huddle at General Headquarters”, *Dawn*, October 4, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361576/coas-bajwa-chairs-seven-hour-huddle-at-general-headquarters> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁶⁷Anwar Iqbal, “US voices concern about stability of Pakistan government”, *Dawn*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361819> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁶⁸Amir Wasim, “FO downplays Tillerson’s remarks about govt’s stability”, *Dawn*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362010> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁶⁹Anwar Iqbal, “CPEC passes through disputed territory: US”, *Dawn*, October 7, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362283/cpec-passes-through-disputed-territory-us> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁷⁰Anwar Iqbal, “US, Pakistan stay engaged to defuse tensions”, *Dawn*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362449/us-pakistan-stay-engaged-to-defuse-tensions> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁷¹Jamal Shahid, “‘Issue of missing Turkish family needs parliamentary intervention’”, *Dawn*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362037/issue-of-missing-turkish-family-needs-parliamentary-intervention> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

- **Pakistan and Iran**

Talking to Iranian Consul General in Quetta Aqai Mohammad Rafie at a meeting on October 5, Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri called for a joint strategy to fight terrorism. Mr. Zehri said that linking Gwadar with Chahbahar ports through a railway line would go a long way and proved to be a multiplier of economic growth.⁷²

Indian Ocean Region

- **Navies of India, South Korea Held Joint Drill in the Indian Ocean**

The navies of Republic of Korea and India held a joint drill in the Indian Ocean on October 6, 2017. The Korean Herald writes "the drill involved a range of destroyers' military ships and other assets from the two nations."⁷³ Republic of Korea Navy Ships (ROKS) Kang Gam Chan and Hwacheon reached Mumbai with Rear Admiral Yang Yong-Mo, Commander, Cruise Training Task Group embarked onboard.⁷⁴ According to a press release issued by Indian Navy, "Rear Admiral Yang Yong-Mo along with Captain Park Chang-Ju and Captain Lee Young-Oh Commanding Officers' ROKS Kang Gam Chan and Hwacheon respectively called on Rear Admiral RB Pandit, Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet and held discussions on issues of bilateral interest."⁷⁵

- **India, EU to Enhance Cooperation in Maritime Security**

India and the European Union have agreed to boost cooperation in maritime security in the Indian Ocean. After the 14th India and European Union summit and delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on October 6, 2017, the President of the European Council Donald Franciszek Tusk, said that "We decided to step up cooperation in maritime security in the Indian Ocean and beyond, which I hope will lead to enhanced military cooperation. We welcome the resumption of tactical exercises in the Gulf of Aden between the EU's Naval Force Operation ATALANTA and the Indian Navy and look forward to more

⁷² "Cooperation with Iran urged", *Dawn*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361997/cooperation-with-iran-urged> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁷³ "Navies of Korea, India hold joint drill in Indian Ocean," 08 October 2017, http://nwww.koreaherald.com/search/list_name.php?byline=Yonhap (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁷⁴ "Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy Ships Enter Mumbai," October 4, 2017, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/republic-korea-rok-navy-ships-enter-mumbai> (accessed on 09 October 2017)

⁷⁵ Ibid.

such opportunities including India's participation in escorting World Food Programme vessels."⁷⁶

- **INS Trishul Thwarted a Piracy Attack in Gulf of Aden**

On October 6, 2017, the Indian Navy's INS Trishul, a stealth frigate, thwarted a piracy attempt on Indian flagged merchant ship MV Jag Amar in the Gulf of Aden.⁷⁷ Indian Navy rescued all 26 members of the ship MV Jag Amar safely. Indian flagged cargo ship MV Jag Amar was on its way to visit Jubail- a city on the Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁸ INS Trishul came into action after receiving the distress call from the cargo ship Jag Amar.⁷⁹

- **Blue Economy Must Act as a Catalyst : PM Modi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 7, 2017 said that the government of India is taking steps towards the empowering fishermen and development of infrastructure. Realising the importance of development of Ocean Economy in "improving India's progress", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "we want development of ports and port-led development. The Blue Economy must act as a catalyst in improving India's progress. Kandla Port is seeing unprecedented growth. This is because we have devoted resources to improve the port. A new lease of life was added to Alang, steps were taken for the welfare of labourers working there. These are steps we are taking towards development."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "India, EU agree to step up cooperation in Indian Ocean maritime security," October 7, 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/oct/07/india-eu-agree-to-step-up-cooperation-in-indian-ocean-maritime-security-1668155--1.html> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁷⁷ "INS Trishul thwarts pirate attack on Indian ship in Gulf of Aden," October 7, 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ins-trishul-thwarts-pirate-attack-on-indian-ship-in-gulf-of-aden/first-jpg/slideshow/60981723.cms> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁷⁸ "Indian Navy thwarts piracy attempt on cargo ship en route to Saudi," 07 October 2017, <http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Oman/Indian-Navy-thwarts-piracy-attempt-on-cargo-ship-en-route-to-Saudi-540r> (accessed on October 8, 2017).

⁷⁹ "INS Trishul thwarts pirate attack on Indian ship in Gulf of Aden," 07 October 2107, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ins-trishul-thwarts-pirate-attack-on-indian-ship-in-gulf-of-aden/first-jpg/slideshow/60981723.cms> (accessed on 09 October 2017)

⁸⁰ Blue economy can improve India's progress: PM Modi, 07 October 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/blue-economy-can-improve-india-s-progress-pm-modi-117100700274_1.html, (accessed on 09 October 2017)

Sri Lanka

- **SL-US Navy CARAT Exercise 2017 Concludes**

The Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Exercise – 2017 conducted in collaboration with US and SL Navy Marines concluded in Trincomalee on October 6, 2017. CARAT was held for the twenty-third year and Sri Lanka turned out to be the latest CARAT partner nation, demonstrating a shared commitment to maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The five-day premier naval engagement, which commenced on October 2, focused on enhancing maritime security skills and operational cohesiveness among participating forces. CARAT series began in 1995 and it has continuously increased into a complex series of training exercises in ashore, at sea and in the air.⁸¹

