

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(20-26 November, 2017)**

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### **Contents**

#### **Regions and Themes covered this Week**

- **Africa**
- **Central Asia**
- **China**
- **Latin America and Caribbean**
- **North America**
- **Russia**
- **South Asia**
- **Indian Ocean**
- **West Asia**
- **Terrorism and Counter Terrorism**

## Africa

- **Rwanda and the Outrage across Africa over Libya 'Slave Trade'<sup>1</sup>**

Last week, an American television broke the story about the ongoing auction of African immigrants in Libya, in a modern-day open door slave market. According to videos doing rounds on the networks, this has been happening in northern Libya for a long period now, and most of the victims comprise the youth and others in the active workforce. Each of them is being sold at as cheap as \$400-\$500 depending on their physical appearance and perceived productive capacity.

Now, Government of Rwanda has not only offered to transport these stranded immigrants back to their respective countries, refuge to around 30,000 African migrants who are living in slave-like conditions in Libya. It is but also take in those that are not willing to repatriate

The Rwandan foreign ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that it was “horrified by the images of the tragedy unfolding in Libya, where African men, women and children who were on the road to exile, have been held and turned into slaves.” “Given Rwanda’s political philosophy and our own history, we cannot remain silent when human beings are being mistreated and auctioned off like cattle.”

Evidence of African migrants being sold as slaves has sparked widespread condemnation in Africa and the West. The French President, Emmanuel Macron has called on the UN Security Council to take action and investigate the reported crimes. The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres described the auction as "crimes against humanity" which should stop immediately.

Politicians in Africa have expressed their outrage at the scandal - especially in West Africa where most African migrants originate. President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou felt particularly revolted by the reports, summoning the Libyan ambassador to Niger and demanding the International Court of Justice to investigate Libya for trading slaves.

Meanwhile the foreign minister of Burkina Faso, Alpha Barry, told the press that he had also summoned the Libyan ambassador to the capital Ouagadougou for consultations. The issue has since been added to the agenda of next week's African Union meeting in Ivory Coast, to take place on November 29 and 30.

Protests meanwhile took place outside the Libyan embassies in several other African capital cities including Bamako, Mali and Conakry, Guinea over the weekend.

- **Sudan: President Al-Bashir and Putin hear Inclusive Briefings on Cooperation<sup>2</sup>**

The Sudanese and Russian Ministers of Defence, Agriculture and Finance have given briefings to the President of the Republic, Field Marshal Omer Al-Bashir, and President, Vladimir Putin, at their second meeting Thursday noon in Sochi, Russia. In a statement to SUNA, the Foreign Minister, Prof. Ibrahim Ghandour, said that the two sides affirmed that the cooperation

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<sup>1</sup>The New Times, Rwanda, 24 November 2017

[http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240032.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabmrjk](http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240032.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabmrjk)

DW, 22 November 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240194.html>

<sup>2</sup>Sudan News Agency 23 November

2017, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240284.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt](http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240284.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt)

between Sudan and Russia is progressing well and covered the mining, educational, financial and cultural field.

He said that the Sudanese and Russian sides asserted that the cooperation between the two countries was launched in the fields of oil and natural gas exploration. Prof. Ghandour pointed out that the Sudanese and Russian parties have deliberated in length about the issues of exportation and importation, especially regarding Sudan importation of wheat from Russia and the exportation of Sudanese vegetables and fruits to Russia.

He indicated that the Sudanese and Russian Ministers of Defence have given a briefing to the two presidents on the cooperation in the military domain between Sudan and Russia at the arms and training fields, especially that the Sudanese Armed Forces depends in part of its training and arming on the Russian-made weapons.

He said that the Ministers of Agriculture of the two countries have given a briefing on the cooperation between Sudan and Russia at the technological and agricultural manufacturing fields, adding that the Sudanese and Russian Ministers of Finance also gave a briefing in the financial, economic and money transfers' fields.

- **Tanzania: Bagamoyo Port Project Now Revived<sup>3</sup>**

Tanzania is finalising negotiations with China and Oman over the construction of Bagamoyo Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the \$10 billion (about Sh22.3 trillion) Bagamoyo Port, the minister for Industry, Trade and Investment, Mr Charles Mwijage, has said speaking on the sidelines of a symposium on Sino-Tanzania investment opportunities in Dar es Salaam on Thursday, 23 November 2017. He said the plan was to complete the negotiations next month to pave the way for implementation of the project.

He said if all goes well, construction of the special economic zone will kick off in January, adding, "the time frame proposed is to have the projects completed by 2022."

Upon completion, the SEZ will attract 700 factories and become a strategic investment zone in East Africa. The project is backed financially by China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI), China's largest operator, and Oman's State General Reserve Fund.

According to Mr Mwijage, the Bagamoyo Port, once completed would be the largest in East Africa. It will be able to handle megaships (vessels carrying 8,000 of 20 feet equivalent units containers) after the first phase is completed, with room for expansion. The port, which is about 75 kilometres from the commercial city, Dar es Salaam, and 10 kilometres from Bagamoyo town, will have new roads, railways and the economic zones. The port and its industrial zone are designed to address congestion at the old port and make Tanzania East Africa's leading shipping and logistics centre.

- **Kenya's Supreme Court upholds Kenyatta's election win<sup>4</sup>**

The Supreme Court of Kenya has upheld the results of the October 26 elections, setting stage for President Uhuru Kenyatta's swearing in on November 28. The decision by the court comes at a time when Kenya is deeply divided, with protests across the country and reports of police brutality.

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<sup>3</sup>The Citizen, 24 November 2017,

[http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240835.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabljpw](http://allafrica.com/stories/201711240835.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabljpw)

<sup>4</sup>Opinion, 20 November 2017, <https://thisisafrica.me/kenyatta-reelection/>

The October 26 elections were held after the opposition Nasa, led by Raila Odinga protested the August 8 elections. The matter was taken to court, where the Chief Justice declared the elections held in August illegitimate.

The October 26 elections saw only 39 per cent turnout as Odinga encouraged his supporters to boycott it. Odinga claimed that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) did not place proper measures to ensure free and fair elections. Kenyatta won by 98 per cent.

Apart from the demonstrations called for by the opposition, there were economic boycott of various products and companies.

The first petition to dispute the October 26 elections was submitted by former lawmaker and businessman John Harun Mwau and the second one submitted jointly by Njonjo Mue, a human rights and judicial expert, and Khelef Khalifa, director of Muslims for Human Rights.

Mwau was looking to have the elections cancelled over the failure of the IEBC to conduct fresh nominations ahead of the vote. Mue and Khalifa's counsel argued that the election re run was not in line with the constitution because of violence and lack of independence of the elections commission.

The Supreme Court Judges led by Chief Justice David Maraga dismissed the petitions, saying that they were not merited.

- **Africa's richest woman fired from State Oil Company Sonangol<sup>5</sup>**

The president of Angola, Joao Lourenco, recently fired the daughter of his predecessor as head of the country's state oil company Sonangol. The move is seen as a bid to clean up Angola's endemic graft, tackle nepotism and revive its listless economy. Angola, which along with Nigeria is one of Africa's top oil producers, has been in the grip of an economic crisis since 2014 as the global price of oil has remained flat. Isabel Dos Santos had been in charge of her country's most important corporate entity since June 2016 after being controversially appointed by her father, José Eduardo dos Santos.

With a net-worth of more than \$3 billion, dos Santos is Africa's richest woman as the only African woman named in Forbes' list of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women in 2017. However, much of her wealth is linked to her family's near-total control of the country's resources for the past four decades. Dos Santos' assets range from stakes in the Angola's largest telecoms company to one of its largest banks. Beyond the country's shores, dos Santos also owns lucrative stakes in Portuguese companies.

Having served as defence minister under president dos Santos, Lourenço wasn't expected to go against the family's interests. But the first indication came when Lourenço appointed Carlos Saturnino; who'd been sacked from Sonangol by president dos Santos last year; as his secretary of state for oil and removed the central bank governor.

## Central Asia

- **Uzbekistan President Visits South Korea**

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited the Republic of Korea from 22 to 25 November 2017 at the invitation of President Moon Jae-in.<sup>6</sup> In the meetings the two leaders

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<sup>5</sup>Opinion, 21 November 2017, <https://thisisafrika.me/angola-africa/>

discussed major areas to increase bilateral cooperation and talked about the regional and international issues common interest. South Korean President said that his country aims to promote peace and prosperity in Eurasia and Uzbekistan is at the heart of this plan. Following the negotiations, the two leaders signed the Joint Statement on comprehensive deepening of relations of the strategic partnership.<sup>7</sup>

Uzbekistan and South Korea have friendly relations. The strategic partnership declaration was signed in 2006. The bilateral trade in 2016 was about US\$ 1 billion and it is about 50 per cent of South Korea's total trade with Central Asian countries. Total South Korean investment in Uzbekistan is more than US\$ 7 billion and more than 450 Korean JVs and wholly-owned companies in oil, gas, petrochemical, chemical, engineering, textile, IT, transport and logistics.

President Mirziyoyev also held a session with South Korea-Uzbekistan business forum which was attended by business leaders and representatives of financial institutions. To further strengthen business and economic relations between the two countries, the President of Uzbekistan proposed establishment of a Korean business centre in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan hosts a significant number of Koreans in the country nearly 180,000, which is the largest in CIS countries.

During the visit, more than 60 documents including on human development, justice, e-commerce, Foreign Ministry Cooperation Programme for 2018-2020, sharing of knowledge on economic issues and on financial cooperation were signed.

- **Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan Ministers Discuss Bilateral Relations**

First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin held talks with Uzbekistan Prime Minister Abdullah Aripov in Tashkent on 24 November 2017. The two leaders covered a range of areas to further increase cooperation and commercial relations between the two countries. Increased engagements in areas like industry, agriculture, military, aerospace, transit and transport were discussed.<sup>8</sup>

Askar Mamin of Kazakhstan said that over the nine months of 2017, the trade between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has increased by 30 per cent and reached US\$ 1.5 billion. He added that by the year end, the turnover will be of about US\$ 2 billion and it can reach US\$ 5 billion 2020.<sup>9</sup>

The visit has been undertaken in the framework of events to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Since Shavkat Mirziyoyev becoming the President of Uzbekistan in 2016, the country has intensified efforts to improve relations and connectivity with the neighbouring countries.

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<sup>6</sup> President of Uzbekistan, "On the state visit of the President of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea," 17 November 2017, <http://www.press-service.uz/en/lists/view/1244>

<sup>7</sup> President of Uzbekistan, "Uzbekistan – South Korea: New stage of the strategic partnership," 23 November 2017, <http://www.press-service.uz/en/lists/view/1276>

<sup>8</sup> The Times of Central Asia, "Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan set to increase bilateral trade to \$5 billion a year," 27 November 2017, <https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/18980-kazakhstan-and-uzbekistan-set-to-increase-bilateral-trade-to-5-billion-a-year>

<sup>9</sup> Kazinform, "Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan hold intergovernmental talks in Tashkent," 25 November 2017, [http://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-uzbekistan-hold-intergovernmental-talks-in-tashkent\\_a3089367](http://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-uzbekistan-hold-intergovernmental-talks-in-tashkent_a3089367)

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are two largest countries of Central Asia in terms of economy and population and their cooperation can play significant role in the region's development.

- **Kyrgyzstan Gets New President in Peaceful Power Transition**

Mr. Sooronbai Jeenbekov has taken oath on 24 November in Bishkek as the new President of Kyrgyz Republic. He was declared winner of the presidential election held on 15 October 2017. The constitution of Kyrgyzstan allows one six-year term of presidency.<sup>10</sup> The transfer of power marks the first peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected government to the other in the country.

After taking the oath, President Jeenbekov said that fighting corruption and bringing transparency in the government are his first priorities.

## China

- **1st Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network Forum<sup>11</sup>**

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on 21 November that non-governmental organizations (NGO) along the Silk Road should contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship between people of different countries, promoting common development, and building a community of shared future for mankind. He made the remarks in a congratulatory letter to the 1st Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network Forum, which kicked off on 21 November in Beijing.

- **CMC Vice Chairman meets with Myanmar Military Chief<sup>12</sup>**

Gen. Xu Qiliang, Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission (CMC), met with the visiting Commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Beijing on 24 November. Xu expressed that China attaches great importance to the China-Myanmar relations and will stick to developing the China-Myanmar friendship and supporting Myanmar to realize its domestic peace and national reconciliation no matter how international and the two countries' domestic situations change.

- **China, Djibouti agree to establish strategic partnership<sup>13</sup>**

China and Djibouti on 24 November agreed to establish strategic partnership to strengthen all-round cooperation. The announcement came as Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Guelleh is the first head of state of an African country to visit China since the conclusion of the 19th Party Congress in October.

- **Chinese delegation visits Asia to introduce CPC Party Congress<sup>14</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> Embassy of Kyrgyz Republic in India, "Sooronbai Zheenbekov takes oath as President of Kyrgyzstan," 24 November 2017, <http://www.kgzembind.in/?p=1172>

<sup>11</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/21/c\\_136768484.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/21/c_136768484.htm)

<sup>12</sup> [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-11/24/content\\_4798192.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-11/24/content_4798192.htm)

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/1124/c90000-9296382.html>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-11/27/content\\_35050139.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-11/27/content_35050139.htm)

A Chinese delegation introducing the achievements of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) ended its three-nation Asia tour on 26 November, which has taken them to Mongolia, South Korea and Japan. The delegation, headed by He Yiting, Executive Vice President of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, met with local political party leaders and held briefing sessions with party officials, friendly groups, major media and think tanks in the three countries to introduce the spirit and significance of the CPC Party Congress.

