

Weekly Media Updates **(13-19 November, 2017)**

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Africa

- **Zimbabwe Political crisis drags on¹**

Robert Mugabe, 93, who ruled Zimbabwe with an iron grip until the military placed him under house arrest last week, stunned the nation on Sunday night, 19 November, 2017 when he refused to say whether he would resign. Many political observers and fellow Zimbabweans were expecting Mr. Mugabe to step down as president after nearly 40 years in power. But the president gave a 20-minute televised speech that acknowledged problems in the nation — even as he vowed to soldier on.

He also declared that he would preside over his party's congress in a few weeks. Observers questioned how Mr. Mugabe could oversee the conference if he was no longer leader of the party. His address came hours after he was expelled as leader of his governing party, ZANU-PF, which gave him until noon on Monday to resign or face impeachment by Parliament.

Party officials earlier on Sunday, 19 November, also removed his wife, Grace Mugabe as head of the ZANU-PF Women's League and barred her from the party for life. So were Jonathan Moyo, Zimbabwe's minister of higher and tertiary education; Saviour Kasukuwere, the minister of local government; and several others.

ZANU-PF also appointed her rival, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the vice president previously fired by the president, to take Mr. Mugabe's place as leader of the party. Zanu-PF had given Mugabe until midday on Monday, 20 November 2017, to resign, failing which they will begin the process to impeach him.

- **Rwanda: Tension Between Rwanda and Uganda Reveals Troubles in Bloc²**

The deteriorating ties between Rwanda and Uganda could deal a major blow to regional projects. Observers say that if diplomatic ties between the two countries worsened further it could hamper planned Central Corridor infrastructure projects. The widely reported tension adds to an already delicate situation where some of the bloc members are currently not on talking terms.

Kampala and Kigali remain tight-lipped on what could be the thorny issues but officials have confirmed that Kigali is rattled by several decisions made by Uganda, including arrests of senior police officers suspected of working with Rwandan authorities.

The "East African" obtained information that different interest groups continue to be "briefed about the situation" between the two countries, urging them to exercise caution when travelling to or conducting business in Uganda. Simmering tensions are beginning

¹ EWN, 19 November, 2017, <http://ewn.co.za/2017/11/20/zim-political-crisis-to-drag-on-as-mugabe-defies-exit-calls>,

Guardian, 19 November 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/nov/19/robert-mugabe-set-to-resign-as-president-of-zimbabwe-live>

² The East African, 18 November 2017, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Rwanda-Uganda-diplomatic-tension/2558-4182462-ng7mc/index.html>

to affect movement of people between the two neighbours, with Uganda officials reportedly scrutinising Rwandans crossing over to Uganda. Observers say if the developments are anything to go by, regional integration could be dealt a heavy blow.

- **Tillerson, African Foreign Ministers Talk Trade, Good Governance, Security**³
Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Friday, 17 November 2017 that the Trump administration wanted to refocus the U.S. relationship with Africa squarely on trade and investment, to help unlock the tremendous potential of what is expected to become the world's most populous continent in coming decades. The secretary also urged African countries to help isolate North Korea, which he called a threat to all nations, by acting to implement U.N. sanctions in full, and cut off all U.N.-proscribed ties.

Tillerson noted that a more vibrant and economically competitive Africa would grow the middle class, increase standards of living and make the entire continent more prosperous. He made the remarks ahead of ministerial talks with foreign ministers and representatives of 37 African countries at the State Department in Washington. The U.S. government hosted a two-day High Level Dialogue and Ministerial for African officials in Washington, DC as mark of ten years of diplomatic ties with the African Union.

The Secretary noted that U.S. exports to sub-Saharan Africa grew from \$17 billion in 2010 to more than \$25 billion in 2014. He said that last year, U.S. direct investment in Africa grew to \$57.5 billion, the highest level to date. He further said that economic growth and lasting prosperity, however, can thrive only in environments of good governance. A recent African Union study concluded that corruption costs the African continent \$150 billion a year

Tillerson said the United States also stood with its African partners to work to defeat what he called the scourge of terrorism and to address the root causes of violent extremism. He said the U.S. was helping 20 African countries to train, deploy and sustain more than 27,000 African peacekeepers this year in United Nations and African Union missions.

Friday's African ministerial meeting comes as Tillerson has been under increasing fire from a number of U.S. lawmakers for what they say is turmoil at the State Department, citing career foreign service leaders who are leaving in large numbers because of budget cuts and morale issues. Africa expert and former U.S. Ambassador John Campbell told VOA the fact that the secretary was hosting such a major meeting of African leaders was good, but he noted the Trump administration still has no signature issue for the African continent. He said "My concern about the Trump administration's approach to Africa is its failure to fill important policy positions such as the assistant secretary of state, its failure to nominate ambassadors to important African countries, such as South Africa, and the threat of massive cuts in the State Department and USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] budget will severely curtail assistance programs in Africa."

³ VoA News, 17 November 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201711200183.html>

North Africa

- **Egypt-India to enhance bilateral ties⁴**

The Egyptian minister of trade and industry Tarek Kabil said there are possibilities to enhance bilateral cooperation between two nations in key areas like automotive industry, textile and leather products. His statement came during his meeting with Tamil Nadu's Minister of Rural Industries P Benjamin who is currently in Cairo leading the Indian delegation to participate in the MACTECH Fair in the Cairo International Convention Centre from November 16-19.

India's s Ambassador to Egypt Sanjay Bhattacharyya said that both the sides discussed possibilities of technology and investment cooperation in textiles and leather sectors. The envoy further added that participation of India with 50 companies at MACTECH Fair was to manifest the strength of India in engineering and capital goods and he also remarked that India's strength lies in high quality and affordable price.

- **Iran is sponsoring terrorism across the world: President Hadi of Yemen⁵**

President Hadi of Yemen has accused Iran of sponsoring global terrorism and he also remarked that Iran is thwarting the peace process in Yemen. He was speaking in the city of Bonn in the Climate Summit where he said that his government with the help of Arab coalition is trying to restore the sovereignty of the nation and execute the legitimacy on the ground in Yemen which is being foiled by the militia. He further said that his government despite all the odds is committed to bring the peace and stability in Yemen. He also told the audience that Yemen is facing worst sort of environmental crisis in recent past and the crisis has become more acute following the war and subsequent drought and spread of cholera and disruption in the rain pattern across the country. He further said that climate and environmental disturbance is causing several disease and epidemic in the suburb of the country and is impacting the life of common people in an unprecedented manner. President Hadi condemned the Houthis and its allies, the forces of Abdullah Saleh for kidnapping the Yemeni citizens and subjecting them to different level of torture and reportedly some of them have succumbed to the inhuman treatment meted out to them.