- **USD 75 Million From WB for Financial Sector Modernization**

Sri Lanka will obtain USD 75 million (approx. Rs. 11,400 million) from International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank to implement the Financial Sector Modernization Project. The development objective of the proposed project is “to contribute to increasing financial market efficiency and use of financial services among micro, small and medium enterprises and individuals.”⁸²

- **Sri Lanka Enforces UN Resolution on Nuclear and Biological Weapons**

The Government has issued a gazette against the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and other related activities in line with United Nations regulations. The gazette issued by the Foreign Ministry stated that United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004), and the modifications and strengthening of the Resolution by the subsequent resolutions including 1673 (2006), 1810 (2008), 1977 (2011), 2055 (2012) and 2325 (2016) and any other subsequent resolution impose upon member States of the United Nations a series of obligations to take appropriate legal measures to prohibit any natural or legal person, group or entity acting without the lawful authority of any member State to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons

⁸¹ “SL-US Navy CARAT Exercise 2017 concludes,” October 7, 2017, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/18278-sl-us-navy-carat-exercise-2017-concludes> (accessed on October 7, 2017)

⁸² “USD 75 Million from WB for Financial Sector Modernization Project,” October 5, 2017, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/18255-usd-75-million-from-wb-for-financial-sector-modernization-project> (accessed on October 5, 2017)

and their means of delivery as well as attempts to engage in any of the foregoing activities, participate in them as an accomplice, assist, or finance them.⁸³

- **UN expert on transitional justice to review progress**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Pablo de Greiff, will carry out an official visit to Sri Lanka from 10 to 23 October 2017, to examine the progress made in redressing the legacies of massive past violations and abuses, including those that resulted from a conflict that spanned more than 25 years, the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights said.⁸⁴

- **Ensure Enforced Disappearances Bill Enacted: Rights Commission**

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) urged the President, in his capacity as Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation, to provide leadership to ensure that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances Bill is enacted and Sri Lanka sets an example not only for the region but globally on how to humanely respond to the grievances and pain of those who have suffered due to serious human rights violations⁸⁵.

Maldives

- **Maldives Hits out at European Parliament**

The Maldives has lashed out at the European Parliament after it called for individual targeted sanctions over “the deteriorating political and human rights situation in the Maldives and the increasingly authoritarian rule of President Abdulla Yameen”. European lawmakers passed a resolution urging Maldivian authorities to reform the judiciary, release political prisoners, and to guarantee the constitutional rights to freedom of speech and assembly. But the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the resolution in a strongly worded statement. “The

⁸³ “Sri Lanka enforces UN resolution on nuclear and biological weapons,” October 7, 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/10/07/government-issues-gazette-against-nuclear-chemical-weapons/> (accessed on October 7, 2017)

⁸⁴ “UN expert on transitional justice to review progress in Sri Lanka,” October 6, 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/10/06/un-expert-on-transitional-justice-to-review-progress-in-sri-lanka/> (accessed on October 6, 2017)

⁸⁵ “Ensure Enforced Disappearances Bill Enacted: Human Rights Commission Tells President,” October 8, 2017, <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/ensure-enforced-disappearances-bill-enacted-human-rights-commission-tells-president/> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

resolution is highly motivated by one-sided political rhetoric and contains inaccuracies, contradictions, misrepresentations and baseless allegations,” the foreign ministry said.⁸⁶

- **Raajje TV Slapped with Third Fine over defaming President**

Maldives Broadcasting Commission (MBC) has again fined local television channel Raajje TV, this time by MVR 500,000, for broadcasting content that defamed President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. This marks the third time that the opposition aligned station has been fined under the contentious Freedom of Speech and Defamation Act⁸⁷.

- **Maldives Declares Jumhoory Party Leader a Fugitive**

Since Jumhoory Party (JP)’s leader Qasim Ibrahim has exhausted all the leave extensions that have been granted to him, he will now be considered a fugitive of the state, Maldives Correctional Service (MCS) declared on October 3, 2017. The opposition leader, who was convicted for three-years, two-months and 12-days on bribery charges, is currently in Singapore being treated for a cardiac problem.⁸⁸

- **Funds Raised for Rohingya Muslims Handed Over to Islamic Relief Worldwide**

Islamic Foundation of the Maldives has handed over the funds raised for Rohingya Muslims to Islamic Relief Worldwide. The funds were handed over by the President of Islamic Foundation of the Maldives Ibrahim Fauzy, former Islamic Minister Dr.Abdul Majeed Abul Baary and the secretary general of the NGO Ibrahim Nazim. They are in Bangladesh at the moment to monitor the situation.⁸⁹

West Asia

Israel

- **US and Shifting of the Israeli Capital City** - US President Donald Trump said October 7th that he will not consider moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem until an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan his administration is working on

⁸⁶ “Maldives hits out at ‘baseless’ European Parliament allegations,” October 6, 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/maldives-hits-out-at-baseless-european-parliament-allegations-132940> (accessed on October 6, 2017)

⁸⁷ “Raajje TV slapped with third fine over defaming Maldives pres,” October 8, 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/raajje-tv-slapped-with-third-fine-over-defaming-maldives-pres/> (accessed on October 8, 2017)

⁸⁸ “Maldives declares Jumhoory Party leader a fugitive,” October 3, 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-declares-jumhoory-party-leader-a-fugitive/> (accessed on October 3, 2017)

⁸⁹ “Islamic Foundation of the Maldives hands over the funds raised for Rohingya Muslims, to Islamic Relief Worldwide,” October 7, 2017, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/8999> (accessed on October 7, 2017)

is given a chance to succeed.⁹⁰ Jerusalem Affairs Minister Ze'ev Elkin on October 8th lamented US President Donald Trump's announcement that he would not consider moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem until an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan is given a chance to succeed.⁹¹