- **Chinese Air Force patrol South China Sea<sup>15</sup>**

China's PLA Air Force recently conducted a combat air patrol in the South China Sea, said a military spokesperson on 23 November. A team of various bombers completed the routine patrol, said spokesman Shen Jinke. The Chinese air force started regular high seas training in 2015.

- **Beijing, Washington move closer to trade war as Donald Trump-led investigations target China.<sup>16</sup>**

US President Donald Trump's mantra before and since his tour of Asia earlier this month touted the need for countries to accept each other's unique characteristics to ensure prosperity for the world's great civilisations. The message of harmony might have offset discord caused by Trump's harsh criticism of multilateral trade and investment deals during the trip. When it comes to civilisation, however, the course in Washington appears set for a clash rather than cooperation and mutual respect.

Amid a push by lawmakers to apply greater scrutiny to Chinese investments in the US, multiple investigations launched by Trump's administration targeting China threatened to destabilise Sino-US close economic and cultural ties, which have underpinned prosperity for the Asia-Pacific region for decades, trade officials and analysts interviewed by the South China Morning Post said.

- **Geography is not destiny: rise of Indo-Pacific<sup>17</sup>**

US President Donald Trump and other top national officials, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, have increasingly favored use of the term "Indo-Pacific" over the more conventional "Asia-Pacific." Scholars, politicians and strategists in Australia, Japan and India have also been pushing to popularize the idea of the "Indo-Pacific" and make it the basis for regional policy. Consequently, some observers argue that the rise of the Indo-Pacific is inevitable, with some even heralding the beginning of an "Indo-Pacific century." The new region of Indo-Pacific is essentially a social construction created through politics. It is by no means driven by any natural geographic factors, as there exists no exact boundary delineations for the Indo-Pacific area. Its membership is also a moot point. However, if we want to understand why the Indo-Pacific has become popular with policymakers in the US, Australia, Japan and India, we need to look at contemporary geo-economic and geopolitical concerns of the major and middle powers that make up the region.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/23/c\\_136774671.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/23/c_136774671.htm)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2120989/beijing-washington-move-closer-trade-war-trump-led>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1076466.shtml>

China has become the "odd man out" in this conceptual mapping of the Indo-Pacific. The association of China's rise by other powers as a "China threat" is an important reason for this. As a result, Chinese strategists have become increasingly concerned about growing soft power and political dynamics fostered between the Indo-Pacific's four main actors: the US, Australia, Japan and India, known as the Quad, and how China is implicated by this. While the new concept of the Indo-Pacific may be socially constructed through various geopolitical and geo-economic lenses, it has the potential to turn into a very real and strategic set of relationships. Geographic position may not necessarily be destiny, but it may suit some states to act as if it is. Chinese policymakers would be well advised to attentively monitor these developments.

- **Xi calls for "unswervingly" pushing forward reform<sup>18</sup>**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday (20<sup>th</sup> November) called for fully implementing the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and pressing ahead with reform. Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the first meeting of the Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform of the 19th CPC Central Committee, which he heads.

"In studying and implementing the spirit of the Party congress, we should focus on its essence, arrangements and requirements on reform," said Xi. Senior officials Li Keqiang, Zhang Gaoli, Wang Yang and Wang Huning attended the meeting.

- **Senior official stresses importance of Xi's second book on governance<sup>19</sup>**

A senior official said on Friday that studying President Xi Jinping's new book on governance will deepen the understanding of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks at symposium on the second volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," which was published earlier this month.

Wang said that "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is considered as the Chinese Marxism of the 21st century, which shows its originality and reflects the features of the times." "According to the 19th CPC National Congress, it is an important strategic task to equip the whole Party with Xi's thought," said Wang. The second volume, covering 17 topics, collects 99 of Xi's speeches, conversations, instructions and letters between Aug. 18, 2014 and Sept. 29, 2017. The new volume depicts the practice of the CPC Central Committee with Xi at the core in uniting and leading Chinese people to uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era.

## European Union

- **Poland Signed Deal for US Gas Supplies**

The Polish Oil and Gas Company Group (PGNiG) and British energy company Centrica have signed a five-year deal for the supply of nine shipments of US Liquefied Natural Gas

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<sup>18</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/20/c\\_136766877.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/20/c_136766877.htm)

<sup>19</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/24/c\\_136777144.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/24/c_136777144.htm)



to Poland. The shipments would be made from the Sabine Pass LNG Terminal in Louisiana to the Świnoujście LNG Terminal of Poland. CEO of PGNiG, Piotr Woźniak said that the new deal would aim to diversify "the gas markets of Poland and other Central European countries in order to increase the energy security of this region, which has historically been dominated by Russian gas".<sup>20</sup>

- **Russia-Czech Republic Trade Relations**

According to the Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Oreshkin, "The potential for cooperation between Russia and the Czech Republic is very big. Growth of the turnover that we see after several years of decline reached 40% - this is a very important figure. Only a few countries show such turnover growth." President of the Czech Republic visited Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russian-Czech relations are developing despite the difficulties.<sup>21</sup>

- **Talks for Next Coalition Government in Germany**

Talks among Greens, FDP and CDU for forming a coalition government have failed. Now attention has shifted to SPD. Social Democrats said that they would sit in the opposition and would not enter grand coalition after the general elections. Now SPD leader Martin Schulz said, "No options are off the table." CSU leader Horst Seehofer also said, "An alliance of the conservatives and the SPD is the best option for Germany - better anyway than a coalition with the Free Democrats and the Greens, new elections or a minority government."<sup>22</sup>

- **Brexit**

Reportedly, tensions were growing between the Irish and British governments, as it is speculated that the UK government proposed Brexit plans could lead to a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Irish EU Commissioner Phil Hogan said that that Ireland would 'continue to play tough to the end' over the border. He argued for remaining in European single market and customs union, as "The best possible FTA with the EU will fall far short of the benefits of being in a single market".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Poland signs five-year deal for US gas supplies, Radio Poland, November 22, 2017 <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/336262,Poland-signs-fiveyear-deal-for-US-gas-supplies>

<sup>21</sup> Trade turnover between Russia and Czech Republic up 40% since early 2017, TASS, November 22, 2017, <http://tass.com/economy/976896>

<sup>22</sup> Angela Merkel's CDU backs German government 'grand coalition' strategy, DW, November 27, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkels-cdu-backs-german-government-grand-coalition-strategy/a-41539014>

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Schumacher, Brexit: Ireland warns Britain over hard border with North, DW, November 26, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/brexit-ireland-warns-britain-over-hard-border-with-north/a-41534842>

## East Asia /South-East Asia

### Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **US designates North Korea as state sponsor of terrorism**<sup>24</sup>

On November 20, 2017 United States designated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism in a symbolic move aimed at increasing pressure on the regime over its nuclear weapons program. President Donald Trump made the announcement at the White House, returning North Korea to a list of nations it was removed from nine years ago. "It should have happened years ago," Trump said at the start of a Cabinet meeting. "In addition to threatening the world by nuclear devastation, North Korea has repeatedly supported acts of international terrorism, including assassinations on foreign soil." The designation is the latest in a series of steps Washington has taken to isolate the North and force it to come to the negotiation table over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

- **US announced new sanction on North Korea**<sup>25</sup>

On November 21, 2017 the US announced new sanctions targeting Chinese and North Korean entities and vessels suspected of aiding Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. According to the US Treasury Department the new sanction list includes one Chinese individual, 13 entities in China and North Korea, and 20 vessels owned by North Korean shipping companies. They will be banned from accessing the U.S. financial system.

- **North Korean troops violated armistice: UNC**<sup>26</sup>

On November 22, 2017 the United Nations Command (UNC) announced that North Korea clearly violated the 1953 Armistice Agreement twice last week, when its border security guards tried to hunt down a fellow soldier defecting to South Korea via Panmunjom. The command released video clips lasting a total of around seven minutes showing the dramatic incident that happened at the Joint Security Area (JSA) of the truce village on Nov. 13. The defector was shot five times, with some of the gunshots flying over the MDL. A North Korean guard also crossed the MDL for a few seconds and then returned to the North's side. The UNC stressed that the North Korean troops' acts were in breach of the Armistice Agreement that ended the Korean War.

- **South Korean Foreign Minister visits Beijing**<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "US designates North Korea as state sponsor of terrorism", The Korea Times, November 21, 2017, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/103\\_239604.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/103_239604.html) (Accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>25</sup> "U.S. slaps new sanctions on Chinese, N.K. entities", The Yonhap News, November 22, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/11/22/0401000000AEN20171122000353315.html> (Accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>26</sup> "N. Korean troops violated armistice in chasing defector: UNC", The Yonhap News, November 22, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/11/22/0401000000AEN20171122004054315.html> (Accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>27</sup> "S. Korea, China agree to push for Moon's state visit to Beijing in Dec.", The Yonhap News, November 23, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/11/23/0401000000AEN20171123000851315.html> (Accessed on November 27, 2017)

On November 22, 2017, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing. According to South Korean Foreign Ministry both leaders have agreed to push for President Moon Jae-in's state visit to Beijing next month as the two nations seek to mend ties frayed by the deployment of an American missile defense system. Seoul-Beijing relations have been frayed for more than a year as China strongly opposed the deployment of an advanced U.S. missile defense system in South Korea before the countries reached an agreement last month to put the dispute behind them.

- **Japanese Foreign Minister visits Russia<sup>28</sup>**

On November 24, 2017, Japanese Foreign Minister, Taro Kono held talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow. According to Russian Foreign Ministry the meeting was focused on the implementation of the top-level bilateral agreements on the development of mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields. The ministers discussed the schedule of political dialogue, interaction in practical spheres, including trade and investment projects, and current efforts, in the context of work on a peace treaty, to promote joint economic activities in the Southern Kuril Island. At the meeting Russian foreign minister concerned that Japan is allowing Washington to use its territory as a base for a U.S. military build-up in north Asia under the pretext of countering North Korea. Japan had wanted to focus on resolving a seven-decade old territorial dispute between the countries but Lavrov's comments on North Korea cast a shadow over the meeting. "We are expressing deep concern, with facts to back it up, that Japan along with South Korea is becoming a territory for the deployment of elements of the U.S. global missile defence system which is being rolled out in that region under the pretext of the North Korea threat," Lavrov said.

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

- **13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-Europe Meeting (ASEM) held in Myanmar<sup>29</sup>**

The 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM13) was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 20-21 November 2017. The Meeting, convened under the over-arching theme: "Strengthening Partnership for Peace and Sustainable Development", provided the opportunity for ASEM partners to exchange views on relevant issues of common interests and explored most effective and efficient ways to create a stronger partnership between Asia and Europe for a future of shared, inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity. Ministers held fruitful discussions on a wide range of regional and international issues as well as global challenges.

- **Australia-Southeast Asia Intelligence sharing on cutting Militant Fund<sup>30</sup>**

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<sup>28</sup>"Russia takes Tokyo to task over defence alliance with Washington", The Asahi Shimbun, November 25, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201711250009.html> (Accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>29</sup>"Chair's Statement of the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting", ASEAN, November 21, 2017, <http://asean.org/chairs-statement-of-the-13th-asem-foreign-ministers-meeting/>, accessed on November 22, 2017.

According to Justice Minister Michael Keenan, who was in Kuala Lumpur to attend a counter-terrorism conference, Australia and Southeast Asia have formed a new alliance named the South East Asia Counter Terrorism Financing Working Group, seeks to disrupt the funding of militant groups through enhanced financial intelligence sharing. Mr Keenan said that under the new initiative participating states will directly target and disrupt the funding lifeline of terrorist groups by denying them access to the international financial system and other sources of funding. He further added that Australia's financial intelligence agency AUSTRAC and the Philippines' Anti-Money Laundering Council will lead the group.

## Myanmar

- **The Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People's Republic of Bangladesh signed the arrangement on return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State: Press statement**<sup>31</sup>

At the invitation of U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, visited Myanmar from 22 to 23 November 2017. U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor and Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh signed the Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State at the Meeting Room, Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor on 23 November 2017 at 1400 hrs. The Arrangement was based on the Joint Statement signed by the Foreign Ministers of the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1992 and contained the general guiding principles and policy arrangements to receive the displaced persons from Rakhine State.

- **Chinese military tells Senior General it wants closer ties**<sup>32</sup>

China and Myanmar have had close diplomatic and economic ties for years, including increasingly in the strategically important oil and gas sectors, and China has offered its support to its southern neighbour, also known as Burma, throughout a crisis over its treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority.

Meeting in Beijing, Li Zuocheng, who sits on China's Central Military Commission, which runs its armed forces, told Senior General Min Aung Hlaing that China's development and prosperity were an important opportunity for Myanmar's development, China's Defence Ministry said in a statement. "In the face of a complex and changeable regional security

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<sup>30</sup>"Australia, South-east Asia join forces to choke militant financing", *The Straits Times*, November 22, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/australia-south-east-asia-join-forces-to-choke-militant-financing>, accessed November 22, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH SIGNED THE ARRANGEMENT ON RETURN OF DISPLACED PERSONS FROM RAKHINE STATE, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1371>

<sup>32</sup> Chinese military tells Senior General it wants closer ties, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/chinese-military-tells-senior-general-it-wants-closer-ties.html>

situation, China is willing to maintain strategic communication between the two countries' militaries," Li was cited as saying in the statement issued late on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

- **Illegal immigration, terrorism new global threats: State Counsellor**<sup>33</sup>

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 20<sup>th</sup> November warned that illegal immigration, terrorism and extremism are new threats countries have to confront. Her comments come at a time when Myanmar is facing intense criticism over its handling of the Rakhine crisis that sent more than 600,000 Muslim residents fleeing to Bangladesh. The State Counsellor did not directly discuss the Rakhine State problem at the opening of the Asia-Europe Meeting of foreign ministers in Nay Pyi Taw, but highlighted the most people in Myanmar view the Muslim residents of the state as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

- **India welcomes Myanmar-Bangladesh MOU on refugee repatriation**<sup>34</sup>

India on 23<sup>rd</sup> November welcomed the MOU signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh to start the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. An Indian external affairs ministry official told Mizzima that the "MOU was a major breakthrough." "It shows Myanmar and Bangladesh can resolve this issue through bilateral dialogue," the official said but was not willing to be named. "Both countries are friendly neighbours, and we back their efforts to find a solution."