⁴ <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-egypt-hold-talks-to-enhance-trade-cooperation/1/1092593.html>

⁵ Al-Hayat , an Arabic daily <http://www.alhayat.com/Articles/25449474/%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A--%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9>

- **Russia uses its tenth veto on Syria**⁶

Russia has used its veto for tenth time since it has involved itself in the Syrian quagmire. The last veto of Russia came against the US proposal to extend the time frame of ongoing investigation against the regime of President Assad for using chemical weapon against the rebel forces. Russia took no time to veto the proposal of US when the US ambassador to UN sought an extension of one more year for the international team investigating the alleged role of Assad in the use of chemical weapons. Reacting to the decision of Russia, US ambassador to UN, Ms. Hilly said that Russia has killed the instrument of investigation today and she further said that this act of Russia conveys a candid message that Russia supports the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime.

Central Asia

- **Kazakhstan President Discusses International Issues in Forum**

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed the Astana Club on November 13, in Astana. The Astana Club is a forum to discuss challenging issues under the Chatham House rules and this year it was the third such annual meeting since 2015. The main issues were international terrorism, wars, economic condition, displacement of people, poverty and shortage of potable water and food for many. More than 60 participants, including politicians, diplomats and academia from 27 countries attended the meeting on this year's theme 'Greater Eurasia-2027: Confrontation or Partnership'.⁷

The President said that the existing regional and international security systems no longer meet the dynamics of change or offer sustainable solutions. He added that political repression, poverty, low level of education and health are fuelling the international terrorism and extremism. He mentioned that increased military expenditure pose a threat to peace and security. The President emphasized that through greater cooperation many challenges can be addressed. Eurasian region can emerge as unifying area for security, economic development and engagement through dialogue.⁸ He cited the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Kazakhstan's Nurly Zhol infrastructure development programme as possible factors to create a new geo-economic configuration in the Eurasian continent.

⁶ Al-Hayat , an Arabic daily <http://www.alhayat.com/Articles/25456352/-%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%88--%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9>

⁷ Zhazira Dyussebekova, "Kazakh President addresses global issues in Astana Club speech," *The Astana Times*, 16 November 2017, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/11/kazakh-president-addresses-global-issues-in-astana-club-speech/>

⁸ President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Participation in the third meeting of Astana Club," 13 November 2017, http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/astana_kazakhstan/participation_in_events/participation-in-the-third-meeting-of-astana-club

China

- **India-China WMCC Meeting⁹**

The 10th round of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was held in Beijing on 17 November 2017. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Pranay Verma, Joint Secretary (East Asia), Ministry of External Affairs. The Chinese delegation was led by Mr. Xiao Qian, Director General, Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two delegations comprised of diplomatic and military officials from each side.

The talks were held in a constructive and forward-looking manner. Both sides reviewed the situation in all sectors of India-China border and agreed that maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is an important prerequisite for sustained growth of bilateral relations. In this regard, the two sides also exchanged views on further confidence building measures and strengthening of military-to-military contacts.

WMCC was established in 2012 as an institutional mechanism for consultation and coordination for the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas, as well as to exchange views on strengthening communication and cooperation, including between their border security personnel. The two sides agreed to hold the next meeting of the WMCC at a mutually convenient time.

- **Indian Pavilion inaugurated at the Shanghai New International Exhibition Center¹⁰**

Consul General Anil K. Rai inaugurated the Indian Pavilion at Shanghai New International Exhibition Centre (SNIEC) during the ongoing 21st Food & Hotel China 2017 in Shanghai on 14 November. The Indian Pavilion featured participation from prominent exporters from food and beverages industry showcasing products ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables, pulp, confectionaries, processed foods, ready to eat, and frozen foods etc. under the auspices of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

- **Chinese Foreign Minister on Myanmar's Rakhine state¹¹**

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said here on 19 November that China proposed a three-phase solution to help settle the issue in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The first phase is to achieve a ceasefire so that local residents can no longer be displaced. Through joint efforts, the ceasefire has been in place. Second, the international community should encourage Myanmar and Bangladesh to keep communication in a bid to find a feasible solution to the issue. The two countries have reached an initial agreement on repatriation of refugees fleeing to Bangladesh from Myanmar. The third phase is to find a long-term solution. Stressing that poverty is the root cause of turbulence and conflict, the Chinese

⁹ <http://indianembassybeijing.in/india-china-17-nov-2017.php>

¹⁰ <http://www.indianconsulate.org.cn/event.php?id=498>

¹¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/20/c_136764392.htm

foreign minister called on the international community to support poverty alleviation efforts in Rakhine state.

Development can lead to stability, Wang said, adding that China's proposal has been backed by Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Chinese foreign minister will participate in the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) foreign ministers' meeting to be held in Nay Pyi Daw on Nov. 20-21. He also visited Bangladesh and Myanmar.

- **China, EU need “greater wisdom” for old problems¹²**

China and the European Union (EU) should strive to solve their old problems with greater wisdom, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on 14 November. Li made the remarks when meeting with European Council President Donald Tusk on the sidelines of a series of leaders' meetings on East Asian cooperation in the Philippine capital of Manila.

- **Panama opens embassy in Beijing, as leader voices support for ‘one-China’ principle¹³**

Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela voiced his support for the “one-China” principle on Thursday as the country opened its first embassy in Beijing, five months after it ditched Taiwan and established diplomatic ties with the mainland. Varela, who is on a weeklong visit to China, is expected to meet President Xi Jinping on Friday, when the two will witness the signing of about 20 agreements.

He said that he and Xi had agreed to initiate political dialogue and discuss issues such as cooperation on tourism, justice, trade and maritime logistics. “I believe that safeguarding the ‘one China’ principle is one of the decisions that will bring benefits to the people I serve,” he said. In June, Panama announced that it was breaking ties with Taiwan to establish full diplomatic relations with China, the second-largest user of the Panama Canal.

- **Cotton-picking machines replace manual workers in Xinjiang¹⁴**

Machines are replacing hundreds of thousands of migrant workers picking cotton in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the biggest cotton production base in the country. At this time of year Xinjiang's cotton growers would usually have started hiring workers to pick their cotton. However, 116,000 hectares of cotton fields in Shawan County have already been harvested by cotton-picking machines.