- **New Homes Built on Settlement** - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is reportedly set to approve almost 4,000 new homes in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The 3,829 units are slated to be built in various areas across the West Bank, including in isolated settlements. The approval will include 30 units in the West Bank city of Hebron, 296 in the settlement of Beit El, 453 in Givat Ze'ev, 102 in Naguhot, 97 in Rechalim, 54 in Har Bracha, 86 in Kochav Yaakov, 48 in Ma'aleh Michmash, 158 in Kfar Ezion, 129 in Avnei Hefetz, 120 in Nofim, and 206 in Tekoa. The new construction is reportedly to be approved during the next meeting of the Civil Administration Higher Planning Committee on October 16.⁹²
- **The Peace March** - The two week peace march organised by the Women Wage Peace movement which started on September 24th ended on October 8th. The march took place through parts of Israel and the West Bank with a Jerusalem rally to demand a peace deal. It included participants who have themselves been affected by violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁹³ However, the march was denounced by Hamas in an official statement, as well as by the Palestinian branch of the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, both of which accused Palestinians participating in the initiative of "normalizing" relations with Israel. The official statement stated that "invitation from the PLO's Committee For Interaction with Israeli Society "a departure from the national consensus and an offense against the history of our people."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ "Trump won't move embassy until peace plan 'given a shot'", *The Times of Israel*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-wont-move-embassy-to-jerusalem-until-peace-plan-given-a-shot/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁹¹ Sue Surkes, "Ministers lament Trump decision to delay US embassy move", *The Times of Israel*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ministers-lament-trump-decision-to-delay-us-embassy-move/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁹² Jacob Magid, "Israel to approve almost 4,000 new West Bank homes — report", *The Times of Israel*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-to-approve-almost-4000-new-west-bank-homes-report/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁹³ "Thousands of Israeli, Palestinian women march for peace", *The Times of Israel*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/thousands-of-israeli-palestinian-women-march-for-peace/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

⁹⁴ Gabe Carroll, "Israeli-Palestinian women's peace march exposes Palestinian divides", *The Times of Israel*, October 9, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-palestinian-womens-peace-march-exposes-palestinian-divides/> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

Saudi Arabia and GCC

- **Saudi King makes history by visiting Russia**

King Salman Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia made a history by visiting Russia on 4-5 October 2017. He was the first reigning Saudi King to visit Russia, although formal diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1926. In 1932, Prince Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, also visited Russia. However, the relations between the two countries abruptly ended, when Russian the President withdrew its staff from its Riyadh consulate in 1938. During the Cold War the relations between the two countries almost reached to the lowest. Saudi Arabia was apprehensive of Russia policy in its neighbourhood. Moscow provided active support to the growing forces of communism and Arab nationalism, which Riyadh viewed as encirclement of the Kingdom. During 1960s and 1970s Iraq, Syria, Southern Yemen, Egypt all gradually joined the Russian orbit. The occupation of Afghanistan by the Russian forces in 1979 finally confirmed that Moscow is playing a role to contain Riyadh. Hence, this deteriorated their relations to the lowest point. As a result, despite differences with US policy on Israel, Riyadh was forced to establish close relations with Washington.

On his visit to Russia, King Salman was accompanied a large delegation, comprising officials from energy, economy, defence and members of the private business sector. The visit of Saudi King to Russia has been hailed by both the sides. President Putin said, 'this is the first visit by a Saudi Arabian monarch in the history of our relations and that in itself is a landmark event'.⁹⁵ He further said, 'I am sure your visit will boost the ties between our countries'. The Saudi King also responded positively about his visit to Russia. He said that this visit will strengthen the two countries relations in the interests of peace and security, in the interests of developing the world economy.

During the visit, the two countries signed 15 agreements, including one for Saudi Arabia to buy Russia's S-400 missile defence system.⁹⁶ Russia also signed agreements to supply Saudi Arabia Kornet anti-tank guided missile systems and multiple rocket launchers. According to Saudi military industry form, these agreements are 'expected to play a pivotal role in the growth and development of the military and military systems industry in Saudi Arabia'.

⁹⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/saudi-king-putin-sign-deals-historic-russia-trip-171005102100641.html>

⁹⁶ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1174156/saudi-arabia>

On investment front, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and Saudi public Investment Fund (PIF) have approved investment of US\$ 1 billion and agreed to launch a dozen projects in petrochemical, technology and transport infrastructure, including rail. The Saudi PIF would also take in the development of Rostec City on the site of former Tushino airfield in Moscow. The fund will also examine more than 25 projects with a total value of more than US\$ 10 billion.⁹⁷ RDIF, with SIBUR, the leading Russian gas processing and Petrochemicals Company, and Saudi Aramco have also signed an agreement of cooperation in Saudi Arabia. Investment agreements made between the two countries carry a great value to the Russian economy, especially when it is facing a tough challenges from both sanctions and unstable energy prices.

On political and strategic front, no official statement has been made but experts are reading between the lines that the visit would certainly register some major transformation, particularly on resolving Syrian and Yemeni crises. Saudi Arabia has perhaps understood that military actions are not the solution of ending the conflicts, while at the same time, Moscow is also not seen as an intervening force in their internal affairs by the regional powers. Its anti-ISIS policies have relaxed many countries suffering from it. However, Saudi Arabia's major concern has been Iran's growing intervention in the region. On this issue, the two countries need to develop a better bilateral understanding. Russia under Putin has tried to emerge as an alternative force in the world and its counter-terrorism policy in the Middle East has proved its credential, while at the same time. Riyadh understands that peace and stability in the region could only be achieved through negotiations and improving ties with Moscow. This is more so that till date President Trump's Middle East policies have not proved to Saudis advantages in real sense.