- **US condemns 'ethnic cleansing'**<sup>35</sup>

The United States on 22<sup>nd</sup> November toughened its stance on Myanmar, accusing the country's security forces of perpetrating "horrendous atrocities" against the Rohingya that amount to "ethnic cleansing" of the Muslim minority. The statement from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who visited Myanmar last week, is the strongest US condemnation yet of the military's crackdown against the Rohingya, which has triggered a major refugee crisis and escalating global outrage. "After a careful and thorough analysis of available facts, it is clear that the situation in northern Rakhine state constitutes ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya," Tillerson said in a statement.

- **China unfolds 3-phase plan for Rakhine**<sup>36</sup>

China has called for a ceasefire in Myanmar's Rakhine State to enable Rohingya Muslim refugees to return from Bangladesh in its three-stage plan to resolve the crisis. The proposal was communicated to Myanmar during high level talks between its leaders and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, who was in Myanmar for the Asia-Europe Meeting of foreign ministers at Nay Pyi Taw.

"The first phase is to effect a ceasefire on the ground, to return to stability and order, so the people can enjoy peace and no longer be forced to flee," China's foreign ministry said in a statement, quoting Wang Yi. Once a ceasefire is seen to be working, Wang said talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh should find a workable solution for the return of

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<sup>33</sup> Illegal immigration, terrorism new global threats: State Counsellor, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/illegal-immigration-terrorism-new-global-threats-state-counsellor.html>

<sup>34</sup> India welcomes Myanmar-Bangladesh MOU on refugee repatriation, 23 November 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-regional/india-welcomes-myanmar-bangladesh-mou-refugee-repatriation>

<sup>35</sup> US condemns 'ethnic cleansing',

<sup>36</sup> China unfolds 3-phase plan for Rakhine, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/china-unfolds-3-phase-plan-rakhine>

refugees, and the final phase should be to work toward a long-term solution based on poverty alleviation.

## North America

### Canada

- **Should soldiers kill ISIS fighters recruited from Canada before they can return?**

Canada's defence minister says the rules of engagement must apply in situations where troops encounter Canadians fighting for the so-called Islamic State, but that "our main priority is making sure that they don't become a threat to Canada." Harjit Sajjan was responding to statements from various countries like the United Kingdom, France and Australia, where top officials have said that the preference is to kill foreign IS fighters before they can travel back home. The top American envoy to the coalition fighting the terror group, Brett McGurk, said his mission is to ensure every foreign IS fighter in Syria dies in Syria. Mr. Sajjan also refused to say Canada has had any discussions with its allies about engaging Canadian IS fighters in the field.<sup>37</sup>

- **Hindu community is slowly coming of age in Canadian politics**

Ontario, with between 400,000 and 500,000 Hindus, accounts for over 70% of the community's population in Canada. Immigration patterns have boosted their numbers significantly in the last decade. Ms. Damerla, Ontario's minister of seniors affairs, said it was "natural progression" that the community was becoming increasingly politically relevant. That has resulted in other measures like permission to immerse ashes in provincial parks, and by spring next year, structures may be provided there for ceremonies or contemplation. There is a cross-party trend in reaching out to the community, as even Jagmeet Singh, the Sikh leader of the New Democratic Party, and until he was elected to that post, a member of the Ontario Parliament, has sent out messages wishing people on Dussehra and Diwali. The outreach, particularly from the Liberal Party, has been aggressive since a motion in the Ontario Parliament in April terming the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as "genocide" was passed. Since then, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has performed aarti on the 10th anniversary of the consecration of a temple in Toronto in July, and attended Diwali celebrations on consequent days in Ottawa and Toronto last month. Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne was at multiple Hindu Heritage Month events as she attempts to woo back the community. Ms. Damerla voted against the "genocide" motion but will not comment directly on the matter.<sup>38</sup>

- **Trade High on Trudeau's Agenda for Visit to China**

Trade will be high on the agenda when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visits China in a bid to boost business ties with the world's second-largest economy. The Dec. 3-7 trip comes as Trudeau wrestles with free trade pacts in North America and with other

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<sup>37</sup> Monique Scotti, "Should soldiers kill ISIS fighters recruited from Canada before they can return?," <https://globalnews.ca/news/3866619/should-soldiers-kill-isis-fighters-recruited-from-canada-before-they-can-return/>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Anirudh Bhattacharyya, "Hindu community is slowly coming of age in Canadian politics," <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/hindu-community-is-slowly-coming-of-age-in-canadian-politics/story-sB1ipcobLmlLuDqXldWO4I.html>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

partners in Asia. The visit is aimed at promoting a "progressive trade agenda and tourism initiatives that will create good, middle class jobs" and seeking greater cooperation on fighting climate change, according to a statement from Ottawa. China was Canada's second-largest trade partner after the U.S. last year, with almost \$70 billion in total trade. Canadian trade negotiators are already in talks with the U.S. and Mexico on a modernized North American Free Trade Agreement. Canada is also part of the 11-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, though it has held up a deal to salvage the pact as it pushes for some changes. The TPP doesn't include China and is seen as a potential check on the country's expanding economic clout in the region. Talks on the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, an alternative trade pact, are set to drag on into next year.<sup>39</sup>

- **Australian official lashes out at Trudeau amid spat over Pacific trade deal**

A spat between Canada and Australia is heating up as Australian officials signal they will block Canada's admission to Asia's premier security forum, the East Asia Summit, amid tensions over the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. An Australian news report suggests that country's leadership has already rejected Canada's application to participate in the key forum because Australian trade officials were "gobsmacked" by Canada's behaviour on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum (APEC) in Vietnam. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau skipped a planned meeting with the 10 other leaders of TPP countries while in Danang because he said Canada simply was not ready to sign a deal that is not yet in the best interest of Canadians. Liberal government officials have refuted international reports — notably from Australian and New Zealand news outlets — that suggested Canada alone was to blame for "screwed" TPP talks. Mr. Trudeau made a pitch for EAS membership on the last day of his eight-days visit to the region. The summit's 18 members must reach a consensus on whether to lift a current membership moratorium and allow Canada to join, meaning opposition from Australia could torpedo Canada's efforts.<sup>40</sup>

## The United States

- **Mattis, Dunford to visit Pakistan soon**

Two key US officials — Defence Secretary James Mattis and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen Joseph Dunford — will visit Pakistan soon for seeking Islamabad's cooperation in war against the Taliban. Gen Dunford is expected early last week of November while Secretary Mattis will arrive in the first week of December, diplomatic sources told Dawn, adding that exact dates of their visit could not be disclosed for security reasons. The two key US defence officials are likely to ask Pakistan to eliminate the Haqqani Network which, they claim, still has hideouts in Fata and uses them for launching attacks into Afghanistan. The US Central Command Chief General Joseph Votel also delivered a similar message to the country's top military leadership. The US demand for "more concrete" actions against the Haqqani Network also dominated talks between

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<sup>39</sup> Greg Quinn, "Trade High on Trudeau's Agenda for Visit to China Next Week," <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-27/trade-high-on-trudeau-s-agenda-for-visit-to-china-next-week>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>40</sup> John Paul Tasker, Australian official lashes out at Trudeau amid spat over Pacific trade deal," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/australia-trudeau-tpp-spat-1.4407531>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in Washington last month.<sup>41</sup>

- **New U.S. Ambassador is an old India hand**

The U.S.'s new Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster, who presented his credentials this week to President Ram Nath Kovind, has the longest association with India among officials of the current administration. Long before the India-U.S. civilian nuclear deal was discussed, it was Mr. Juster who laid its foundations as U.S. Under-Secretary of Commerce, negotiating the "end-user agreement" for dual-use technologies with India. Many view Mr. Juster's appointment as a signal from the Trump administration that trade will be a priority in the relationship. "It is clear that growing bilateral economic ties will be at the top of the new Ambassador's agenda, given his background," a U.S. official, who preferred not to be named, said, adding that it is significant that his first public address will be delivered at the U.S.'s Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Hyderabad on November 28, along with Ivanka Trump. Equally important will be resolving some of the long-pending issues the two countries have had on trade.<sup>42</sup>

- **Former Trump Advisor Michael Flynn May Have Started Cooperating With Robert Mueller—Reports**

President Donald Trump's former national security advisor Michael Flynn may have started cooperating or negotiating a deal with the investigative team of special counsel Robert Mueller, multiple reports indicate. According to The New York Times and The Associated Press, Flynn's lawyers ended communications with the president's legal team. They had previously been keeping in touch regarding the sprawling investigation into Russian influence on last year's election. So far, the only publicly-known charges in Mueller's probe are against Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, Manafort's business partner Rick Gates, and former Trump foreign policy advisor George Papadopoulos. Papadopoulos definitely is cooperating with the investigators.<sup>43</sup>

## Mexico

- **In Mexico, a left-wing firebrand cools the rhetoric and embraces NAFTA**

While the countries re-negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement huddled quietly in a Mexico City hotel last week, a neighbourhood away a noisy political event unfolded that could affect the agreement's fate. A boisterous throng of 10,000 gathered a few blocks away to approve the platform for the left-wing nationalist political party currently leading the polls for Mexico's July presidential election. That very election has prompted insiders to declare a sense of urgency in competing NAFTA talks — before Mexico's voters potentially hand the presidency to a left-wing anti-establishment party whose leader famously held anti-NAFTA views. That candidate is Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador — a household name here, known universally by the acronym AMLO. He's also a

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<sup>41</sup> Anwar Iqbal, "Mattis, Dunford to visit Pakistan soon," <https://www.dawn.com/news/1371495>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Suhasini Haidar, "New U.S. Ambassador is an old India hand," <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/new-us-ambassador-is-an-old-india-hand/article20942371.ece>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>43</sup> David Meyer, "Former Trump Advisor Michael Flynn May Have Started Cooperating With Robert Mueller—Reports," <http://fortune.com/2017/11/24/michael-flynn-donald-trump-robert-mueller/>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.



former two-time presidential candidate and ex-mayor of Mexico City, and currently leads numerous polls, suggesting he could be elected in a few months. His party is trying to cool that firebrand reputation. The platform itself contains a dollop of centre-left, belt-tightening economics a la Bill Clinton and Jean Chretien: it promises spending cuts and a balanced budget initially, increased social spending later in the mandate, and corporate tax cuts in a special economic zone near the U.S. border to make businesses competitive there. It offers qualified support for NAFTA, calling it a guarantor of stability that could use improvements, particularly for peasant farmers in Mexico's south. It also argues that the talks should happen under Mexico's next government, because the current one led by Enrique Peña Nieto lacks the popularity and legitimacy to negotiate on Mexico's behalf.<sup>44</sup>

- **Nafta's Renegotiation Risks National Security**

It came straight from the mouth of Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray of Mexico, arguably the most influential member of President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration: a Trump administration rejection of the North American Free Trade Agreement would undermine United States-Mexico security cooperation and our collaboration on migration. Until recently, the Mexican government had only insinuated that security cooperation was on the table. It's time for Americans to take the warning seriously as Mexico heads into an election year in which anti-Trump sentiment continues to grow, increasing the political cost of partnering with the United States and buoying the nationalist presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The Americas Barometer reports that the Mexican populace's distrust of the United States rose to 84 percent from 31 percent in just three months after Donald Trump was elected. A deterioration of US-Mexico defense cooperation threatens the stability and security of our hemisphere in areas from illicit trafficking to migration-related humanitarian crises to destabilizing crime and violence.<sup>45</sup>

- **Natural Calamities, Stalled NAFTA Talks Impact Mexico Economy**

Mexico's economy contracted more than previously thought in the third quarter due to the impact from storms and quakes on the oil and tourism industries, the government said, adding to concerns that stalled NAFTA talks are hurting growth. Third-quarter gross domestic product shrank by 0.3% compared with the previous quarter, the first contraction in almost two years. The economy grew 1.5% compared with the same period a year earlier, the slowest pace of growth since the fourth quarter of 2013. Mexican stocks were down nearly 0.8% following the data, Reuters reported. Mexico was struck by devastating earthquakes and hurricanes in August and September that affected the oil industry, denting economic activity. "This deceleration is largely explained by a temporary and limited impact from the natural disasters," the finance ministry said in a statement on Friday, citing the oil, education and tourism industries. The ministry added that impact appeared to have dissipated and that it was maintaining its 2017 economic growth forecast of 2% to 2.6%. However the central bank is less optimistic, trimming its growth forecast for 2017 to between 1.8% and 2.3% this week due to the natural disasters and the impact on