"In the past, the cotton picking season lasted at least 45 days from October to November. But now, the machines can harvest a 15-hectare cotton field in one day," said Lin Hongru, head in Caohu Village. A cotton-picking machine can do the work of 2,000 workers each day, he said. "The cotton picking season was the busiest time of the year. Cotton growers in my village hired migrant workers from Gansu, Sichuan and Henan provinces to help. People worked in the fields from dawn to dusk," said Lin, who has been growing cotton

¹² http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/15/c_136752504.htm

¹³ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2120265/panama-opens-embassy-beijing-leader-voices-support-one>

¹⁴ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/15/c_136753101.htm

since 1998. He remembered in the past so many workers travelled from across the country to Xinjiang when autumn came that Xinjiang's railway department had to put extra trains in service from August to December to deal with the traffic rush.

- **Xi Jinping's allies named as head of propaganda, chief of staff as president tightens grip on power¹⁵**

Two more of Chinese President Xi Jinping's close allies have landed senior positions in the ruling Communist Party – as head of propaganda and Xi's chief of staff. Huang Kunming, 60, on Monday attended a meeting of the central propaganda department as its chief, while Ding Xuexiang, 55, was made the director of the general office of the Central Committee, state media reported. Both were formerly second in command of their respective departments and were waiting in the wings for promotion.

The two men were among a slew of Xi loyalists promoted to the party's powerful 25-member Politburo during the leadership reshuffle at the 19th national party congress that ended last week. At the weekend, Xi's allies Li Qiang and Li Xi were named party bosses of the economic powerhouses of Shanghai and Guangdong, respectively.

- **China's propaganda chief warns against 'seduction' of Western values¹⁶**

Western countries are trying to push their culture and political values onto others, seducing them into abandoning their own, China's propaganda chief warned on Friday, saying the country must follow its own path. Chinese President Xi Jinping has overseen a sweeping crackdown against civil society since assuming office five years ago, tightening control over society, media and the internet.

Xi has pledged to promote what the ruling Communist Party refers to as core socialist values, which stress, among other things, patriotism, Chinese traditional culture, the rule of law, harmony and prosperity. Huang Kunming, who was appointed to the post following last month's party congress at which Xi further cemented his grip on power, wrote in the official People's Daily that there was an intensifying "surge and collision" in the world between different values.

European Union

- **British Prime Minister Theresa May Accused Russia of Fake News**

British Prime Minister Theresa May has accused Russia of planting fake news and interfering in the elections. In an address at the lord mayor's banquet, Prime Minister May said, "I have a very simple message for Russia. We know what you are doing. And you will not succeed. Because you underestimate the resilience of our democracies, the enduring attraction of free and open societies, and the commitment of western nations to the alliances that bind us." She added, "It is seeking to weaponise information. Deploying

¹⁵ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2117676/xi-jinpings-allies-named-head-propaganda-chief-staff>

¹⁶ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2120330/chinas-propaganda-chief-warns-against-seduction-western>

its state-run media organisations to plant fake stories and photo-shopped images in an attempt to sow discord in the west and undermine our institutions.”¹⁷

- **Increase in German Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt**

Reportedly, German arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt has increased. The German government approved nearly €450 million worth of arms exports to Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the third quarter of 2017. The German Economy Ministry provided the information on the request of Stefan Liebich, Member of Parliament from the left party.¹⁸

- **New Social and Economic Policies for Poorest neighborhoods**

French President Emmanuel Macron has unveiled a series of new social and economic policies for the poorest neighborhoods of the country. Reportedly, President Macron argues that abandoning low income areas may contribute to rise of extremism. He said, “In these neighborhoods we have closed schools, cut aid for the oldest and youngest, and other groups have arrived touting solutions for all of that.” He also said, “Radicalization took root because the state checked out.”¹⁹

- **Global Terrorism Index: Rise Terrorism Related Death in Europe**

Daniel Hyslop, Research Director at the Institute for Economics and Peace, said that there are global changes in terrorism-related deaths. The number of terrorist deaths has decreased by 22 percent globally in 2016 compared to the peak of 2014. He said, “one of the concerning trends is that in 2016 we saw the highest number of terrorist deaths in the OECD member countries, which include most of Europe, the US, Australia and Canada. And that number was the highest number since 1988. I think that's largely the reason why at least in Europe we have the perception of there being perhaps more terrorism than before.”²⁰

- **Saudi Arabia Recalled Its Ambassador to Germany**

Saudi Arabia has recalled summoned its Ambassador in Germany for consultations. It has protested over comments by German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel about the political crisis in Lebanon. The Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry said that German Ambassador in Riyadh was summoned. “A protest memorandum over the shameful and unjustified remarks made by the German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel” was handed to him.²¹

¹⁷ Rowena Mason, Theresa May accuses Russia of fake news and interfering in elections, the Guardian, November 13, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/nov/13/theresa-may-accuses-russia-of-interfering-in-elections-and-fake-news>

¹⁸ Ben Knight, Germany quintuples arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, DW, November 14, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-quintuples-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-and-egypt/a-41370500>

¹⁹ France's Emmanuel Macron blames state for fueling extremism, vows solutions, DW, November 15, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/frances-emmanuel-macron-blames-state-for-fueling-extremism-vows-solutions/a-41385004>

²⁰ Nastassja Shtrauchler, Global Terrorism Index: Death toll drops globally but rise in Europe, DW, November 15, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/global-terrorism-index-death-toll-drops-globally-but-rise-in-europe/a-41385199>

²¹ Saudi Arabia recalls ambassador to Germany over Gabriel comments, Reuters, 18 November 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-germany-lebanon/saudi-arabia-recalls-ambassador-to-germany-over-gabriel-comments-idUSKBN1DI00V>

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Koike resigns as the leader of Hope party²²**

On November 14, 2017 Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike announced her resignation as the leader of Kibo no To (Hope), the national party formed amid high expectations that ended up failing in the Lower House election. Her decision was announced at a meeting of the party's Diet members. Announcing her resignation Koike said, "I want to leave national political matters to Diet members. I founded the party, but I will step down as representative and support you all in an appropriate manner." Koike will be succeeded by Yuichiro Tamaki, a lower house lawmaker who was recently picked as the party's co-leader.