Iran

- **US Certification of the Iran Nuclear Deal⁹⁸**

In an opinion piece⁹⁹ published by *The New York Times* on October 8, 2017, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations Gholamali Khoshroo argued that the views of the current US President Donald Trump and other 'hard-liners' in Washington

⁹⁷ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1174156/saudi-arabia>

⁹⁸ All quotes in this review are borrowed from Gholamali Khoshroo, "False Assumptions about the Iran Nuclear Deal," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/08/opinion/false-assumptions-about-the-iran-nuclear-deal.html>, accessed on October 9, 2017.

⁹⁹ Gholamali Khoshroo, "False Assumptions About the Iran Nuclear Deal," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/08/opinion/false-assumptions-about-the-iran-nuclear-deal.html>, accessed on October 9, 2017.

about the Iran Nuclear Deal and the JCPOA are based on ‘a set of false assumptions.’ He wrote this article under the backdrop of the news reports published in recent days that President Trump may ‘refuse to recertify Iran’s compliance’ on October 15, 2017. On this day, President Trump is required to decide for the third time, since assuming office, on whether to certify that Iran was complying with the nuclear agreement. In case President Trump refuses to certify, this move ‘could set up Congress to impose sanctions on Iran that violate the agreement.’ Seeking to mitigate such ‘false assumptions’ and probably to pre-empt any more sanctions on Iran, Gholamali Khoshroo attempted to falsify three such assumptions in the following manner:

- On the claims of President Trump and some of his associates that the JCPOA was ‘the worst agreement the United States has ever entered into with another country,’ Gholamali Khoshroo wrote that ‘this ignores an important truth: The nuclear deal is not a bilateral agreement between Tehran and Washington. In fact, it isn’t even a multilateral deal that requires ratification in either Congress or the Iranian Parliament. It is, instead, a United Nations Security Council resolution. (Indeed, this explains why the deal continues to have wide support from the other Security Council members, as well as from Secretary General António Guterres.)’¹⁰⁰
- On the second assumption ‘that the deal is meant to dictate Iran’s policies in matters unrelated to’ its nuclear programme, Gholamali Khoshroo writes that ‘this has never been the case. It was always clear that the path to reaching a nuclear deal meant setting aside other geopolitical concerns. Anyone involved in the years of talks that led to the J.C.P.O.A. can attest to this. For example, even as Russia and the United States disagreed on many other issues in the Middle East, they were able to work together at the negotiating table.’¹⁰¹
- On the third assumption that there was a ‘sunset clause’ in the nuclear deal, ‘suggesting that in a decade Iran will be free of inspections or limits on its nuclear program’ Gholamali Khoshroo wrote, ‘while it’s true that some provisions regarding restrictions will expire, crucial aspects of inspections will not. Moreover, the deal establishes that some six years from now — assuming all participants have fulfilled their obligations — Iran should ratify the Additional Protocol on Nuclear Safeguards, part of the Nonproliferation Treaty. This would subject my country to an extensive I.A.E.A. inspection process. Iran will continue its nuclear program for

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

energy and medical purposes as a normal member of the international community and signatory to the Nonproliferation Treaty after the period of years written into the J.C.P.O.A.¹⁰²

Gholamali Khoshroo emphasised that Iranians ‘like all nations involved in adopting the deal, the international community and nonproliferation experts — recognize that the nuclear agreement was an important diplomatic accomplishment and it remains a credit to the international nonproliferation regime. Among the seven countries that negotiated the nuclear agreement, only America finds the deal’s adoption controversial. What the president and Congress decide to do about recertification is, ultimately, a domestic matter. But if the United States wants to remain credible in future multilateral negotiations, it cannot go against the international consensus and attempt to scuttle past diplomacy whether as political retaliation against a previous administration, or as part of a constant reassessment of American national interests.’¹⁰³

- **Ali Jafari’s Reaction to the New US Sanctions Measures**

Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari has given his reactions¹⁰⁴ to the news reports that the US was considering new sanctions measures against Iran including the possibility of designating IRGC as a terrorist organisation. Jafari said, ‘If the scattered news about the stupidity of the US government regarding the IRGC as a terrorist group is correct, the Guards will also consider the American military all over the world, especially the Middle East, as equal to Daesh.’¹⁰⁵ Referring to CAATSA, Ali Jafari warned that ‘if America’s new law for sanctions is enforced, this country will have to move its regional bases outside the 2,000 km radius of the Iranian missiles’ range.’¹⁰⁶ This was a reference to the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), signed by the US President Donald Trump on August 2, 2017, after its passage from the Senate. According to Ali Jafari, Iran ‘deems the implementation of CAATSA equal to America’s unilateral withdrawal from the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Iranian Student’s News Agency* (ISNA), “Iran deems implementation of CAATSA equal to US unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA,” October 8, 2017, <http://en.isna.ir/news/96071608479/Iran-deems-implementation-of-CAATSA-equal-to-US-unilateral-withdrawal> , accessed on October 9 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

JCPOA',¹⁰⁷ which would lead Iran to work further on improving its missile capabilities.

Turkey

- **Turkey suspends US visa applications after US decision to suspend all non-immigrant visa services¹⁰⁸**

Turkish Embassy in Washington said on Oct. 8 that it suspended all non-immigrant visa services at all Turkish diplomatic facilities in the U.S. in retaliation for the latest decision by the U.S. Embassy in Ankara to suspend all non-migrant visa services at its diplomatic facilities in the country.

“Recent events have forced Turkish Government to reassess the commitment of the Government of the United States to the security of Turkish Mission facilities and personnel. In order to minimize the number of visitors to our Embassy and Consulates while this assessment proceeds, effective immediately we have suspended all non-immigrant visa service at all Turkish diplomatic facilities in the US. This measure will apply to visas in passports as well as e-Visas and visas acquired at the border,” a statement by the Embassy read.