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<sup>44</sup> Alexander Panetta, "In Mexico, a left-wing firebrand cools the rhetoric and embraces NAFTA," <http://nationalpost.com/news/world/mexico-a-left-wing-firebrand-cools-the-rhetoric-and-embraces-nafta>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Rebecca Bill Chavez, "Nafta's Renegotiation Risks National Security," <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/opinion/nafta-national-security-mexico.html>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

investment from worries about the future of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Talks have stalled to renegotiate the pact that underpins \$1 trillion in trilateral trade. The central bank sees growth of up to 3% next year.<sup>46</sup>

## Latin America and Caribbean Countries

### Argentina

- **Argentine minister admits inflation will end 2017 at 21%**

Argentina's inflation rate will likely end the year above 21%, Treasury Minister Nicolas Dujovne told reporters on 23 November 2017. The government previously estimated that consumer prices in Latin America's third-biggest economy would rise 17% in 2017. "Inflation is falling," Dujovne told a news conference. "Last year, we had inflation of about 37%. It will be much less this year and much lower still in the year ahead." He did not provide details on Argentina's planned borrowing. "As long as the deficit is falling, we will have to issue less debt each year," he said. The government expects a fiscal shortfall of 4% of GDP in 2017, 3.2% in 2018, 2.2% in 2019 and 1.2% in 2020.<sup>47</sup>

### Brazil

- **Finance Minister Meirelles Urges Pension Reform in Brazil**

Finance Minister of Brazil, Henrique Meirelles, said that if the pension reform is not approved by Congress in 2017, it will more difficult to pass by lawmakers in 2018, an election year. According to Meirelles, the country needs the reform to be able to decrease the government's burden of social security benefits. "If the pension reform is not approved, in ten years eighty percent of the Union's budget will be used solely for the payment of social security, and this percentage will continue to rise in the following years until there will be no more resources for security," stressed Meirelles on November 22, 2017. According to Meirelles, to make it easier to be approved, the government has agreed to remove some of the more controversial points of the bill, such as the minimum contribution time in the original proposal was twenty-five years, but now it's going to be fifteen. The bill, submitted by Temer's government in December 2016, has not only been rejected by a majority of lawmakers, it has also received strong criticism from workers union that claim that the lower classes of Brazilian society would be the ones most hurt by these reforms. Since the reform was introduced in Congress, there have been several nationwide protests led by union groups which have taken thousands to the streets to demonstrate against the bill.<sup>48</sup>

- **Russia Bans Brazilian Pork, Beef Over Growth Hormone**

Russia announced on November 20, 2017, it was banning all pork and beef imports from Brazil starting December 1, 2017. According to the Russian agro-sanitary agency

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<sup>46</sup> ----, "Natural Calamities, Stalled NAFTA Talks Impact Mexico Economy," <https://financialtribune.com/articles/world-economy/76798/natural-calamities-stalled-nafta-talks-impact-mexico-economy>, Accessed on 27 November 2017.

<sup>47</sup> "Argentine Minister Admits Inflation will End 2017 at 21%," November 24, 2017, <http://en.mercopress.com/2017/11/24/argentine-minister-admits-inflation-will-end-2017-at-21>, Accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Lise Alves, "Finance Minister Meirelles Urges Pension Reform in Brazil," November 23, 2017, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/brazils-finance-meirelles-says-pension-reform-approval-is-priority/>, Accessed on November 27, 2017.

Roselkhoznadzor a banned growth hormone has been found in recent shipment of imports. “According to laboratory results, banned growth stimulants were again detected in livestock products arriving in Russia from Brazil in 2017,” says the press release issued by Roselkhoznadzor. But the Brazilian government says that the problem is only with a few companies and should not have to affect the entire Brazilian meat import segment to Russia. According to Brazil’s Agriculture Minister Blairo Maggi, a few countries prohibit the use of ractopamine in their cattle, including Russia and the European Union. In Brazil, Canada and the United States, however, the substance is not illegal. For Maggi, the Brazilian government has monitored those companies using ractopamine in their herds and does not allow exports from these companies to go out to those countries which ban the substance. It is noted that in the last twelve months ending in September 2017 Russia accounted for only 6.6 percent of the company’s exports. The Russian ban on some Brazilian meats comes only months after a meat-tainting scandal shook the sector. In March 2017, investigations by Brazil’s federal police revealed a scheme in which companies ‘baptized’ meats with ascorbic acid and repackaged them to sell them. The operation dubbed “Carne Fraca” (Weak Flesh) is said to have led to revenues losses of more than US\$1.5 billion and a loss of at least ten percent of the world’s meat share market.<sup>49</sup>

## Bolivia

- **Bolivia Signs Fossil Fuel Exploration Contract for US\$1.6 Billion**

Bolivian President Evo Morales announced that the state-owned hydrocarbon company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos has signed three contracts projected to generate approximately US \$20 billion in oil revenue by 2021. The contracts align with the interests of consortium led by the Spanish company Repsol and Brazilian Petrobras that will explore and exploit oil from three areas in Bolivia: Iñiguazu, San Telmo Norte y Astillero. According to the information offered by the President during the Fourth Forum of Gas Producing Countries (FPPG) that took place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the investment will be approximately US \$1.5 billion. Bolivia also offered the world’s leading oil companies a guide detailing country’s hydrocarbon potential, highlighting 80 areas reserved for exploration by YPF with a potential of up to 60 TCF. The hydrocarbon sector has not seen any growth in this first quarter of 2017. According to data revealed by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) in the first three months of this year the sector’s production actually decreased by 14.1 percent.<sup>50</sup>

## Venezuela

- **Venezuela’s Hyperinflation Reaches New Record of 4,000 Percent**

Venezuela has become nearly impossible, as hyperinflation continues to climb to unprecedented levels of nearly 4,000 percent. In one year, the price of basic products has increased almost 4,000 percent, forcing many Venezuelans to survive on the lowest wages in the region. People rummage through the garbage, and the weakest and smallest die from malnutrition. The country has fallen into humanitarian disaster due to the economic

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<sup>49</sup> Lise Alves, “Russia Bans Brazilian Pork, Beef Over Growth Hormone,” November 21, 2017, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/russia-bans-brazilian-pork-beef-imports/>, Accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>50</sup> Karina Martin, “Bolivia Signs Fossil Fuel Exploration Contract for US\$1.6 Billion,” November 23, 2017, <https://panampost.com/karina-martin/2017/11/23/bolivia-signs-fossil-fuel-exploration-contract-for-us1-6-billion/>, Accessed on November 27, 2017.

policies of the socialist regime that has caused the only legal currency — the bolivar — to collapse. Meanwhile, the value of the dollar rises or remains strong despite only being available on the black market. Until this Thursday, (November 23, 2017), Venezuelans paid 81,759.98 bolívares for every dollar. Earlier this month, a US dollar was worth 41,000 bolívares, whereas earlier this year, only 3,100 bolívares were needed to buy a dollar, according to *DolarToday*. Hyperinflation is due to the absence of actual income, a sharp fall in the production of the state oil company PDVSA below two million barrels and the use of black market currencies. According to the Hanke-Krus Inflation Table, the situation in Venezuela is among the worst cases of inflation in world history. Hungary, between August 1945 and July 1946, saw its currency lose value so fast that prices doubled every 15 hours and daily inflation was 207 percent. Zimbabwe had a serious case, with a daily inflation of 98 percent between March 2007 and November 2008.<sup>51</sup>

- **Cuba rejects EU sanctions against Venezuela**

On November 21, Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister, Rogelio Sierra Díaz, criticized coercive measures adopted by the EU's Foreign Affairs Council against Venezuela, which he noted constitute interference in the country's internal affairs and are counterproductive to the Bolivarian government's efforts to promote dialogue. In this regard Sierra Díaz stated that the EU's decision goes against the principles of international law and the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by regional heads of state and government during the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States' (CELAC) Second Summit in Havana, January 2014. The Cuban official went on to note that Cuba rejects these sanctions against Venezuela, and reaffirmed the island's "unwavering and unconditional solidarity" with the Bolivarian Revolution, with its civil-military union and the government of President Nicolás Maduro. It's also important to note that since April 2017, various European leaders, including the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, have been demanding that the bloc impose sanctions on Venezuela. In fact, at that time, Maduro described the EU's decision as hostile as it harms both the Venezuelan people and the almost one million Europeans living in the South American country, and who are also suffering the consequences of the political and economic violence that has been generated over recent months.<sup>52</sup>

## Russia

- **Russia and India**

During the three-day visit of Home Minister Rajnath Singh to Moscow, India and Russia will sign two key pacts for cooperation in tackling all forms of terrorism and jointly fighting smuggling of narcotics. The pact will reinforce the bilateral relationship through exchange and sharing of information, expertise, best practices and help in curbing terrorism and enhancing security in the region. The proposed pact, which will replace the

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<sup>51</sup> Ben Jackson, "Venezuela's Hyperinflation Reaches New record of 4000 Percent," November 24, 2017, <https://panampost.com/ben-jackson/2017/11/24/venezuelas-hyperinflation-reaches-new-record-of-4000-percent/>, Accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Dayron Rodriguez Rosales, "Cuba Rejects EU Sanctions Against Venezuela," November 22, 2017, <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2017-11-22/cuba-rejects-eu-sanctions-against-venezuela>, Accessed on November 27, 2017.

agreement of October 1993, is a step towards consolidating the benefits accrued in the field of security and seeks to jointly fight the new and evolving risks and threats.<sup>53</sup>

- **Russia and Japan**

During his remarks during a joint news conference on 24 November with Foreign Minister Taro Kono, after the two held talks in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia is concerned that Japan is allowing Washington to use its territory as a base for a US military buildup in north Asia under the pretext of countering North Korea. “We are expressing deep concern, with facts to back it up, that Japan, along with South Korea, is becoming a territory for the deployment of elements of the U.S. global missile defense system, which is being rolled out in that region under the pretext of the North Korea threat. We have no problems directly with Japan, we do not see risks there. We see risks because of the proliferation of a global U.S. missile defense system on the territory of countries that neighbor Russia, including Japan” Lavrov said. He said that in the past few weeks the United States had conducted military exercises in the region and adopted additional sanctions despite the absence of provocation from Pyongyang. Kono, after listening to Lavrov’s remarks, responded that Japan and its allies were not seeking regime change in North Korea. He said Tokyo had to act to defend itself after Pyongyang test-fired missiles that flew over Japanese territory.<sup>54</sup>

- **Russia and Sudan**

On his visit to Russia, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir said on 23 November said during his meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin that his country needs protection from the US and could serve as a gateway to Africa for Moscow. He accused the US of fomenting the conflict in Sudan. Al-Bashir added that “we need protection from the U.S. aggressive actions.” He told Putin that his country could help Russia develop contacts with other African nations. Al-Bashir said that his government is also looking forward to cooperating with Russia in oil exploration, as well as transport and agricultural sector. Al-Bashir is on the International Criminal Court’s wanted list for committing crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide in Sudan’s Darfur region. ICC prosecutors issued two warrants for al-Bashir’s arrest, in 2009 and 2010. Asked about it, Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov refrained from comment, saying that Russia sees him as “the legitimate president.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>“Rajnath Singh leaves for Russia; to sign two key pacts”, *Economic Times*, November 26, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/rajnath-singh-leaves-for-russia-to-sign-two-key-pacts/articleshow/61804690.cms> Accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>54</sup>“Japan becoming ground zero for U.S. military buildup in Asia, Russia’s Lavrov says”, *Japan Times*, November 25, 2017. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/25/national/politics-diplomacy/russia-takes-tokyo-task-defense-alliance-washington/#.WhunOFWWbIU> Accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>55</sup>Vladimir Isachenkov, “Sudan’s president visits Russia, asks for protection from US”, *ABC News*, November 23, 2017. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sudans-president-visits-russia-asks-protection-us-51345777> Accessed on November 27, 2017.

## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Taliban Commanders to ‘Hold Talks’ With Afghan Delegation**

An Afghan delegation is expected to hold talks with Taliban commanders in the next few days, a senior Taliban commander, Sayed Akbar Afgha, said on 20 November 2017. However he did not give details as to where the meeting would take place or who would represent the Taliban. The host country says that at least seven or eight Taliban officials will attend the meeting, but there is no exact information about the names of Taliban commanders who are expected to take part in the talks. This came in the wake of the Chairman of Afghanistan’s High Peace Council (HPC) Mohammad Karim Khalili’s arrival in Indonesia where he held discussions with high-ranking officials including President Joko Widodo. An official from the HPC meanwhile confirmed a ten-member HPC delegation has left for Indonesia where they will try to pave the way for a direct talk with the Taliban.<sup>56</sup>

- **UN Adopts This Year’s Resolution On Afghanistan**

Addressing a UN General Assembly meeting on 20 November 2017, after the adoption on this year’s resolution on Afghanistan, CEO Abdullah Abdullah briefed the delegates on the situation in the country and said the move would help Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve peace. He also said that progress has been made in the country and that “Afghanistan has regained its status as a responsible member of the international community”. He said the Afghan national security forces have recorded many successes in recent months especially in thwarting insurgent attempts to capture towns and cities. He welcomed Monday’s decision by the UN to adopt this year’s resolution and said it reaffirmed the international community’s support to Afghanistan.<sup>57</sup>

- **Afghanistan’s Economy Slowly on Rise, to Grow 2.6 Percent this Year: WB**

Afghanistan’s economy is expected to grow 2.6 percent this year, up slightly from the previous year despite deteriorating security, the World Bank (WB) said in a report on 21 November 2017. While the figure is up from 2.2 percent last year, it does not keep up with the country’s population growth of roughly 3 percent, meaning that gross domestic product per capita continues to decline. “In the next three to four years, there are things that can be done to boost growth to between 4 and 5 percent,” said Shubham Chaudhuri, the World’s Bank’s Country Director for Afghanistan. Chaudhuri, presenting a report on Afghanistan’s economy at the World Bank’s fortified headquarters in Kabul, said that agriculture, mineral attraction and the country’s youth were its biggest assets, as well as its geography as a regional land bridge.<sup>58</sup>

- **Afghan Senate passes the controversial census law amended by the government**

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<sup>56</sup> Anisa Shaheed, "Taliban Commanders to ‘Hold Talks’ With Afghan Delegation", *Tolonews*, 20 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-commanders-%E2%80%98hold-talks%E2%80%99-afghan-delegation> accessed on 20 November 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Kathy Whitehead, "UN Adopts This Year’s Resolution On Afghanistan", *Tolonews*, 20 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/un-adopts-year%E2%80%99s-resolution-afghanistan> accessed on 21 November 2017.