- **Prime Minister Abe Meets Chinese Premier Li Keqiang: Agree to work on closer Japan-China ties²³**

On November 14, 2017 Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Manila on the sidelines of a summit among nations with close ties to ASEAN. The meeting came two days after Abe met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Danang, Vietnam. It is rare for a Japanese prime minister to meet in such quick succession with the top two Chinese leaders. At the meeting Premier Li said "aggressive change has begun to appear recently in ties between China and Japan." In response, Abe said, "with an eye on the 40th anniversary, we plan to further develop a mutually beneficial strategic relationship and move strongly forward in improving relations." Prime Minister Abe and Premier Li confirmed the need to further improve bilateral ties ahead of the anniversary. The two leaders also agreed to hold an early meeting in Tokyo among the leaders of Japan, China and South Korea. Li would represent China in such a trilateral meeting.

- **Senior Chinese diplomat visits North Korea as envoy of President Xi Jinping**

According to Xinhua News Agency Song Tao, who heads the Chinese Communist Party's external affairs department, would leave for North Korea on Friday as the special envoy of President Xi Jinping. Xinhua announced that Song Tao will "inform the DPRK of the 19th CPC National Congress and visit the DPRK".²⁴ Rodong Sinmun reported that on November 17, 2017, Song Tao met Choe Ryong Hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), vice-chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and vice-chairman of the C.C., WPK. At the meeting, Song Tao informed in detail of the 19th National Congress of the CPC. He stressed the CPC's stand to steadily develop the traditional friendly relations

²² "Koike resigns as leader of Hope party to focus on being governor", The Asahi Shimbun, November 14, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201711140055.html> (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

²³ "Abe and Chinese premier agree to work on closer Japan-China ties", The Asahi Shimbun, November 14, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201711140023.html> (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

²⁴ "Xi's special envoy to visit DPRK", Xinhua News, November 15, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/15/c_136753868.htm (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

between the two parties and countries.²⁵ On November 18, 2017, the special envoy had talk with Ri Su Yong, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea and vice-Chairman of the C.C., WPK. The two sides exchanged their views on such matters of mutual concern as the situation of the Korean peninsula and region and bilateral relations.²⁶

- **North Korean Soldier defected to South Korea via Panmunjom**²⁷

On November 13, 2017 a North Korea soldier defected to South Korea via the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The soldier was recovered by South Korean and U.S. soldiers and transported to a hospital south of Seoul. The soldier had been hit by multiple gunshots fired North Korea forces while running away from the North in the heavily fortified demilitarized zone (DMZ).

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **Manila Declaration at the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation**²⁸

The Heads of the State/Government of the Members States of ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea, reaffirmed their commitment to deepen and broaden the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) cooperation, according to the Manila declaration announced on November 14, 2017. The declaration also reaffirmed the important role of the APT for peace, security, and prosperity in the East Asian region. Further, ATP would continue to support the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 to pave the way towards deeper regional integration in East Asia. The declaration also adopted the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2018-2022) as the principle guide to enhance APT cooperation in the next five years. This work plan would include the deepening of cooperation in all areas, in particular political-security, economy, finance, food security, agriculture, energy, environment and biodiversity conservation, health and pandemic diseases, culture, tourism, science and technology and innovation, youth and education as well as on connectivity.

²⁵ "Choe Ryong Hae Meets with Song Tao", Rodong Sinmun, November 20, 2017, http://rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2017-11-20-0006 (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

²⁶ "Talks Held between Ri Su Yong and Special Envoy of Xi Jinping", Rodong Sinmun, November 20, 2017, http://rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2017-11-20-0001 (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

²⁷ "N. Korean soldier drove car before defecting to S. Korea: UNC", The Yonhap News, November 14, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/11/14/0401000000AEN20171114004453315.html> (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

²⁸ "Manila Declaration at the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation", ASEAN, <http://asean.org/storage/2017/11/Manila-Declaration-on-the-20th-Anniversary-of-APT-Final.pdf>, accessed on November 16, 2017.

- **China, ASEAN Agree to a 10-year China Sea Protection Pact**²⁹

According to the “Declaration for a Decade of Coastal and Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea (2017-2027)”, ASEAN and China set a ten year period through 2027 to protect the coasts and marine resources in the South China Sea while trying to settle lingering disputes over territories. This declaration came in after the ASEAN-China Summit which took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Manila. The two page declaration stated that the ASEAN members and China are committed to meet the aspirations of this declaration, while adding that the preservation and sustainable management of the coastal and marine environment is vital to the economic well-being and enhanced quality of life of the people of ASEAN member states and China. Further, the declaration stated that the pending issues on territory and jurisdictional disputes, the parties concerned would explore or undertake relevant cooperative activities.

- **PM Modi Reaffirms towards Strengthening India-ASEAN Cooperation at the ASEAN Summit**

During his address at the India-ASEAN Summit in Manila, Philippines, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN nations. The Prime Minister stated that as ASEAN celebrates 50 years it is an occasion of pride, joy and a time to think ahead about what we can achieve. He remarked, “India places ASEAN at the core of our 'Act East Policy.' Our ties with ASEAN are old and we want to further strengthen cooperation”, while calling for united efforts in mitigating terrorism.³⁰

At the 12th East Asia Summit, PM Narendra Modi took note that ASEAN began in times of a great global divide, but today as it celebrated its Golden Jubilee, it shone as a beacon of hope; a symbol of peace and prosperity. He added further, “We look forward to the East Asia Summit attaining greater salience in years to come. I reiterate my commitment to work with you to address the political, security and economic issues of the region.”³¹

²⁹ “China, ASEAN agree to 10-years China Sea protection pact”, ASEAN, Bangkok Post, November 14, 2017, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1359851/china-asean-agree-to-10-year-china-sea-protection-pact>, accessed on November 15, 2017,

³⁰“Prime Minister Modi’s address at the India-ASEAN Summit in Manila, Philippines”, <https://www.narendramodi.in/pm-modi-s-address-at-india-asean-summit-537800>, accessed on November 19, 2017.

³¹“Key Points from the Prime Minister’s address at the 12th East Asia Summit”, <https://www.narendramodi.in/key-points-from-prime-minister-s-address-at-the-12th-east-asia-summit-537799>, accessed on November 19, 2017.

Myanmar

- **Talks between government and UNFC delayed**³²

The ninth round of peace talks between the government peace team and an ethnic bloc, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), has been delayed, although on 16th it was agreed to be held. “I was told that the government postponed the meeting because they need to take time to prepare,” said U Hla Maung Shwe, adviser of the government peace commission.

- **Twenty-seven parties criticise NLD prayer ceremonies as party promotion**³³

Twenty-seven political parties, led by the Union Solidarity and Development Party, released an official statement on 13th to criticise the interfaith prayer ceremonies organised by the National League for Democracy (NLD) throughout October of being purely political promotion. The NLD organised the prayer ceremonies on October 10, 17, 24 and 31 in Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi and Patheingyi.