The Turkish response came hours after the US Embassy in Ankara announced that it had suspended all non-immigrant visa services at its diplomatic facilities in Turkey. The US embassy statements issued on its official Twitter account says:

“Recent events have forced the United States Government to reassess the commitment of the Government of Turkey to the security of US Mission facilities and personnel. In order to minimize the number of visitors to our Embassy and Consulates while this assessment proceeds, effective immediately we have suspended all non-immigrant visa services at all U.S. diplomatic facilities in Turkey,” the Embassy said in a statement issued on its Twitter account.

On October 4, Turkey’s police had arrested Metin Topuz, a staff member at US consulate Istanbul over espionage charges and alleged links with some leading

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-suspends-us-visa-applications-after-us-decision-to-suspend-all-non-immigrant-visa-services-120549>

members of the Gülen network, accused of being behind last year's failed coup attempt.

According to the indictment, the suspect was in contact with a number of former police chiefs in Istanbul where he worked, and all those police chiefs involved in the 2013 coup attempts were FETÖ members in the judiciary and law enforcement. He was also in touch with Oktay Akkaya, a former lieutenant colonel who was among the main actors in the 2016 coup attempt. "The suspect acted as a liaison between members of FETÖ and its leader, Fetullah Gülen, who lives in Pennsylvania," the indictment adds, claiming there is strong evidence to justify Topuz's arrest.¹⁰⁹

- **Turkey launches operation in Syria 'for security'**¹¹⁰

Turkey has announced the beginning of a new military operation into Idlib province in Syria as part of a deal with Russia and Iran, in an attempt to create de-escalation zones and also prevent Syrian Kurdish groups from building a "terror corridor" along the Syrian border toward the Mediterranean Sea. The Turkish Armed Forces on early Oct. 8 shelled positions in jihadist-controlled Idlib in support of the advance of Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters on the ground, a day after Ankara announced the start of an operation there.

Military sources said howitzers on the border fired around five shots in support of FSA fighters who had entered Idlib, which is largely controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former al-Qaeda affiliate that changed its name last year from the Nusra Front.

"The [operation] process, which began yesterday and started to be implemented today, is continuing together with the Free Syrian Army without any problems," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said in his address at a ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) strategic planning camp on Oct. 8.

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli has pledged full support to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) over its latest Syria and Iraq

¹⁰⁹Daily Sabah, 9 October 2017 <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/10/08/us-turkey-suspend-visa-services-amid-arrested-employee-row>

¹¹⁰<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-cooperating-with-russia-in-idlib-operation-pm-yildirim-120507>

policies, as the Turkish Armed Forces prepare to launch a military operation in Syria's jihadi-controlled Idlib province.

"A new operation has been launched in Idlib. We would like to see the same to happen in Afrin. All these [locations] should be cleared of terror," Bahçeli said on Oct. 8 at the MHP's special gathering under the title "Lovers of Kirkuk" in Ankara. "In this process, the MHP will stand by the state and the government in a firm, uncompromising manner in accordance with national interests. We are in the same trench, on the same front line, at the same line," Bahçeli said.

- **Pentagon supports Turkey-led Idlib operation in Syria¹¹¹**

The U.S. Defense Department acknowledged support to a Turkish-led military operation in the northeastern Syrian province of Idlib to prevent clashes and ensure the de-escalation regime in the region. In a statement addressed to Daily Sabah, Pentagon spokesman Eric Pahon said the U.S. supports Turkey's efforts to secure its borders, fight terrorism, and prevent safe havens for terrorist organizations.

"The Syrian regime has allowed northwest Syria to become a safe haven for al-Qaida terrorists that not only threaten the Syrian people and regional security, but also support international terrorist networks," he said. The Pentagon statement underlined the U.S. designation of the Nusra Front, also known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, as a foreign terrorist organization. It added: "The Nusra Front has publicly declared itself an al-Qaida affiliate- it shares al-Qaida's terrorist aims and agenda, not those of the Syrian people." Jabhat Fateh al-Sham is the leading group in the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) coalition that controls almost half of the territory in the Idlib area and the city itself.

- **Erdogan visits Iran, Kurdish referendum and Idlib Operation on agenda¹¹²**

The presidents of Turkey and Iran Wednesday indicated that their countries share a common stance on developments in neighboring Syria and Iraq, particularly on the recent referendum held in northern Iraq by the Kurdistan Regional

¹¹¹ <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/10/08/pentagon-supports-turkey-led-idlib-operation-in-syria>

¹¹² Daily Sabah, 4 October 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/10/04/turkey-iran-express-common-stance-on-syria-iraq-developments-as-erdogan-rouhani-meet>

Government (KRG), establishing de-escalation zones in Syria and also on counter terrorism.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan arrived in Tehran with a high-level delegation Wednesday on an invitation from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. In a joint presser after a closed-door meeting in the Saadabad Complex, Erdoğan said that "all regional matters were on the agenda and discussed" at the meeting. Rouhani said: "Iran and Turkey, as two friendly, Muslim states, are the centerline of regional stability."

Rouhani spoke first at the press conference, saying, "Increasing the ethnic and sectarian separatism are the plans of outsiders," and that the efforts of Turkey, Iran and Russia, in trilateral cooperation, are needed for establishing peace in Syria. Erdoğan said the de-escalation zones in Syria, establish under guarantee of Turkey, Iran and Russia, are of importance for Turkey, as they would help liberate civilians from terrorist groups such as Daesh. "During this process, our respective ministers, security forces and intelligence organizations are carrying out all kinds of work in the region," Erdoğan said.

Cyber Security

- **China, U.S. agree to work together on cybercrime, counterterrorism**¹¹³

On 4 September 2017, both China and U.S.A concluded first round of China-U.S Law Enforcement and Cyber Security Dialogue to strengthen their capabilities to fight against transnational and cyber space crime, that also added to the outcome of forthcoming Trump's state visit to China in November 2017. The dialogue was the part of four cabinet-level dialogues agreed to between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump in April 2017. The other three dialogues were on diplomacy and security, economy and social and cultural Dialogue.