<sup>58</sup> "Afghanistan’s Economy Slowly on Rise, to Grow 2.6 Percent this Year: WB", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 22 November 2017. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19517](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19517) accessed on 24 November 2017.

The Afghan Senate House, Upper House of the Parliament (Meshrano Jirga) on 19 November 2017 passed the amended version of the controversial census law. The Afghan government had forwarded the amended version of the law to the Lower House and Upper House of the parliament for their approval. However, the members of the Lower House of the Parliament (Wolesi Jirga) had earlier voted against the law and had subsequently rejected it. In reaction to Lower House decision, the Office of the President, ARG Palace, said last week that the Afghan government calls on the lawmakers in the Lower House of the Parliament, Wolesi Jirga, to reconsider their decision and once again try to pass the law. A statement by ARG Palace said as the nation is aware that the census law was passed by the government after bringing necessary changes and modifications. The statement further added that the law has been prepared in line with the Islamic values and complies with the constitution of the country. The members of the Senate today discussed the amended version which includes the word Afghan as the nationality and Islam as the religion.<sup>59</sup>

- **Nicholson Announces War on Drugs In Afghanistan**

Commander of US-Forces in Afghanistan General John Nicholson said a well-planned raid against drug producing facilities was carried out in Helmand on Sunday (November 19, 2017) and that for the first time an F-22 bomber was used in combat in Afghanistan. "We used an F22 Raptor aircraft that can carry 250lbs bombs and hits direct targets ... in the attack on a drug processing factory in Musa Qala, Helmand (on Sunday night). F22 Raptor aircrafts were used for the first time in Afghanistan," he said.<sup>60</sup>

- **Former NDS Chief 'Spills Beans' On 2014 Presidential Elections**

The former National Directorate of Security (NDS) Rahmatullah Nabil on Monday (November 20), claimed that printing equipment for fake ballot papers were found in houses around Wazir Akbar Khan, in Kabul city, during the run up to the 2014 elections. He claimed the machines were found in the houses of high-ranking officials who are today part of the National Unity Government (NUG). Nabil's statement was made during a live broadcast of Black and White on TOLONews. According to Nabil, who had been the National Directorate of Security (NDS) at the time, he reported the matter to then president Hamid Karzai.<sup>61</sup>

- **Iran to Help Afghanistan Uproot Terrorism, Establish Peace: Rouhani**

President Rouhani underlined the need for an all-out campaign against narcotics production and trafficking, and called for extensive international cooperation to eradicate the phenomenon. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a telephone conversation with his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani voiced his country's support for eradicating terrorism and establishing peace in Afghanistan. During the phone talk on

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<sup>59</sup> "Afghan Senate passes the controversial census law amended by the government", *Khaama Press*, 20 November 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-senate-passes-the-controversial-census-law-amended-by-the-government-03881> accessed on 22 November 2017.

<sup>60</sup> "Nicholson Announces War On Drugs In Afghanistan", *Tolo News*, November 20, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/nicholson-announces-war-drugs-afghanistan> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>61</sup> Faridullah Hussainkhail, "Former NDS Chief 'Spills Beans' On 2014 Presidential Elections", *Tolo News*, November 21, 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/former-nds-chief-%E2%80%99spills-beans%E2%80%99-2014-presidential-elections> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

Thursday (November 24) night, the Iranian president said that Tehran is determined to help Kabul to get rid of the terrorist groups and restore stability to that country.<sup>62</sup>

- **'Indo-Afghan Cultural Week' Begins Wednesday**

The Afghanistan Embassy in India plans to celebrate the first "Indo-Afghan cultural week" in New Delhi from November 29, 2017. Afghan envoy to New Delhi, Dr. Shaida Ahmad Abdali, said the event would showcase different academic and cultural programs from both the countries.

"The people of Afghanistan and India have many cultural similarities that are centuries-old", he said, adding the aim of the cultural week was to improve cultural relations between the two countries and encourage new generations to preserve these values for future. "The cultural relations between Afghanistan and India have a history spanning thousands of years and the upcoming event will present further information to the new generation, particularly to Afghan and Indian students," he said.<sup>63</sup>

## Bangladesh

- **BNP threatens street movement if there is no consensus over polls**

BNP senior leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain on Tuesday (21) warned that their party will wage a street movement if the government fails to reach an understanding over the holding of the 11th parliamentary polls under a neutral government. "People won't accept it if the government again tries to hold an election like the one on January 5, 2014, ignoring our demands for having a non-party election-time neutral administration. People will take to the streets to realize their demands," he said.<sup>64</sup>

- **'Ethnic Cleansing' in Myanmar: Russia terms US remarks unhelpful**

The US labelling of a Myanmar army crackdown on Rohingya Muslims as "ethnic cleansing" is unhelpful and could aggravate the situation, Russia's ambassador to the southeast Asian nation said yesterday (November 23), criticising "excessive external intervention". Rights groups have accused the military in mostly Buddhist Myanmar of carrying out mass rape and other atrocities during a ferocious military sweep launched in late August in retaliation for attacks by Rohingya Muslim militants in Rakhine State. "I don't think that it will help to solve this problem," Russian ambassador Nikolay Listopadov told Reuters in an interview in Yangon, when asked about the US move. "On the contrary, it can aggravate the situation, throw more fuel," he said in English, citing concern over how the Buddhist community in Rakhine would react to such a designation.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "Iran to Help Afghanistan Uproot Terrorism, Establish Peace: Rouhani", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 25, 2017. [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19533](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19533) (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>63</sup> "'Indo-Afghan cultural week' begins Wednesday", *Pajhwok Afghan News*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/11/26/%E2%80%98indo-afghan-cultural-week%E2%80%99-begins-wednesday> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>64</sup> "BNP threatens street movement if there is no consensus over polls," *Dhaka Tribune*, November 21, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2017/11/21/bnp-street-movement-polls/> (accessed on November 21, 2017)

<sup>65</sup> "'Ethnic Cleansing' in Myanmar: Russia terms US remarks unhelpful," *Daily Star*, November 24, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/ethnic-cleansing-myanmar-russia-terms-us-remarks-unhelpful-1495831> (accessed on November 24, 2017)



- **Country's interest protected**

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said that Dhaka protected its interest in signing the deal with Naypyitaw over the repatriation of Myanmar nationals and hoped to send them back home within “a reasonable time”. “Our interest has not been ignored or hampered at all...our main goal is to send back the Rohingya Muslims sheltered in Bangladesh and we have been able to make Myanmar agree to take back its nationals,” he said at a press conference. Responding to questions from reporters, Mahmood said the criticism about not mentioning a specific timeframe in the agreement for completion of the repatriation was not right, because it can't be done within a given timeframe.<sup>66</sup>

- **BNP casts doubt over Rohingya repatriation deal with Myanmar**

BNP yesterday (November 25) raised questions over the agreement signed by the government with Myanmar over sending Rohingyas back to their homeland. “It is a good initiative that you [the government] signed a treaty with Myanmar quickly ... What will we get from the agreement?” BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said.<sup>67</sup>

## नेपाल

- देउबा ने सुरक्षा एजेसियों को चेताया:

प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा ने आगामी चुनावों में सुरक्षा के मुद्दे को देखते हुए सुरक्षा एजेसियों के साथ एक बैठक की और चुनावों में होने वाली हिंसा को रोकने के पुख्ता इंतजाम की बात कहीनेपाल की सेना के प्रमुख और पुलिस के प्रमुख को . उम्मीदवारों और पोलिंग बूथ की पूर्ण सुरक्षा होनी चाहिए ,देउबा ने साफ निर्देश दिए कि मतदाताओं<sup>68</sup>

- चुनाव से पहले कई जिलों में दलों के मध्य हिंसा:

नेपाल के कई जिलों में चुनाव से पहले दलों के मध्य झड़प होने की खबरे हैवाम गठबंधन और नेपाली कांग्रेस के समर्थकों . के मध्य कई जगह झगडे हुए है जिन्हें सुरक्षा बल नियंत्रित करने की कोशिश कर रहे है<sup>69</sup>

- पहले चरण का चुनाव संपन्न :

नेपाल के संघीय और प्रांतीय विधानसभा के चुनाव का प्रथम चरण चुनाव आयोग के अनुसार .नवम्बर को संपन्न हुआ 26 .प्रतिशत मतदान बताया जा रहा है 65 इस प्रथम चरण के चुनाव में .जिलों में हुए ये चुनाव सफल रहे 32 नेपाल के सीटों के लिए 74 सीटों और प्रान्तों की विधानसभा की 37 प्रतिनिधि सभा की यह मतदान हुआके अतिरिक्त 2 प्रांत संख्या . सभी प्रान्तों के चुने हुए जिलों में मतदान हुआ<sup>70</sup>

## Pakistan

<sup>66</sup> “Country's interest protected,” *Daily Star*, November 26, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/country-interest-protected-1496497> (accessed on November 26, 2017)

<sup>67</sup> “BNP casts doubt over Rohingya repatriation deal with Myanmar,” *Daily Star*, November 26, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/bnp-casts-doubt-over-rohingya-repatriation-deal-myanmar-1496650> (accessed on November 26, 2017)

<sup>68</sup> Kamal Dev Bhattari, “Deuba tells forces to act tough”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 21 November 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-11-21/1>

<sup>69</sup> “Parties clash in different districts ahead of polls”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 25 November 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-11-25/1>

<sup>70</sup> “Vote in 32 districts a success, says EC”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 27 November 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-11-27/1>

- **The Faisabad Conundrum** – The continued sit in by Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah protesting against amending Khatam e Nabuwat clause in Election Act 2017 at Faisabad paralyzing Rawalpindi and Islamabad took an ugly turn on November 24<sup>th</sup> when law enforcement agencies including the Frontier Rangers to honour the decision of the court tried to disperse the sit-in by force. But the ill-planned action only added fuel to the demonstrators’ fire and not only failed to dislodge them, but also fanned smaller protests in other parts of the country. There were several high level meetings within the government and the army as well as in between the government and religious scholars. Six people were killed while hundreds were injured during the operation that was eventually suspended and the army was called in. On November 26<sup>th</sup> the government finally given in to the demands of protesters camped out at Faizabad Interchange with Zahid Hamid resigning as the Federal Law Minister. The government also agreed to make the Raja Zafarul Haq-led committee report public within 30 days. The government also agreed to release all the arrested protestors.<sup>71</sup>
- **Long Term Plan for CPEC** - The Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) approved on November 21<sup>st</sup> the Long-Term Plan (LTP 2017-30) envisaging broad parameters for future cooperation, but could not conclude agreements on development projects and special economic/industrial zones. The Chinese delegation complained about the political instability in Pakistan that would negatively impact on the pace of CPEC progress. They also could not finalise taxation issues and stood short of final agreement on inclusion for financing of special economic zones. The Chinese delegation again requested to make Yuan the legal tender in Gwadar, which was declined by the Pakistani counterpart. Federal Minister for Ports and Shipping Mir Hasil Bizenjo stated in the Senate later on November 24<sup>th</sup> that 91 per cent of the revenues to be generated from the Gwadar port as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would go to China, while the Gwadar Port Authority would get 9pc share in the income for the next 40 years. Senator Kalsoom Parveen of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) pointed out that the agreement had not been signed on the basis of equality as had been done with India.<sup>72</sup>
- **Release of JuD Chief** - A provincial review board comprising three judges of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on November 22<sup>nd</sup> rejected the Punjab government’s request for an extension of Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Muhammad Saeed’s detention and directed

<sup>71</sup> Shakeel Qarar & Javed, “Law minister Zahid Hamid resigns after govt gives in to demands of Islamabad protesters”, *Dawn*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1373182/law-minister-zahid-hamid-resigns-after-govt-gives-in-to-demands-of-islamabad-protesters> (accessed on November 27, 2017); Aamir Yasin & Munawer Azeem, “Army secures sensitive installations in capital”, *Dawn*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1373098/army-secures-sensitive-installations-in-capital> (accessed on November 27, 2017); Aamir Yasin, Mohammad Asghar & Munawer Azeem, “Army called in after botched operation”, *Dawn*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372930> (accessed on November 27, 2017); Mohammad Asghar & Munawer Azeem, “Govt is delaying action on religious scholars’ proposals?”, *Dawn*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372551> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>72</sup> Khurram Husain, “China’s road through Pakistan”, *Dawn*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372349> (accessed on November 27, 2017); Iftikhar A. Khan, “China to get 91pc Gwadar income, minister tells Senate”, *Dawn*, November 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372695/china-to-get-91pc-gwadar-income-minister-tells-senate> (accessed on November 27, 2017); Khaleeq Kiani, “Top cooperation body okays CPEC long-term plan”, *Dawn*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372079/top-cooperation-body-okays-cpec-long-term-plan> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

the government to release him once the 30 days of his house arrest ended (November 30<sup>th</sup>).<sup>73</sup> The White House said on November 25<sup>th</sup> that there would be repercussions for US-Pakistan relations unless Islamabad took action to detain and charge Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed.<sup>74</sup>