- **Tatmadaw to train in India for UN peacekeeping duties**³⁴

A group of Tatmadaw officers was due to train in India for United Nations peacekeeping duties in the first bilateral military exercise on Indian soil. The training exercise involves 15 Tatmadaw officers and 16 Indian Army counterparts. It said the training would be held at a recently opened facility at Umroi in northeastern Meghalaya State, from November 20 to 25.

- **NLD to focus on peace and Rakhine issues**³⁵

The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party will prioritise two key issues - the peace process and the Rakhine problem - until its term expires in 2020. Myo Nyunt, NLD spokesperson, said the two issues take precedence in the agenda over changing the 2008 Constitution. “To complete the peace process is one of the main political issues in Myanmar,” he told party members, government officials and guests at the NLD celebration of the 97th anniversary of the National Day on 14th November.

- **Tillerson says sanctions against Myanmar ‘not advisable’**³⁶

US Secretary of State Mr Rex Tillerson said the reimposition of economic sanctions against Myanmar in the wake of the Rakhine crisis would “not be advisable” at this time, following meetings with the country’s senior leaders on 15th November. “All of that has to

³²Talks between government and UNFC delayed, 17th November 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/talks-between-government-and-unfc-delayed.html>

³³ Twenty-seven parties criticise NLD prayer ceremonies as party promotion, 16th November 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/twenty-seven-parties-criticise-nld-prayer-ceremonies-party-promotion.html>

³⁴ Tatmadaw to train in India for UN peacekeeping duties: report, 19th November 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tatmadaw-to-train-in-india-for-un-peacekeeping-duties-report>

³⁵ NLD to focus on peace and Rakhine issues, 14th November 2017, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/nld-focus-peace-and-rakhine-issues.html>

³⁶ Tillerson says sanctions against Myanmar ‘not advisable’, 16th November 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tillerson-says-sanctions-against-myanmar-not-advisable>

be evidence-based,” Tillerson told a press conference in the capital. “If we have credible information that we believe to be very reliable that certain individuals were responsible for certain acts that we find unacceptable, then targets sanctions on individuals very well may be appropriate.”

- **Human trafficking ‘rife’ in Rohingya camps: aid agencies**³⁷

Women and children make up the majority of the more than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims who have fled violence in Myanmar for neighbouring Bangladesh, many escaping with only the clothes on their back and desperate to survive any way they can. Confined to congested tent cities near the border without any prospect of work, refugees are willing to take whatever comes their way -- and many have fallen prey to traffickers, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Young girls in particular are at high risk, with the IOM documenting cases of refugees being lured with promises of marriage or jobs in big cities.

- **UN urges end to Myanmar military campaign in Rakhine**³⁸

UN member-states on 16th November urged Myanmar authorities to end a military campaign against the Muslim Rohingya in a resolution adopted despite opposition from China, Russia and some regional neighbours. The General Assembly's human rights committee overwhelmingly endorsed the measure presented by Muslim countries by a vote of 135 to 10, with 26 countries abstaining.

North America

Canada

- **Defence Minister Sajjan touts Canada’s ‘increased role’ at Halifax security forum**

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan opened a security conference by saying Canada is embracing a more muscular approach to international security, touting a new peacekeeping strategy and increased military spending as signs of an “increased role.” Mr. Sajjan told the Halifax International Security Forum that Canada has shown initiative in a host of international conflicts, while maintaining its multilateral approach to foreign policy. Mr. Sajjan trumpeted several Canadian peacekeeping commitments unveiled during this week’s United Nations peacekeeping summit in Vancouver. They included offering soldiers, equipment and a feminist perspective on peace missions. The federal government has also promised to increase military spending by \$62 billion over the next two decades. Appearing on a panel with Sajjan, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Canada’s revitalized defence efforts, despite estimates suggesting its military spending still falls short of the alliance’s target of two per cent of GDP.³⁹

³⁷ Human trafficking ‘rife’ in Rohingya camps: aid agencies, 18th November 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-regional/human-trafficking-%E2%80%98rife%E2%80%99-rohingya-camps-aid-agencies>

³⁸ UN urges end to Myanmar military campaign in Rakhine, 17th November 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-international/un-urges-end-myanmar-military-campaign-rakhine>

³⁹ Adina Bresge, “Defence Minister Sajjan touts Canada’s ‘increased role’ at Halifax security forum,” <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/11/17/sajjan-tells-security-forum->

- **Canada's top general pushes back against critics of peacekeeping plan**

Canada's top general is forcefully rejecting the notion that Canada's new peacekeeping commitment isn't in line with the Liberal government's initial promise. Gen. Jonathan Vance, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, argues that the plan outlined days ago by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Vancouver is consistent with what was first discussed 14 months ago, when the government committed to providing up to 600 troops and 150 police officers for United Nations operations. The plan unveiled called for up to 200 ground troops, transport and armed helicopters, cargo planes and military trainers for future United Nations peacekeeping operations. Prime Minister Trudeau has said he wants Canada to make "smart pledges" around peacekeeping. The government was criticized for seemingly falling short of their initial promise. But the country's top general says that once you factor in the various quick-response deployments and training missions, Canada's new peacekeeping blueprint will live up to what the Liberals first put on the table.⁴⁰

- **Justin Trudeau set to head to China in December to open free trade talks**

Justin Trudeau is expected to announce he is heading to Beijing early next month to launch free trade talks with China. The trip has not been finalized but diplomatic sources suggest he will head east in the first week of December. The Prime Minister has just returned from Asia, where he committed Canada to the "core principles" of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement between 11 countries including Japan, Australia and New Zealand. But Canada remains reluctant to sign on to a final TPP agreement, specifically over concerns that weaker rules of origin on auto components than those in force under the North American Free Trade Agreement would complicate the ongoing NAFTA renegotiation with the United States and Mexico.⁴¹

- **The Government of Canada invests \$1.6 million to help Pacific Alliance countries combat climate change**