According to Fu Xingchao , director of the Ministry of Public Security's American and Oceania Affairs International Cooperation Department, " this high level dialogue underlines the great importance attached by Washington to reinforced

¹¹³ <http://www.ecns.cn/2017/10-06/276114.shtml>, 6 October 2017

cooperation on transnational and cybercrimes with Beijing", Jin Bo, professor and chief scientist with the Third Research Institute of the Ministry of Public Security added that cyber crimes as a common threat to both USA and China. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said these latest development would help both the nations to manage their differences. According to Chinese State Councilor Guo Shengkun "China is ready to work together with the U.S. side to increase cooperation in areas including counterterrorism, fighting cross-border crimes, bringing back fugitives and recovering their assets, counternarcotics and judicial assistance, and to address the important concerns of the two countries in law enforcement,". While on the other hand, according to Heather Nauert, spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, "Consistent with the results-oriented approach of this administration's policy toward China, the dialogue facilitated forthright and detailed discussions and resulted in bilateral cooperation on priority issues including immigration, counternarcotics, counterterrorism and cyber security."

- **Kaspersky Lab denies involvement in Russian hack of NSA contractor¹¹⁴**

A paper published in the Wall Street Journal on 5 September 2017 reported that Kaspersky Lab, Moscow-based cyber security firm involved in obtaining sufficient information of the NSA, U.S.A and handed it to Russian government. The Russian hackers through Kaspersky's antivirus software hacked an NSA contractor and acquired significant amount of data from his personal computer. However, Eugene Kaspersky, the infosec firm's founder, Kaspersky Lab retaliated the allegation and said "We never betray the trust that our users put into our hands. If we would do that a single time that would be immediately spotted by the industry and our business would be done." He is also of the view , "Even though we have an internal security team, and do bug bounties, we can't give 100% guarantee that there are no security issues in our products, name another security software vendor who can!" . Matthew Green, a cryptography professor at Johns Hopkins University said , "Consensus on infosec Twitter is that Kaspersky may not have colluded with the Russian government; just maybe their product may be horrendously compromised". Adding to this , Kaspersky Lab said that the company had been

¹¹⁴ The Guardian, 6 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/06/kaspersky-lab-denies-involvement-russian-hack-nsa-contractor-moscow>)

trapped in the middle of geopolitical brawl and it did not have any connection to any government including Russia.

- **Romania is a Key Ally in Intelligence and Cyber Security**¹¹⁵

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in an interview that Romania has been contributing 2 percent of its GDP to NATO's collective defense and common security. "Romania has key intelligence capabilities, being an important ally when it comes to cyber-protection," he said . Romania provides significant assistance to Ukraine in tackling cyber threats. Viewing Russian interference among NATO allies, he added, "We are very vigilant, we are prepared to counteract when we find attempts to mix in our processes or use misinformation to manipulate the media," In order to counter Russia's growing influence, NATO extended its presence in Romania through various measures such as sending troops to Craiova, Southern Romania, building a command centre in Bucharest.

- **North Korea's new Internet provider: Russian firm replaces China Unicom as primary router**¹¹⁶

In recent time, several Western governments accused North Korea that it conducted major cyber attacks that damaged internal security of many countries. Bryce Boland, chief technology officer for the Asia-Pacific region at FireEye, a cyber-security company viewed that North Korea's has 1,000 route connections via both China and Russia, vital for directing North Korea's cyber attacks. According to Dyn Research, a monitoring agency related to international Internet traffic flows, since 1 October 2017, Russian Telecommunication Company TransTele Com route to North Korean traffic which was earlier handled through China Unicom. Dyn Research mentioned that TransTeleCom handled approximately 60 percent of North Korean Internet traffic, while Unicom handles remaining 40 percent. Boland reported to Reuters that, " The Russian connection will improve the resiliency of their network and increase their ability to conduct command and control over those activities."

¹¹⁵ <http://www.novinite.com/articles/183985/Romania+is+a+Key+Ally+in+Intelligence+and+Cyber+Security>, 6 October 2017

¹¹⁶ World Tribune, 6 October 2017, <http://www.worldtribune.com/north-koreas-new-internet-provider-russian-firm-replaces-china-unicom-as-primary-router/>

- **India calls for closer and real-time intelligence sharing¹¹⁷**

Amidst rising trans-border crimes, Mayank Joshi, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of India to the UN during the General Assembly's Third Committee debate said that India needed a closer and immediate intelligence sharing, coordination of operations and technology assistance to tackle transnational crime challenges. Several terrorist groups like the Islamic State, Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, LeT, JeM expanded their reach across the world through employment over cyberspace and social media. In an era where constant rise of new crimes via new technologies is the trend, cyber security a grave concern for all and he viewed, "All of us are aware of the importance of genuine international collaboration in meeting these multifarious challenges. This requires much closer and real-time intelligence sharing, coordination of operations, capacity building and technology assistance. "Joshi also said that lack of common understanding in cyber safety issues need to be addressed.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 4	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Three terrorists tried and convicted by military courts were executed at a jail in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The convicts were "involved in committing heinous	3	0

¹¹⁷ The Economics Times, 5 October 2017, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/60955533.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

			offences relating to terrorism, including [an] attack on a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane at Peshawar Airport, killing of civilians, attacking the armed forces and law enforcement agencies,” the ISPR handout read. ¹¹⁸		
2	October 5	Balochistan	At least 20 people, including a police constable, were killed and more than 30 others were injured in a suicide bombing at Dargah Pir Rakhel Shah in Fatehpur town of Jhal Magsi District. ¹¹⁹ ISIS also known as Daesh claimed the responsibility for the bombing on October 6, 2017. ¹²⁰	20	30
3	October 7	Balochistan	A major terrorist activity was averted in Balochistan after FC personnel conducted intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in Grandani, Kohlu, Ghazi Nullah and Uch Naseerabad and recovered large quantities of arms, ammunition and explosives, the ISPR said in a press release. The military said 1,300 kilogrammes of	Arms recovery	