## Indian Ocean Region

- **Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff to Participate in Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX)**

Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff is visiting Bangladesh to participate in Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX). The IMMSAREX is being held at Bangladesh from 26 to 28 November 2017 under the aegis of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).<sup>75</sup> At present the chair of IONS is Bangladesh. IMMSAREX is first ever first ever operational exercise under the IONS charter.<sup>76</sup> In addition to the exercise, the Chiefs of the Navy of all member countries will attend 'Extraordinary Conclave of Chiefs (ECoC)' meeting of IONS is also scheduled on November 28, 2017, at Cox Bazar.<sup>77</sup> "The ECoC would deliberate upon activities being undertaken by IONS in-addition to reviewing the progress made by three IONS Working Group (IWG) namely 'HADR', 'Maritime Security' & 'Information Exchange and Interoperability'."<sup>78</sup> Indian naval ships Ranvir, Sahyadri, Gharial and Sukanya and one maritime patrol aircraft P-8I will take part in the IMMSAREX.<sup>79</sup>

- **ISRO to help track suspicious vessels**

Aimed at preventing a 26/11 type infiltration from the sea route, Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) will soon launch an initiative to help agencies involved in coastal and maritime security to track suspicious vessels with the help of satellite imagery.<sup>80</sup> Under the initiative, ISRO will supply 1000 transponders by March 2018 for satellite monitoring of boats.<sup>81</sup> Referring information from Home Ministry official sources, Times of India notes "automatic identification system will monitor boats measuring above 20 metres; satellite monitoring is proposed for the sub-20m boats."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Wajih Ahmad Sheikh, "JuD chief set to be released", *Dawn*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372329> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>74</sup> "US warns of repercussions over Saeed release", *Dawn*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372922/us-warns-of-repercussions-over-saeed-release> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>75</sup> Navy chief Lanba visits Bangladesh for multilateral naval exercise, November 25, 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/navy-chief-lanba-visits-bangladesh-for-multilateral-naval-exercise/article9973053.ece> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Indian Navy chief to arrive in Dhaka today, November 26, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2017/11/26/indian-navy-chief-arrive-dhaka-today/> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>80</sup> Maritime security: Isro to help track suspicious vessels through satellite imageries, November 25, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/isros-satellite-images-to-help-track-suspicious-vessels/articleshow/61785927.cms> (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

- **Appreciation for Seychelles' Role in Piracy Fight**

During a meeting with the Seychelles's President Danny Faure, a key official of the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) delegation said that the support of Seychelles was crucial in deterring future pirate attacks in the region.<sup>83</sup> Rear Admiral Fabio Gregori, and the Italian Consul Claudio Izzi were among the key members of delegation. During November 18 to November 19, 2017, the six suspected Somali pirates were detained by an Italian navy frigate, ITS Virginio Fasan after they attacked a Seychelles-flagged container ship and a fishing vessel.<sup>84</sup> Later, the suspect pirates were transferred to the concerned authorities in Seychelles for possible trial.<sup>85</sup> "This kind of immediate action is very important in the mission to counter piracy in the Indian Ocean. Without this we would have been obliged to release them, thus, sending the wrong message,"<sup>86</sup> said Rear Admiral Gregori.

Seychelles's President Danny Faure said that the swift act of the EU NAVFOR in a recent operation in which six suspected Somali pirates were detained has sent a strong message.<sup>87</sup> "Your presence over the years when the scourge of piracy took a toll on the country has been invaluable, and once again your quick action in the recent operation has sent a strong message. We look forward to further consolidating our strong partnership," said the President Faura.<sup>88</sup>

## Sri Lanka

- **Modi needs joint ventures expedited**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on 23<sup>rd</sup> November informed the latter that India would like to have fast tracked the implementation of Indian joint ventures in Sri Lanka. He added that this should be brought to the attention of President Maithripala Sirisena and these joint ventures started as soon as possible. Prime Minister Modi explained that this would not only improve Sri Lanka's economic assets but would also add to job creation. He noted that despite internal political opposition within Sri Lanka, Premier Wickremesinghe was taking great efforts in cementing the friendship between India and Sri Lanka. "India, he said would prepare an information technology cooperation agreement to assist in the pilot project of providing school children with tabs and help prepare the necessary databases for Sinhala and Tamil instruction," Prime Minister Modi said<sup>89</sup>.

- **Trade deficit with India no big deal: economist**

Despite the hue and cry made by the public and a certain section of the business community on Sri Lanka's trade deficit with its neighboring giant, a top economist

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<sup>83</sup> East Africa: EU Naval Official Offers Appreciation for Seychelles' Role in Piracy Fight, <http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/east-africa-eu-naval-official-offers-appreciation-for-seychelles-role-in-piracy-fight/> (accessed on November 27, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> "Modi needs joint ventures expedited", 24 November 2017, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/18771-modi-needs-joint-ventures-expedited>

asserted such arguments do not show the real picture of the situation at hand and said one should not pay much attention to it. While acknowledging the concern arises due to India being Sri Lanka's largest trading partner, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Chairman Dr. Razeen Sally said, "The argument that the trade deficit is bad is obviously economically-illiterate. The trade deficit with India doesn't really tell us anything about the state of Indo-Lanka relations. Taking the situation in isolation, it is not a big deal as the public perception has it"<sup>90</sup>.

- **China fully endorses India-SL relations: Marapana**

Minister Marapana said that China fully endorsed the various joint ventures Sri Lanka has launched with India, in particular those with strategic importance such as the Mattala Airport Development Project and the Trincomalee Oil Tank Project.

He spoke to the Daily Mirror on the outcome of his recent official visit to the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) Minister Marapana said it was sad and indecent that certain political elements were trying to misinterpret Sri Lanka's warm and friendly links with China and India<sup>91</sup>.

- **Adam's Bridge linking Sri Lanka and India will not be damaged**

India's Union Government has taken a decision not to go ahead with the original alignment of Sethusamudram Shipping Canal project in order to protect Ram Sethu or Adam's Bridge which links Sri Lanka and India. At a meeting with a few Cabinet colleagues, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided that the Indian Government should file a fresh affidavit in the Supreme Court making its stand on Ram Sethu clear<sup>92</sup>.

- **OMP to become fully operational during first quarter of 2018**

The Office of Missing Persons (OMP), will become fully operational during the first quarter of 2018, Mano Tittawella, Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM) said. He says the Constitutional Council will begin interviewing suitable candidates for OMP commissioners very soon. The public application deadline closed 10 days ago<sup>93</sup>.

- **More than 11,200 Army absentees report during amnesty**

A total of 11,232 Army deserters including 15 Officers, 09 Officer Cadets and 11,208 other rank personnel had reported to their respective Regimental Centers seeking legal discharge during the General Amnesty extended to Army absentees which ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, the army said.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "Trade deficit with India no big deal: economist", 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017, <https://news.lk/news/world/item/18786-trade-deficit-with-india-no-big-deal-economist>

<sup>91</sup> "China fully endorses India-SL relations: Marapana", 25 November 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/China-fully-endorses-India-SL-relations-Marapana-141075.html>

<sup>92</sup> "Adam's Bridge linking Sri Lanka and India will not be damaged", 23 November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/23/adams-bridge-linking-sri-lanka-and-india-will-not-be-damaged/>

<sup>93</sup> "OMP to become fully operational during first quarter of 2018", 22 November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/22/omp-to-become-fully-operational-during-first-quarter-of-2018/>

<sup>94</sup> 'More than 11,200 Army absentees report during amnesty', 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/23/more-than-11200-army-absentees-report-during-amnesty/>

## Maldives

- **Govt awarded only fraction of Hulhumale flat project to China firm: HDC**  
Amidst recent foreign reports that the Maldives has awarded development of housing units for 80,000 people in reclaimed suburb Hulhumale to a Chinese state-run firm, Housing Development Corporation (HDC) on 22<sup>nd</sup> November clarified that the government handed over development of only 16 out of 62 towers to that company. “Hiyaa” is the government’s largest affordable housing project, which comprises construction of 62 towers of 25-storeys each in Hulhumale’s second phase of development. Though the government had not disclosed details of the project, Chinese media reported Tuesday that China State Construction Engineering had secured the bid for USD 434 million (MVR 6.7 billion)<sup>95</sup>.
- **High Court upholds 10-year prison term for ex-defence minister**  
The High Court on 21<sup>st</sup> November upheld a 10-year prison term for former defence minister Tholhath Ibrahim Kaleyfaan over the arrest of a judge in 2012. Tholhath was convicted of terrorism and sentenced in April 2015 for the arbitrary arrest of Criminal Court Judge Abdulla Mohamed. The judge’s three-week detention at the military training base on the island of Girifushi sparked anti-government protests, culminating in then-president Mohamed Nasheed’s resignation in the wake of a violent mutiny by police and army elements on February 7, 2012<sup>96</sup>.
- **External debt will increase by 10 billion Rufiyaa in 2 years : MMA**  
Maldives Monetary Authority has stated that the external debt which was at 11.1 billion Rufiyaa in 2016 will reach 21.7 billion Rufiyaa by 2018. According to MMA, external debts increased because of the loans taken to conduct developmental projects. Governor of MMA said that increase in foreign debt will decrease the reserve of MMA and action needs to be taken to mitigate the effects that will be caused by that<sup>97</sup>.

## West Asia

### GCC & Saudi Arabia

- **Saudi Crown Prince Pledge to eradicate Islamic terrorism from the world**  
In the wake of terror attack in a mosque located in the restive North Sinai Province of Egypt, killing around 300 people, the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salam (MBS), vowed to eradicate Islamic terrorism from the earth’s surface.<sup>98</sup> While opening the inaugural meeting of 41-member of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition

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<sup>95</sup>“ Govt awarded only fraction of Hulhumale flat project to China firm: HDC”, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/govt-awarded-only-fraction-of-hulhumale-flat-project-to-china-firm-hdc/>

<sup>96</sup> “High Court upholds 10-year prison term for ex-defence minister”, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/high-court-upholds-10-year-prison-term-for-ex-defence-minister-134278>

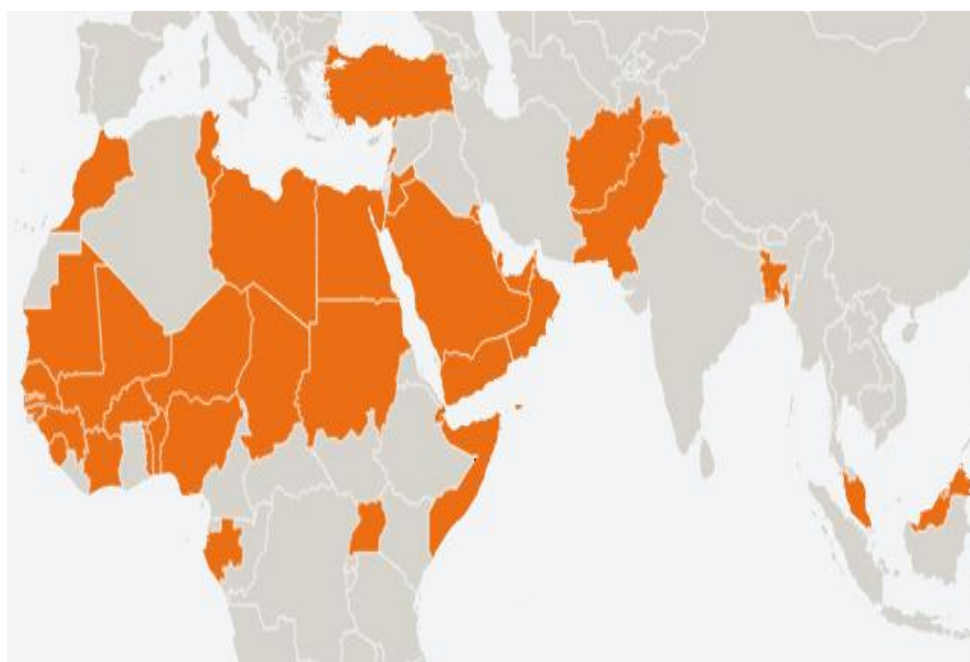
<sup>97</sup> “External debt will increase by 10 billion Rufiyaa in 2 years : MMA”, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/9354>

<sup>98</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/26/middleeast/saudi-arabia-crown-prince-terrorism-fight/index.html>

(IMCTC), termed as ‘pan-Islamic unified forum’<sup>99</sup> in Riyadh, MBS said that extremists would no longer be able to ‘tarnish our beautiful religion’. The Islamic Coalition would bring greater military, political and financial cooperation against terrorism<sup>100</sup> and work together and coordinate together to support each other.<sup>101</sup> ‘We will pursue it until it disappears completely from the surface of the earth’, he added further.<sup>102</sup>

The idea of setting up IMCTC was conceived of in December 2015 and Riyadh was chosen as the centre of the joint headquarters the operation of coalition forces. Initially, 34 Islamic countries joined the coalition. In January 2017, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif was appointed as the first Commander-in-Chief of the IMCTC. While addressing the gathering Raheel Sharif, Commander-in-Chief of the coalition said that the ‘vision of the IMCTC is to have a collective response to terrorism... it will provide a platform to the member-countries to fight against terrorism’. He said that in recent years, almost 70,000 terror attacks took place, killing approximately 200,000 people. He further clarified the coalition is not formed against any country, sect and religion. Its aim is to promote moderate form of Islam.<sup>103</sup>

#### Member countries of the IMCTC



Source: [www.imctc.org](http://www.imctc.org).