The Government of Canada continues to take a leadership role in tackling climate change and helping our country—and the world—create a cleaner global economy. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, announced that the Government of Canada will invest \$1.6 million to help the four Pacific Alliance countries address climate change. Established in 2011, the Pacific Alliance is a regional initiative by Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Minister McKenna highlighted the Government of Canada's commitment at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany. The \$1.6-million project will help the Pacific Alliance reduce climate pollutants, attract investment supporting climate actions, and help create a cleaner environment for Pacific Alliance countries, Canada—and the rest of the world. The project will also support the implementation of the Paris Agreement by strengthening Pacific Alliance

canada-will-deal-daesh-threats-from-afar-or-close-to-home.html, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴⁰ CBC News, "Canada's top general pushes back against critics of peacekeeping plan," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/jonathan-vance-peacekeeping-1.4409019>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴¹ John Ivison, "Justin Trudeau set to head to China in December to open free trade talks," <http://nationalpost.com/news/politics/exclusive-justin-trudeau-set-to-head-to-china-in-december-to-open-free-trade-talks>, Accessed on 20 November 2017

nations' climate actions and helping them develop measurable, reportable, and verifiable data.⁴²

The United States

- **US nuclear general says would resist 'illegal' Trump strike order**

The top U.S. nuclear commander said on Saturday that he would resist President Donald Trump if he ordered an "illegal" launch of nuclear weapons. Air Force General John Hyten, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), told an audience at the Halifax International Security Forum in Nova Scotia, Canada that he had given a lot of thought to what he would say if he received such an order. Hyten, who is responsible for overseeing the U.S. nuclear arsenal, explained the process that would follow such a command. Hyten said running through scenarios of how to react in the event of an illegal order was standard practice, and added: "If you execute an unlawful, you will go to jail. You could go to jail for the rest of your life." The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Hyten's remarks. They came after questions by U.S. senators, including Democrats and Trump's fellow Republicans, about Trump's authority to wage war, use nuclear weapons and enter into or end international agreements, amid concern that tensions over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs could lead to hostilities.⁴³

- **US and Poland agree \$10.5bn missile defence deal**

The US Department of State has approved a possible deal worth up to \$10.5bn to sell Patriot missile defence systems to Poland, American authorities said. The linchpin of Nato's eastern flank, Poland has been accelerating its drive to modernise its armed forces since Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula in neighbouring Ukraine in 2014. The central European country is one of the few members of the Nato alliance to spend 2 per cent of its GDP on defence, and last month pledged to raise defence spending to 2.5 per cent by 2030. Poland signed a "memorandum of intent" with the US on the long-awaited Patriot deal when President Donald Trump visited Warsaw in July. Antoni Macierewicz, the defence minister, said earlier this year that he expected a final deal would be agreed before the end of the year. The proposed sale includes four radar sets, four control stations, 16 launching stations, and 208 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles, the US Defense Security Co-operation Agency said. The systems are made by Raytheon, the US defence group.⁴⁴

- **US must invest in natural strategic partner India: Randall Schriver**

The US must continue to invest in its "natural strategic partner" India, nominee for assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall Schriver said,

⁴²----, "The Government of Canada invests \$1.6 million to help Pacific Alliance countries combat climate change," <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-government-of-canada-invests-16-million-to-help-pacific-alliance-countries-combat-climate-change-657765143.html>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴³ Reuters, "US nuclear general says would resist 'illegal' Trump strike order," <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/11/19/us-nuclear-general-says-would-resist-illegal-trump-strike-order.html>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴⁴ James Shotter, "US and Poland agree \$10.5bn missile defence deal," <https://www.ft.com/content/40037e72-cbe4-11e7-ab18-7a9fb7d6163e>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

noting that the security ties between the two nations was at "its strongest point in history". Addressing the US lawmakers during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Schriver said the overall relationship between the two nations had strengthened significantly during the last decade. Mr. Schriver said it is particularly important that the two expand their co-operation on regional and global security issues, including supporting the US' South Asia strategy and contributing in Afghanistan; expand defence trade under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative; and advance the interoperability of the two militaries to enable strong cooperation.⁴⁵

- **US Congress approves defence bill, Rs 35 bn CSF for Pakistan**

The US Congress overwhelmingly authorised \$700 billion in national defense spending for next year, a substantial increase over Donald Trump's request, and sent the measure to the president for his signature. The bill has allocated Rs35 billion for Pakistan under the Coalition Support Fund (CSF). The CSF is a US Defense Department program to reimburse allies that have incurred costs in supporting counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency operations. Regular payments to Pakistan under the CSF programme began in 2001, when Pakistan joined the US-led coalition in Afghanistan as a "frontline ally" Pakistan in March this year received US\$350 million under CSF, the State Bank of Pakistan said in a statement. The National Defense Authorisation Act of 2018 is a negotiated compromise between the two chambers of Congress. The US Senate passed it on a unanimous voice vote, two days after it cleared the House on a vote of 356 to 70. The bill is some \$26 billion above Trump's initial military budget requests, and about 15 percent higher than the authorization in 2016, the last full year of Barack Obama's presidency. It provides for \$626 billion in base budget requirements, \$66 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations, or warfighting, and an additional \$8 billion for other defense activities. \$4.9 billion is reserved for Afghanistan security forces, including a program integrating women into the country's national defense. The figure is substantially more than Trump's baseline missile defense request, at a time of heightened tensions with North Korea over its testing of nuclear devices and ballistic missiles.⁴⁶

- **Trump administration updates demands as NAFTA talks continue**

President Trump's top trade official has issued new objectives for renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement — including some likely to irk Canada and Mexico, as well as the U.S. recording industry and other major business interests, as talks continue this weekend. There are few surprises in the 17-page document, given recent revelations and sharp words from NAFTA negotiators. But the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, or USTR, made some notable additions and changes to the blueprint it initially outlined in July, a month before talks began, adding a fresh degree of uncertainty to the talks. Among the updated goals is new language that the U.S. would seek to limit liability for Internet giants like Google, Facebook and Comcast that host or transmit online content — a move that will be bitterly opposed by the U.S. music and recording

⁴⁵ PTI, "US must invest in natural strategic partner India: Randall Schriver," <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-must-invest-in-natural-strategic-partner-india-randall-schriver/articleshow/61682168.cms>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴⁶ Geo TV, "US Congress approves defence bill, Rs35bn CSF for Pakistan," <https://www.geo.tv/latest/168222-us-congress-approves-defence-bill-csf-for-pakistan>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

industry, whose sales have been battered by piracy. U.S. officials explicitly stated, for example, that it would work to eliminate “unjustified measures” limiting U.S. dairy products’ access to Canadian markets. And, for apparent emphasis, the USTR inserted that one of its major goals — along with reducing the trade deficit with NAFTA countries — would be addressing import and export monopolies that distort trade. The latest summary does not say that the U.S. intends to eliminate the so-called investor-state dispute settlement element in NAFTA, but newly inserted language suggests that rulings by the tribunal would be subject to U.S. government review and possible overrule. The change will be as much hated by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has insisted that such investor protections are necessary, as Canada or Mexico.⁴⁷