¹¹⁸ Naveed Siddiqui, 3 terrorists convicted by military courts executed in KP: ISPR, *Dawn*, October 4, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361654/3-terrorists-convicted-by-military-courts-executed-in-kp-ispr>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹¹⁹ Syed Ali Shah, 20 killed in suicide bombing targeting shrine in Jhal Magsi, Balochistan, *Dawn*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361889/20-killed-in-suicide-bombing-targeting-shrine-in-jhal-magsi-balochistan>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²⁰ ISIS behind Jhal Magsi shrine attack, *Pakistan Today*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/10/06/isis-behind-jhal-magsi-shrine-attack/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			explosives were recovered during the raids. ¹²¹		
4	October 9	Balochistan	At least five Hazara Shias were killed while one other was injured when unidentified armed assailants opened fire at them on Kasi road in provincial capital Quetta. ¹²²	5	1

Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 2	Uruzgan	At least 30 Taliban insurgents have been killed and 15 others wounded in an ongoing operation in Uruzgan province. Police chief Brigadier General Rahmatullah Siddiqi said that Taliban's attacks in Chora district were repulsed and a clearing operation was underway. ¹²³	30	15
2	October 5	Badghis	The District Governor confirmed that the Taliban carried out an attack on three villages in Ab Kamari district, forcing 200 families to leave their homes. Residents from Ordo, Tagab Rabat and Bai villages in Badghis province said the Taliban attacked the area evening and	Taliban seize villages	

¹²¹ FC Balochistan foils major terrorist bid: ISPR, *Dawn*, October 7, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362313/fc-balochistan-foils-major-terrorist-bid-ispr>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²² Syed Ali Shah, 5 Hazaras shot dead on Quetta's Kasi road, *Dawn*, October 9, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362674/5-hazaras-shot-dead-on-quettas-kasi-road>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²³ Dozens of Militants Killed in Uruzgan Offensive, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 3, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/October%2003,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			torched a number of houses. “We had no option but to leave our houses during the evening by walking across difficult terrain. The Taliban took our belongings from our houses when they came to our village. They set fire to some houses (in our village),” said Hafizullah, one resident who was forced to flee. ¹²⁴		
3	October 6	Kunduz	At least 88 Taliban militants were killed and 78 others were wounded in Operation Pamir-24 carried out by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces in Imam Sahib District. Sayed Qurban Musawi, Executive Officer of Pamir 20 Battalion in Kunduz said that Qerghez, Gombaz and Ganjak villages in Imam Sahib district were cleared of Taliban during the operation. ¹²⁵	88	78
4	October 7	Sara-e-Pul	An airstrike targeted a compound of Taliban militants in Sar-e-Pul province, leaving seven dead and 11 others injured. According to the police chief, the Taliban were using the	7	11

¹²⁴ Jawed Ziyaratjayee, 200 Badghis Families Displaced After Taliban Seize Village, *Tolo News*, October 7, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/200-badghis-families-displaced-after-taliban-seize-villages>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²⁵ Taliban Suffers Heavy Losses In Ongoing Kunduz Operation, *Tolo News*, October 8, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-suffers-heavy-losses-ongoing-kunduz-operation>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			compound as their main training facility in this province. ¹²⁶		
5	October 7	Baghlan	At least two Policemen were killed in a Taliban attack on a check post in Chashme Sher village in Dand-e-Ghori area of Baghlan Province. ¹²⁷	2	0
6	October 8	Balkh	The commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) Qadrya Yazdanparast during a meeting in Mazar-e-Sharif said that the increasing civilian casualties in Afghanistan are “terrifying.” “According to a recent report, the number of civilian casualties in the ongoing conflict has surprisingly risen,” she said. ¹²⁸	Increase in civilian casualties	

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 5	Anbar	IS militants killed a family as they tried to escape in Anbar, a security source said. “IS militants killed in the evening a family which tried escaping in the desert of Qaim,” the source said. The militant group, according to	1	0

¹²⁶ Deadly airstrike targets Taliban compound in Sar-e-Pul province, *Khaama Press*, October 8, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/deadly-airstrike-targets-taliban-compound-in-sar-e-pul-province-03602>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²⁷ Two Policemen Killed in Taliban Attack on Baghlan Check Post, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 9, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/October%2009,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹²⁸ Increasing civilian casualties worries AIHRC, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, October 7, 2017, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/10/08/increasing-civilian-casualties-worries-aihrc>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			the source, “previously threatened people against escaping or they would be killed along with their families.” ¹²⁹		
2	October 6	US	The Pentagon believes Islamic State’s supreme ‘commander’ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is still alive, having analyzed a latest voice recording attributed to the runaway militant. Eric Pahon, a Pentagon spokesperson, said that US intelligence service, analyzed an audio recording circulated last week, have verified its authenticity. He said the recording’s content showed that Baghdadi was still alive to a recent time, or at least until the time the recording was made. ¹³⁰		
3	October 7	Kirkuk	The leader in-charge of training ISIS snipers, identified as Abu Abdullah al-Tajiki, was killed along with several other snipers in an airstrike in a village in north of Hawija in Kirkuk. According to unnamed local source “al-Tajiki is one of the front line leaders. He was known to be close to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group’s leader. He	NS	NS

¹²⁹ Nehal Mostafa, IS kills escaping family, militants killed in Coalition airstrikes in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/kills-escaping-family-militants-killed-coalition-airstrikes-anbar/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³⁰ Mohamed Mostafa, Islamic State top leader Baghdadi still alive: Pentagon, *Iraqi News*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-top-leader-baghdadi-still-alive-pentagon/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			was in charge of the snipers brigade in Nineveh.” ¹³¹		
4	October 8	Mosul	At least 16 Islamic State militants were killed as they got out of tunnels in Mosul during a security operation. “Security troops launched an operation to blow up IS tunnels in regions of al-Midan, al-Shahwan, al-Dakka and Qulai’at, in centre of the Old City of Mosul,” a security source said. ¹³²	16	NS