- **Saudi Arabia bans photos and Video at two holy shrines**

Saudi Arabia has banned visitors from taking photos and videos at two holy shrines, *Khana-i-Kaba* and *Masjid-i-Nabvi* and its suburb areas. The controversy started when a Russian borne Jew, Ben Tzion, uploaded the pictures of *Masjid-i-Nabvi* on Facebook, stating, ‘People of Saudi Arabia would stand with the Jewish nation side by side’.<sup>104</sup> This created a huge uproar on social media in Arab and Muslim countries. According to the

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1199381/saudi-arabia>

<sup>100</sup> <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-crown-prince-opens-mega-anti-terror-meeting-in-riyadh-1.2130488>

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1199381/saudi-arabia>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/0f61de82-d2c7-11e7-a303-9060cb1e5f44>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/411030-saudi-islamic-military-alliance-terrorism/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.dailysabah.com/religion/2017/11/23/saudi-arabia-bans-photos-videos-at-islams-two-holiest-sites>

Saudi General Directorate of Press and Information, the decision to prohibit photos and videos in Khana-e-Kaaba and Masjid-e-Nabwi was taken by the Saudi foreign ministry on November 12. The Saudi authorities informed that in the event of the violation of the ban, tools used to take snaps and videos will be confiscated and legal action will be taken". On his facebook post Tzion wrote that the '. In another post Tzoin wrote, 'Peace in the Middle East with respect and love towards each other'.<sup>105</sup>

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## Israel

- **Prime Minister Netanyahu, France and Russia** - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly told French President Emmanuel Macron in a phone call on November 21<sup>st</sup> that Israel sees Iranian activity in Syria as "a target" for its forces, and may carry out strikes against Iranian objectives if security needs require it. Macron reportedly attempted to reassure the Israeli leader and dissuade him from "hasty" action. As per the Prime Minister's Office, Netanyahu spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin by phone the same day about a ceasefire deal in the Syrian civil war and Iranian presence near Israel's borders with the war-torn country.<sup>106</sup>
- **Iran on Israel** - The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Revolutionary Guard Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari on November 23<sup>rd</sup> threatened that any future war in the region will result in the annihilation of Israel. "Hezbollah must be armed to fight against the enemy of the Lebanese nation which is Israel. Naturally, they should have the best weapons to protect Lebanon's security. This issue is non-negotiable," Jafari said.<sup>107</sup>

## Iran

During the week under review, two developments pertaining to Iran could be mentioned with some details. One was the tripartite talks on Syria between Iran, Russia and Turkey. The other was related to war of words between Iran and its arch rival Saudi Arabia. While the tripartite meeting and the release of a Joint Statement promised some progress towards the resolution of the Syrian crisis, Iran's presence in that effort could be seen by Saudi Arabia as further gain of influence by its foe. Under this backdrop, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia sought to further escalate the already tensed relations between the two countries with his remarks against the Iranian regime.

- **Tripartite Meeting on Syria**

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<sup>105</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1569025/3-saudi-arabia-bans-photos-videos-khana-e-kaaba-masjid-e-nabwi/>

<sup>106</sup> "Israel may 'target' Iran activity in Syria, Netanyahu said to tell Macron", *The Times of Israel*, November 22, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-will-target-iran-activity-in-syria-netanyahu-said-to-tell-macron/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=ca0d13c752-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2017\\_11\\_23&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-ca0d13c752-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-will-target-iran-activity-in-syria-netanyahu-said-to-tell-macron/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=ca0d13c752-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_23&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-ca0d13c752-55556173) (accessed on November 27, 2017)

<sup>107</sup> "Iran military chief: Any new Mideast war will end with Israel 'eradicated'", *The Times of Israel*, November 24, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-military-chief-any-new-mideast-war-will-end-with-israel-eradicated/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=32b642bc0e-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2017\\_11\\_24&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-32b642bc0e-555561732018](https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-military-chief-any-new-mideast-war-will-end-with-israel-eradicated/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=32b642bc0e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-32b642bc0e-555561732018) (accessed on November 27, 2017)



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met at the city of Sochi in Russia on November 22, 2017 to continue their collaboration for 'establishing peace and stability in Syria' under the rubric of UNSCR 2254. After their meeting, they released a Joint Statement<sup>108</sup> through which the three Presidents expressed their satisfaction over the ceasefire regime in Syria and near elimination of the ISIS and Nusra Front. They also emphasised the efficiency of the Astana process as an instrument of bringing peace and stability in Syria and resolved to continue their collaboration on that line. Importantly, the three Presidents 'agreed to assist the Syrians in restoring unity of the country, and achieving a political solution of the crisis through an inclusive, free, fair and transparent Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process leading to a constitution enjoying the support of the Syrian people and free and fair elections with the participation of all eligible Syrians under appropriate UN supervision.'<sup>109</sup> Through this Joint Statement, they also expressed their commitment 'to sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of The Syrian Arab Republic' and 'expressed their support for a broad intra-Syrian dialogue involving representatives of all segments of Syrian society.' They also 'underscored the need for rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and emphasized the need for the Syrian parties to take confidence-building measures, including the release of detainees/abductees and the handover of the bodies as well as identification of missing persons to create better condition for political process and lasting ceasefire.' Towards this end, 'they called upon members of the international community to support the process of de-escalation and stabilization in Syria, inter alia, by sending additional aid to the Syrian people, facilitating the humanitarian mine action, preserving historical heritage, and restoring basic infrastructure assets, including social and economic facilities.'<sup>110</sup>

On November 25, 2017, this Joint Statement issued by Iran, Russia and Turkey was sent to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres as well as the President of the United Nations Security Council Sebastiano Cardi with a request to publish this Joint Statement as a UNSC document.<sup>111</sup>

- **Iran-Saudi War of Words**

In an interview<sup>112</sup> given to Thomas Friedman on November 23, 2017 for the *New York Times*, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman said that Iran's "Supreme Leader is the new Hitler of the Middle East."<sup>113</sup> Bin Salman also added: "But we learned from Europe that appeasement doesn't work. We don't want the new Hitler in Iran to repeat what happened in Europe in the Middle East."<sup>114</sup> Considering the future of the Iranian nuclear deal, whose fate is now largely in the hands of the Europeans, the relevance of this comment cannot be missed out. Invoking Hitler in their diatribe, bin

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<sup>108</sup> Official Website of the President of Russia, "Joint statement by Presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey," November 22, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5256>, accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> *Alalam News*, "Joint statement issued by presidents of Iran, Russia, Turkey," November 25, 2017, <http://en.alalam.ir/news/3171886/joint-statement-issued-by-presidents-of-iran-russia-turkey>, accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> *The New York Times*, "Saudi Arabia's Arab Spring, at Last," November 23, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/23/opinion/saudi-prince-mbs-arab-spring.html>, accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

Salman apparently is seeking to tilt the balance of the Europeans in his favour and against the nuclear deal, seeking to further weaken Iran.

On expected line, Iran rejected<sup>115</sup> these anti-Iran comments of Saudi Crown Prince with Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi suggesting him on November 24, 2017 to instead think of the fate of other regional dictators. Iranian Spokesman considered these remarks as immature and absurd, which were not taken seriously any more by the world. Bahram Qassemi said: “The mistakes made by the adventurist Saudi crown prince, including his latest scandalous interference in the internal affairs of Lebanon which used to be the traditional ally of Saudi Arabia, have put the kingdom in deep trouble.”<sup>116</sup>

## Cyber Security

- **Israel-based OT security provider SCADAFence raises \$10m funding<sup>117</sup>**

SCADAFence, an Israel based cyber security company acquired \$ 10 million for the Series A funding to enlarge its business in Asia, Europe and North America as well as to build R & D centre. By focussing on security operational technology (OT) networks, Ofer Shaked, SCADAFence CTO and co-founder said, “Most IT security solutions are inadequate for securing industrial networks, and the risk they pose on the operational process usually outweighs their security benefits”. SCADAFence included global Fortune five hundred companies that consisted of energy, automotive, chemical, pharmaceutical industries. Expressing the advantages of security provided by SCADAFence, Yoav Tzruya, JVP general partner mentioned, “SCADAFence uniquely provides real-time detection, complete visibility and asset management. Simply using IT security solutions in OT isn't effective, which is exactly why we see a lot of value in SCADAFence's technology. SCADAFence's solutions' unprecedented ability to scale, achieve high detection rates while providing industry-leading user experience and low total cost of ownership, make them the only product that fits the requirements of large industrial networks”. Amidst of rising threats of ransomware attacks, Ofer Shaked said, “SCADAFence provides a passive and continuous monitoring solution, that is guaranteed not to add any additional risks, making it very easy for companies to improve their security posture”.

- **China created a website for vigilante citizens to report leaks and fake news<sup>118</sup>**

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<sup>115</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran, “Iran Urges Saudi Crown Prince to Think about Fate of Regional Dictators,” November 24, 2017, <http://en.mfa.ir/index.aspx?siteid=3&fkeyid=&siteid=3&pageid=36409&newsview=487913>, accessed on November 27, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> <https://securitybrief.asia/story/israel-based-ot-security-provider-scadafence-raises-10m-funding/>, 27 November 2017

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.my/china-military-crackdown-website-reports-fake-news-2017-11/>, 24 November 2017

On 20-24 November 2017, the Chinese government created a vigilant website where citizens could report harmful information about its military. The creation of this website demonstrated strict cyber policy of China as the government is closely monitoring online activity of public. China's Congress implemented this website to form a clean and bright cyber military space to reduce illegal internet use by members of the military trying to distorting and deconstructing the history of the Communist party. China pursues a longstanding policy of scrutinizing the online activities of military personnel as well as ordinary citizens. In June 2017, the government implemented cyber security laws permitting both domestic and international companies to store user data in China. Xinhua, the state news agency also reported that more than 1000 internet police offices working across the country to investigate illegal information and collecting information from the public.

- **World's security agencies must collaborate to fight cyber threats: Ajit Doval<sup>119</sup>**

On 24 November 2017, at the ministerial forum of countries participating in the fifth Global Conference on Cyber Space, held in New Delhi, Ajit Doval, the National Security Advisor raised concerns over increasing use of internet by terrorist groups. He asked that security organisations across the world should collaborate to fight against cyber threats and cyber warriors. According to Doval, "The cyberspace provides opportunities and challenges at the same time. While it provides global connectivity, it also provides connectivity to terrorists, which is worrisome. Timely and swift response to threats posed by cyber criminals is the key. The world needs a new jurisprudence to deal with the growing challenges. We need a specific regime to deal with the cyber threats". Doval stressed the need for joint efforts by both private and government sectors including various stakeholders representing people from different regions to be created. On the Conference, the Union Information and Technology Minister Ravi Shankar said, "India's will also be the voice of assertion for the digitally-deprived in a global platform. We need an egalitarian global cyberspace. If we are to use cyberspace for inclusive growth, we cannot have islands of digital deprivation or preferential lanes on the digital highway. Access to the Internet cannot be discriminatory through preferential gateways. We believe in Internet access for all. India's digital drive has been based on three D's -- digital inclusion, digital access and digital security".

- **Cyber Security Firms Turn To Artificial Intelligence As Hacking Threats Rise<sup>120</sup>**

A Finland based cyber security firm F-Secure said that deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) by cyber security companies to ward off cyber attacks become a common phenomena. Sean Sullivan, security advisor of F-Secure stressed that cyber security firms are leaning towards artificial intelligence and machine learning tools to analyse gigantic data to secure networks from infiltration challenges such as malware, phishing, breaching of passwords and denial of service attacks. It is difficult for human beings to check on enormous data and use of machine learning tools and AI to assist in detecting threats at an early stage without breaking the network is a welcome effort. However, there is a long way to go for extensive implementation of AI and machine learning tools due to its lack of cost effectiveness.