Mexico

- **Mexico readying economic response if U.S. exits NAFTA**

Mexico’s government is preparing a macroeconomic response in case U.S. President Donald Trump makes good on threats to quit the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an event which could wreak havoc on the Mexican economy and hurt the peso. Mexico’s Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray said the government and central bank were preparing a plan to address the possibility of a future without NAFTA, but gave few details. The government has said it is examining how it could adjust Mexican legislation to give investors certainty about their investments if the almost 24-year-old NAFTA collapses. Underpinning some \$1.3 trillion in annual trade between the United States, Canada and Mexico, NAFTA has been a central pillar of recent Mexican economic development. Nearly 80 percent of Mexican exports are shipped to the United States. Trade negotiators from the United States, Mexico and Canada meet in Mexico City this week to continue talks on overhauling the accord, and Videgaray reiterated the government’s position that the expectation was that talks would ultimately succeed. Mexico would continue to work on diversifying trade, protect foreign investment, review possible changes to tariff barriers, and prepare a macro-economic response from the finance ministry and the central bank, Videgaray added.⁴⁸

- **Mexico 2018: It’s Not the Economy, Stupid**

Emerging media consensus is that Mexico’s Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) will likely name Treasury Secretary José Antonio Meade as its candidate for president in 2018. Such a move would serve the unpopular ruling party on two fronts: it would muffle inherent opposition to the PRI as an institution (Meade is not a party member), and it would give them an ideal standard-bearer to carry forward their economic message (Meade has been treasury secretary for two parties and is highly regarded by the country’s business elite). On this second front, the PRI has a decent case to make. The economy is stable, structural reforms seem to be bearing fruit and, NAFTA aside, there are no major storm clouds on the horizon. Will this be enough to shift voters’ focus next July?

⁴⁷ Don Lee, “Trump administration updates demands as NAFTA talks continue,” <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-nafta-updated-objectives-20171118-story.html>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁴⁸ Ana Isabel Martinez, “Mexico readying economic response if U.S. exits NAFTA,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-nafta-mexico/mexico-readying-economic-response-if-u-s-exits-nafta-idUSKBN1DD2KU>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

Unfortunately for the PRI, the answer is probably not. The race for Mexico's presidency in 2018 looks to be about two things: crime and corruption. Or, put more simply, impunity. The candidates will have to compete to convince voters not just that they are capable of dealing with corruption and crime, but that they are genuine in their desire to do so. This goes not only for the presidential candidate, but also for contenders in the race for mayor in Mexico City, in eight state governor's races and in a handful of important legislative posts. The 2018 election will depend on who is most successful in this effort.⁴⁹

- **EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement renegotiation moving forward as NAFTA talks sputter**

Unlike the NAFTA negotiations, discussions to modernize the Global Agreement between the EU and Mexico are proceeding steadily, such that the parties are still adhering to their objective of reaching an agreement in principle by the end of 2017. A fifth round of negotiations took place in Brussels at the end of September, followed by an important intercessional meeting in mid-October. A sixth round of negotiations is scheduled for the end of November in Mexico. The parties report achieving progress in the areas of customs and trade facilitation, rules of origin, good regulatory practice, technical barriers to trade, digital trade, and investment. However, further work remains in the thornier areas of public procurement, dispute settlement, geographical indications, and the sectoral annexes for automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and wines.⁵⁰

Russia

- **Russia and India**

Commerce and industry minister Suresh Prabhu met Russia's Minister for Economic Development Maxim Oreshkin in Moscow on 16 November and discussed the current level of trade between the countries and ways for its enhancement. The next day, they discussed ways to boost bilateral trade and investments to strengthen economic ties. They also discussed opportunities that the fast growing economy of India provides for doing business, particularly in the field of manufacturing. Prabhu is on a visit to Russia from November 15-17, to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting of the ministers of member states responsible for foreign economy and trade. This is the first ministerial conference on trade organised by the organisation after India became a full member in June. He also met the Member of Board (Minister) for Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EaEC), Veronika Nikishina and discussed early start of negotiations of the proposed free trade agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Commission. A joint feasibility report on the proposed agreement was completed last year. It concluded that the proposed pact is feasible and mutually beneficial with substantial potential welfare gains and augmentation of trade in goods. In

⁴⁹ Macario Schettino, "Mexico 2018: It's Not the Economy, Stupid," <http://americasquarterly.org/content/mexico-2018-its-not-economy-stupid>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁵⁰ ----, "Eu-Mexico Free Trade Agreement renegotiation moving forward as NAFTA talks sputter," <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=f25a7fb4-5c0e-4d9d-b09b-f08be9685a79>, Accessed on 20 November 2017.

regard to ease of doing business, priority areas for investing in India are like financing in the nuclear energy sector, natural gas and railways.⁵¹

- **Russia and the US**

Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and a senior White House adviser, is under increasing scrutiny in the myriad investigations into Russian interference in the U.S. election. Leaders of the Senate Judiciary Committee revealed on 16 November that Kushner failed to hand over a document about a "Russian backdoor overture" — nor did he provide investigators with a September 2016 email he was sent about WikiLeaks or communications the campaign forwarded to him from a Russian-born businessman. Kushner has long been a flashpoint in the controversy over Trump's alleged ties to Russia. He spearheaded the campaign's formidable data and analytics operation, under scrutiny as congressional investigators work to determine the extent to which Russia leveraged social media platforms in its interference campaign.⁵²

On November 16, Brian Hook, the State Department's director of policy planning, told the Center for Strategic & International Studies' Transatlantic Forum On Russia that Moscow's actions in the war with Georgia in 2008 and more recently in Ukraine are "violations of the UN Charter and of multiple articles of the Helsinki Final Act." He said that Russia's actions over the past decade have shown that Moscow's willingness to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations is "real" and not "simply rhetorical." Hook said the risks to Europe from Russia were similar to those faced by the West during the Cold War. He said that "The great difference between the Russia of today and its Soviet form is that it lacks an ideological coherence that informs its actions. But Russia is nonetheless a serious rival."⁵³