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	October 3	Iraq-Syria border	Iraqi paramilitary troops said that they killed 11 IS militants near the Iraqi borders with Syria as military operations prepare to retake the last group holdouts there. The Popular Mobilization Forces’ media service said troops repelled an attack by the group at al-Hamadaniya Triangle, which links the city of Ramadi to Syria’s Hassaka. ¹³³	11	NS

¹³¹ Nehal Mostafa, IS’s Baghdadi’s close member, five snipers, killed in airstrike in Kirkuk, *Iraqi News*, October 7, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iss-baghdadis-close-member-five-snipers-killed-airstrike-kirkuk/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³² Sixteen IS militants killed, while troops comb tunnels in Mosul, *Iraqi News*, October 8, 2017,

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/sixteen-militants-killed-troops-comb-tunnels-mosul/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³³ Mohamed Mostafa, Iraqi mobilization kill 11 Islamic State militants near Syrian borders, *Iraqi News*, October 3, 2017,

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-mobilization-kill-11-islamic-state-militants-near-syrian-borders/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

2	October 3	Uqayribat	The Syrian army forces, backed by Qalamon Shield militias recaptured Oksh Village in the district of Uqayribat, in the eastern countryside of Hama, after violent battles with the Islamic State militants. The clashes were accompanied by mutual artillery and missiles shelling, leaving several casualties among the ranks of the terrorist group. ¹³⁴	NS	NS
3	October 4	Deir Ezzor	The Syrian army forces and allied militia carried out an offensive on a village in Deir Ezzor. Local sources said that the Syrian army forces, backed up by Russian, carried out an offensive on the Sa'alo village, in Deir Ezzor. ¹³⁵	Syrian army launches offensive	
4	October 8	Abu Dali	Dozens of Syrian troops were either killed-in-action or captured alive by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) after the al Qaeda affiliated group attacked the village of Abu Dali, located on the provincial border between Hama and Idlib, from all flanks in a highly coordinated offensive. ¹³⁶	NS	NS
5	October 8	Deir Ezzor	Contingents of the Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) 4th Mechanized Division expanded their	Syrian Army	

¹³⁴ Loaa Adel, Syrian army retakes new village in Uqayribat east of Hama, *Iraqi News*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-army-retakes-new-village-uqayribat-east-hama/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³⁵ Loaa Adel, Syrian army launches extensive offensive on IS strongholds in Deir Ezzor, *Iraqi News*, October 4, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-army-launches-extensive-offensive-strongholds-deir-ezzor/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³⁶ Chris Tomson, In pictures: Al-Qaeda defeats besieged Syrian Army garrison at Abu Dali village, *Al Masdar News*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/pictures-al-qaeda-defeats-besieged-syrian-army-garrison-abu-dali-village/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

			bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River, thus reaching ISIS-held areas of Deir Ezzor province that have not been under government control since 2012. ¹³⁷	liberates new village
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International Economic Issues

- **AIIB, ADB approves \$100 million loan for India's power sector**

On October 2, 2017, China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and multilateral funding agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a \$100-million loan for India to improve power transmission network and expand the use of solar and wind energy. The loan, approved by the Board of Directors of the Beijing-headquartered AIIB involves co-financing of USD 50 million from the ADB.¹³⁸

- **India signs €300 million Finance Contract with EIB for financing Bangalore Metro Rail Project Phase II- Line R6.**

On October 5, 2017, Government of India and European Investment Bank (EIB) signed the Finance Contract for lending of €300 million for Bangalore Metro Rail Project Phase II Line R6. Bangalore Metro Rail Project Phase II is to be jointly financed by the EIB (€500 million) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (€300 million).¹³⁹

- **14th India-EU Summit held in New Delhi**

The 14th annual Summit between India and the European Union (EU) was held in New Delhi on October 6, 2017. The leaders reviewed the wide-ranging cooperation under the India-EU Strategic Partnership and recognised the deepening of trade cooperation, enhancing investment flows in both directions and broadening

¹³⁷ Chris Thomson, Syrian Army liberates new village east of Euphrates River, encircles ISIS in Deir Ezzor city, *Al Masdar News*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-liberates-new-village-east-euphrates-river-encircles-isis-deir-ezzor-city/>, accessed on October 9, 2017

¹³⁸ “AIIB, ADB approves \$100 million loan for India's power sector”, *The Economic Times*, October 2, 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/aiib-ADB-approves-100-million-loan-for-indias-power-sector/articleshow/60914742.cms> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

¹³⁹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, “India signs €300 million Finance Contract with European Investment Bank (EIB) for financing Bangalore Metro Rail Project Phase II- Line R6”, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx> (accessed on October 9, 2017)

dialogue and engagement on global and regional issues, including climate change, as well as migration and the refugee crisis, and resolved to further strengthen their bilateral and multilateral cooperation in these areas. The leaders commended the strong engagement of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in India in a wide range of key sectors, in particular in the field of climate action and renewable energy. The EU leaders welcomed India's efforts to promote economic and social development and expressed EU's continued interest in participating in India's flagship initiatives such as "Make in India", "Digital India", "Skill India", "Smart City", "Clean India," and "Start-Up India".

The Leaders expressed their shared commitment to strengthening the Economic Partnership and efforts to re-engage actively towards timely re-launching of negotiations for a comprehensive and mutually beneficial India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA). The Leaders welcomed the establishment of an Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM) for EU investments in India as a means to improve the business climate as well as the South Asian Regional Representative Office of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in India and noted that its investments, especially in urban mobility and renewable energy projects, will support India-EU collaboration on the Climate Agenda.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "India – EU Joint Statement during 14th India-EU Summit, New Delhi (October 06, 2017) ",<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx> (accessed on October 8, 2017)