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<sup>119</sup> The Indian Express, 24 November 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/nov/24/worlds-security-agencies-must-collaborate-to-fight-cyber-threats-ajit-doal-1710148.html>

<sup>120</sup> <http://profit.ndtv.com/news/tech-media-telecom/article-cyber-security-firms-turn-to-artificial-intelligence-as-hacking-threats-rise-1780119>, 26 November 2017

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 22	Punjab	A review board comprising judges of the Lahore High Court refused to extend the detention orders of Jama'at-ud-Dawa's (JuD) chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed. The review board under the chair of Justice Abdul Sami Khan passed these orders after a senior Finance Ministry official failed to convince the board that the release of Saeed would bring diplomatic and financial problems to the country. Saeed had been placed under house arrest on January 31, 2017. <sup>121</sup>	LHC refuses to extend Hafiz Saeed's detention	
2	November 22	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Major Ishaq of the Pakistan Army was killed in an exchange of fire with terrorists during a search operation in Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan District. <sup>122</sup>	1	0
3	November 24	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Additional Inspector General (AIG) Headquarters Ashraf Noor was killed when a suicide bomber rammed into a police vehicle near Zarghooni Mosque in Hayatabad area of provincial capital Peshawar. <sup>123</sup>	2	0
4	November 24	Balochistan	Two terrorists were arrested by the Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Uch, Dera Bugti, Gulistan and Dera	Arrest	

<sup>121</sup> Idrees Sheikh, Hafiz Saeed set to be freed after LHC turns down extension in detention order, *Dawn*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372167>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>122</sup> Army major martyred during operation against terrorists in DI Khan, *Dawn*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372148/army-major-martyred-during-operation-against-terrorists-in-di-khan>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>123</sup> Ali Akbar, AIG martyred in suicide blast targeting Peshawar police, *Dawn*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372576/aig-martyred-in-suicide-blast-targeting-peshawar-police>, accessed on November 27, 2017

			Murad Jamali areas. The FC also recovered improvised explosive devices (IED), grenades, ammunition as well as 46 kilogrammes of explosives. <sup>124</sup>		
5	November 24		Pakistan should ensure that JuD chief Hafiz Saeed is arrested and charged for his crimes, the US said a day after he was released from house arrest. "The United States is deeply concerned that Lashkar-e-Taiiba (LeT) leader Hafiz Saeed has been released from house arrest in Pakistan. The LeT is a designated foreign terrorist organisation responsible for the death of hundreds of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks, including a number of American citizens. The Pakistani government should make sure that he is arrested and charged for his crimes," said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert. <sup>125</sup>	US urges for the re-arrest of Hafiz Saeed	
6	November 25	Balochistan	At least four people, including a child, were killed and 19 others were injured in an explosion in Quetta. FC vehicle was the target of the blast, Balochistan Home Minister Sarfaraz Bugti confirmed. <sup>126</sup>	4	9

### Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 20	Herat	At least 75 militants were killed and 25 others were wounded during an operation, codenamed "Azam	75	25

<sup>124</sup> Two 'terrorists' from banned organisations arrested by FC, claims ISPR, *Dawn*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372615/two-terrorists-from-banned-organisations-arrested-by-fc-claims-ispr>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>125</sup> Varghese K George, Arrest Hafiz Saeed and charge him for his crimes, U.S. tells Pakistan, *The Hindu*, November 24, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-calls-for-arrest-of-hafiz-saeed/article20788888.ece>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>126</sup> Syed Ali Shah, 4 killed, 19 injured in explosion on Quetta's Sariab Road, *Dawn*, November 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372801/4-killed-19-injured-in-explosion-on-quettas-sariab-road>, accessed on November 27, 2017

			Kahlid 21”, in the Shindand district of Herat province. <sup>127</sup>		
2	November 21	Logar	Eight Taliban, including the group’s ‘commander’, were killed in security forces raid in the Baraki Barak district. <sup>128</sup>	8	0
3	November 23	Nangarhar	Daesh militants cut off heads of its 15 group members in the Achin district. Governor spokesman Attaullah Khogyani said that internal rift inside Daesh forced one side to behead 15 members of the opposite side. <sup>129</sup>	15	0
4	November 26	Paktika	According to an investigation, government offices have closed in some districts of Paktika province due to the high level of insecurity. Officials said this has had a significant impact on people’s lives and the vacuum has resulted in locals having to deal with the Taliban’s justice system, specifically in the Sar Rozah district. The probe found that government officials dare not go to Geyan and Nakah districts because of the high security risks and have instead set up offices in another Paktika district, Orgun, where security is more stable. <sup>130</sup>	Government offices closed due to insecurity	
5	November	Wardak / Zabul	According to Ministry of Defense, at least two militants were killed and	6	3

<sup>127</sup> 75 Militants killed in Herat Fresh Offensive, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 21, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2021,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>128</sup> 8 Taliban killed in Logar Raid, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 22, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2022,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>129</sup> Internecine Rifts: 15 Daesh Insurgents Decapitated, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 23, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2025,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>130</sup> Tamim Hamid, Paktika District Officials Forced To Work From Provincial Capital, *Tolo News*, November 26, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/paktika-district-officials-forced-work-provincial-capital>, accessed on November 27, 2017

	26		<p>two others were wounded in an explosion in Syedabad district of Wardak province.</p> <p>The ministry further added that another militant was killed after his explosives exploded prematurely in Arghandab district of Zabul province.</p> <p>In another incident in Shamulz district of Zabul, at least three militants were killed and another militant was wounded.<sup>131</sup></p>		
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**Iraq**

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 21	Salahuddin	At least 19 people were killed and 70 others were injured in a car bomb blast near an overcrowded market at the Military District in Tuz Khurmatu region. <sup>132</sup>	19	70
2	November 22	Nineveh	A total of 446 Iraqis who had sought refuge in a Syrian camp from Islamic State (IS) militancy have returned to their home regions, the Iraqi migration ministry said. Khaled Abdel-Karim, head of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement's office in Nineveh, said that nearly 446 refugees in al-	446 refugees return to Nineveh	

<sup>131</sup> Militants suffer casualties in premature Zabul and Wardak bombings, Khaama Press, November 26, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/militants-suffer-casualties-in-premature-zabul-and-wardak-bombings-03920>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>132</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, 19 people killed, 70 injured in bomb blast in Salahuddin, *Iraqi News*, November 21, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/83-people-killed-injured-salahuddin-blast/>, accessed on November 27, 2017

			Houl camp in Syria's Hassaka returned to the province. <sup>133</sup>		
3	November 24	Kirkuk	Iraqi paramilitary forces killed three IS suicide bombers in Kirkuk before perpetrating an attack on civilians. PMF media said the militants, wearing explosive belts, were killed at al-Rashad area in Hawija, a former IS bastion, southwest of Kirkuk. <sup>134</sup>	3	0
4	November 26	Baghdad	One person was killed and six others were injured in a bomb blast in al-Nahrawan region. The Baghdad Operations Command announced confiscating an amount of explosives that were left by IS militants in al-Thiban region. <sup>135</sup>	1	6
5	November 26	Diyala	An IS hideout was destroyed in an airstrike on a village in al-Muqadiyah city. "The Iraqi army targeted an IS hideaway at Bablan village in al-Muqadiyah city, some 35 km northeast of Baqubah," Commander of the Tigris Operations Lieutenant General Mazher al-Azzawi said. <sup>136</sup>	IS hideout destroyed	

<sup>133</sup> Mohamed Mostafa, Ministry: 446 Iraqi refugees in Syria returned to Nineveh, *Iraqi News*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/features/ministry-446-iraqi-refugees-syria-returned-nineveh/>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>134</sup> Mohamed Mostafa, PMFs kill 3 Islamic State suicide bombers in Hawija, *Iraqi News*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/pmfs-kill-3-islamic-state-suicide-bombers-hawija/>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>135</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Seven people killed, injured, 14 bombs found in Baghdad, *Iraqi News*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/seven-people-killed-injured-14-bombs-found-baghdad/>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>136</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, Islamic State hideout destroyed in airstrike on Diyala village: Commander, *Iraqi News*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-hideout-destroyed-airstrike/>, accessed on November 27, 2017



## Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 23	Iraq-Syria border	Three IS militants were killed as they infiltrated towards the defense line on borders with Syria. According to a statement by al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces), Commander Abu Jinan al-Basri said “troops killed three IS members as they blew their booby-trapped vehicle, that they were using in Syria.” <sup>137</sup>	3	0
2	November 24		<p>The Pentagon is likely to announce in the coming days that there are about 2,000 US troops in Syria, rather than the 500 the military has said are in the country. Two US officials detailed the new figure, as the military acknowledges that an accounting system has underreported the size of forces on the ground.</p> <p>The US military has publicly said it has about 500 troops in Syria, mostly supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces group of Kurdish and Arab militias.</p>	Presence of 2,000 US troops in Syria	
3	November 26	Damascus	At least 25 civilians, including five children, were killed in Syrian regime attacks in the Eastern Ghouta suburb. The attacks targeted the opposition-held residential neighborhoods of Douma, Misraba, Ein Tarma, Medeira, and Harasta. The death	25	NS

<sup>137</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Three Islamic State members killed near borders with Syria, *Iraqi News*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-islamic-state-members-killed-near-borders-syria/>, accessed on November 27, 2017

			toll is feared to rise as many people were injured in the attacks. <sup>138</sup>		
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## International Economic Issues

- **Brics Bank approves \$400 million loans for India, Russia<sup>139</sup>**

On 20 November 2017, the Board of Directors (BoD) of the New Development Bank (NDB) approved two infrastructure and sustainable development projects in India and Russia with loans aggregating over USD 400 million (mln) during the 12<sup>th</sup> BoD Meeting in Shanghai. Under the framework of Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project for Desert Areas, the Bank will provide a sovereign multi-tranche financing facility of up to USD 345 mln to the Government of the Republic of India. The facility will be used by the Government of India for on-lending to the Government of Rajasthan for rehabilitating the Indira Gandhi canal system. Under the framework of Ufa Eastern Exit Project, the NDB will provide a sovereign project loan of up to 68.8 mln to the Government of the Russian Federation for the construction of a toll transport corridor connecting the Ufa city center to the M-5 federal highway.

- **India stands up to US, defends Doha trade negotiations, WTO<sup>140</sup>**

India upped the ante on November 22, 2017 for salvaging the “development” dimension of the Doha trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO), after the US blocked attempts to finalize a draft ministerial declaration for the next month’s ministerial conference in Buenos Aires. The US remained opposed to any language in the draft Buenos Aires ministerial declaration on the pre-eminent role of the WTO for furthering global trade liberalization as well as on the importance of development dimension in the Doha trade negotiations. The US, according to a trade envoy, maintained that it is not able to agree to the draft ministerial declaration because it fails to take on board Washington’s core priorities for institutional reform at the WTO. The US also made it known that it does not agree with the importance attached to the pre-eminent role of WTO under the Marrakesh Agreement, the envoy suggested. The US and the European Union (EU) also remained opposed to the status of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) trade negotiations as they reckon that the Doha negotiations no longer exist, said an African trade envoy. India’s deputy trade envoy Aseem Mahajan said that the DDA and the development dimension embodying the work programme represent India’s core interests

<sup>138</sup> Syria: Regime attacks kill 25 in Eastern Ghouta, *Anadolu Agency*, November 26, 2017, <http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-regime-attacks-kill-25-in-eastern-ghouta/980083>, accessed on November 27, 2017

<sup>139</sup> New Development Bank, “NDB Board of Directors approves two projects in India and Russia with loans aggregating over USD 400 mln during 12th meeting in Shanghai”, press release, November 21, 2017, [https://www.ndb.int/press\\_release/ndb-board-directors-approves-two-projects-india-russia-loans-aggregating-usd-400-mln-12th-meeting-shanghai/](https://www.ndb.int/press_release/ndb-board-directors-approves-two-projects-india-russia-loans-aggregating-usd-400-mln-12th-meeting-shanghai/) (accessed on November 24, 2017)

<sup>140</sup> D. Ravi Kanth, “India stands up to US, defends Doha trade negotiations, WTO”, *Livemint*, November 25, 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/GCV4B7CsDWVG1uONeKInMN/India-stands-up-to-US-defends-Doha-trade-negotiations-WTO.html> (accessed on November 24, 2017)

as well as the interests of a large majority of the developing countries. He added, “Consequently, we cannot agree for any formulation in the declaration that says the Doha Development Agenda and the decisions taken in the past ministerial conferences are no longer relevant.” On behalf of the Group of 90 countries, Rwanda expressed concern over the persistent position of “some members” to seriously undermine “the development dimension of the WTO and the WTO itself.” Rwanda’s trade envoy Ambassador Dr. Francois Xavier Ngarambe said “the centrality of development in this institution, is the *raison d’être* of our Membership”. Argentina, which is hosting the Buenos Aires meeting from 10 December, expressed sharp concern over the US decision but maintained that it will continue to work for the ministerial declaration at Buenos Aires.

- **IREDA Sign \$100 Million Loan Agreement with World Bank to Support Shared Infrastructure for Solar Parks Project in India<sup>141</sup>**

On 20, November, 2017 Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) Ltd., the World Bank and Department of Economic Affairs, Government of India (GoI) signed the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) loan agreement of \$75 million, Clean Technology Fund loan agreement of \$23 million and Clean Technology Grant Fund of \$2 Million to support lending by IREDA to the Shared Infrastructure for Solar Parks Projects in India. The objective of the project is to increase solar generation capacity through establishment of large-scale parks in the country. The project will help establish large-scale solar parks and support the government’s plan to install 100 Gigawatts (GW) of solar power out of a total renewable-energy target of 175 GW by 2022.

- **Cabinet approves India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development<sup>142</sup>**

According to the Press Information Bureau (PIB), the Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD) on November 22, 2017. The minimum initial investment towards the membership of EBRD will be approximately €1 (one) million. However, this assumption is based on India deciding to buy the minimum number of shares (100) required for obtaining the membership. If India were to buy a higher number of Bank shares, the financial implications could be higher. In-principle approval of the Cabinet at this stage is being obtained for joining the Bank. In view of the country’s impressive economic growth over the years and enhanced international political profile, the Government considered it appropriate that India should expand its presence on the global developmental landscape beyond its association with the Multi-lateral Development Banks (MDBs) such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank.

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<sup>141</sup>PIB, “India Signs Loan Agreement with World Bank for USD 100 Million for “Shared Infrastructure for Solar Parks Project””, Press Release, November 20, 2017, <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=0> (accessed on November 24, 2017); IREDA, “IREDA Sign \$100 Million Loan Agreement with World Bank to Support Shared Infrastructure for Solar Parks Project in India”, Press Release, November 21, 2017, <http://www.ireda.gov.in/forms/list.aspx?lid=1843&Id=3> (accessed on November 24, 2017)

<sup>142</sup>PIB, “Cabinet approves India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development”, Press Release, November 22, 2017, <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=0> (accessed on November 24, 2017)