- **Russia and UK**

Addressing leading business figures at a banquet in London, Prime Minister Theresa May launched her strongest attack on Russia yet, accusing Moscow of meddling in elections and carrying out cyber espionage. She said that Russia was "planting fake stories" to "sow discord in the West". She added that while the UK did not want "perpetual confrontation" with Russia, it would protect its interests. In her message to Russian President Vladimir Putin, she said that Putin must choose a very "different path" from the one that in recent years had seen Moscow annex Crimea, foment conflict in Ukraine and launch cyber attacks on governments and Parliaments across Europe. She said as the UK left the EU and charted a new course in the world, it remained absolutely committed to Nato and securing a Brexit deal which "strengthens our liberal values", adding that a strong

⁵¹"India, Russia discuss ways to boost trade, investments", *Hindustan Times*, November 17, 2017. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/india-russia-discuss-ways-to-boost-trade-investments/story-bx7dSd1iTQm7CHrqIESxVO.html> Accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁵²Katie Bo Williams, "Kushner under scrutiny in Russian probe", *The Hill*, November 19, 2017. <http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/360951-kushner-under-scrutiny-in-russian-probe> Accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁵³Mark Najarian, "Senior U.S. Official Warns Of Russia's 'Clear, Real' Threat To The West", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, November 16, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/us-diplomat-russia-real-threat-brian-hook/28858347.html> Accessed on November 20, 2017.

economic partnership between the UK and EU would be a bulwark against Russian agitation in Europe.⁵⁴

- **Russia and Latin America**

During the framework of a meeting between the minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Argentina, Sergey Lavrov and Jorge Faurie in Russia on 17 November, both the countries expressed their desire to expand bilateral trade, primarily regarding the entry of Argentinean meat in the Russian market, increasing investments in energy and moving ahead with common projects in scientific-technological areas and biotechnology. During the meeting, while Faurie sought to open the Russian market to Argentinean meat, Lavrov stressed the need to increase Russian investments in Argentina, specifically in sectors such as renewable energy and conventional energy.⁵⁵

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **'Peace Talks' Meeting Postponed After UAE Denies Taliban Visas**

A meeting scheduled to be held in Dubai on Afghanistan's peace process was reportedly postponed after Taliban representatives from their Qatar office were refused United Arab Emirates visas. The meeting was scheduled to have taken place in the first week of November but according to sources; ongoing tension between Qatar and a number of Arab countries was the reason for the UAE refusing to issue Taliban representatives visas. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid however told TOLO news in a telephone interview that the group was not aware of the latest development. He said the Taliban had not agreed to attend the Dubai meeting. In recent years, holding peace talks with the Taliban has always been one of the main plans of the Afghan government.⁵⁶

- **US congress passes new bill regarding Pakistan and Haqqani network**

The US congress has passed a new amended law regarding Pakistan and the notorious Haqqani terrorist network, it has been reported. According to the new bill passed by the Congress, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2018, Pakistan is obliged to work with the Afghan government and Washington for the elimination of the safe havens of the terror network in its soil. Passed on 16 November 2017 the bill includes \$700 billion for the US defense needs for the year 2018 as well as \$700 million on Coalition Support Fund for Pakistan. However, the US Congress has said half of the funds from the

⁵⁴“Theresa May accuses Vladimir Putin of election meddling”, *BC*, November 14, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-41973043> Accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁵⁵“Argentina: Country And Russia Intend To Expand Trade And Investments”, *Business Insider*, November 17, 2017. <http://markets.businessinsider.com/news/interestrates/ARGENTINA-Country-And-Russia-Intend-To-Expand-Trade-And-Investments-1008683884> Accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁵⁶ Tamim Hamid, “Peace Talks' Meeting Postponed After UAE Denies Taliban Visas”, *Tolonews*, 13 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/pugwash-meeting-postponed-after-uae-denies-taliban-visas> accessed on 14 November 2017.

Coalition Support Fund amounting to \$350 million will be withheld and will be released only when the US defense secretary certifies Pakistan's steps against the Haqqani terrorist network. This comes as the Afghan and US officials have long been insisting that the leadership councils of the Taliban and the notorious Haqqani terrorist network are based in the key cities of Pakistan from where they plan and coordinate attacks in Afghanistan.⁵⁷

- **Afghanistan Ranks 2nd Worst in the World On New Terrorism Index**

A global study by the Institute for Peace and Economics has ranked Afghanistan the 2nd worst country, out of 163, in terms of terrorism in the world. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) put Iraq at number one and Afghanistan at number two, followed by Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen – in that order. GTI Indicators on terrorism attacks in Afghanistan for 2016 stood at: a) Incidents - 1,342, b) Fatalities – 4,574, and c) Injuries – 5,057. Based on the report, Afghanistan had the second highest number of deaths from terrorism in 2016. However this was 14 percent lower than the previous year, in part due to reduced terrorist activity by the Taliban, the report stated. While this reduction provides some hope, the number of deaths recorded in 2016 was the second highest recorded from terrorism incidents in Afghanistan since the ousting of the Taliban regime in 2001. The report indicates that the Taliban was responsible for 94 percent of attacks by known groups in Afghanistan in 2016. The report stated that this trend reflects the move by the Taliban to engage in more traditional conflict tactics against the Afghan security forces and focus instead on territorial gains rather than terrorist activities. The report was released however at a time that Daesh in Afghanistan has significantly increased attacks – particularly on mosques and other civilian targets.⁵⁸

- **UNODC Survey Finds Opium Production Up By 87% this Year**

Afghan opium production has jumped a by a staggering 87 percent in the past year – from an estimated 2016 level of 4,800 tons to about 9,000 in 2017. According to the United National Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this year's survey found a “disappointing reversal of last year has become a profoundly alarming trend in the cultivation and production of opium in the country.”

UNODC's survey found the total area under poppy cultivation has jumped by 63 percent or 127,000 hectares compared to 2016. In 2017, the total area of cultivation is 328,000 hectares.⁵⁹

- **RECCA-VII Reiterates Prosperous Afghan Economy**

Second vice president Sarwar Danish on November 15, 2017, said Afghanistan could overcome its challenges with cooperation of regional countries. Danish was addressing

⁵⁷ “US congress passes new bill regarding Pakistan and Haqqani network”, *Khaama Press*, 19 November 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/us-congress-passes-new-bill-regarding-pakistan-and-haqqani-network-03877> accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁵⁸ Samim Faramarz, “Afghanistan Ranks 2nd Worst In The World On New Terrorism Index”, *Tolonews*, 16 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/afghanistan-ranks-2nd-worst-world-new-terrorism-index> accessed on 20 November 2017.

⁵⁹ Samim Faramarz “UNODC Survey Finds Opium Production Up By 87% This Year”, *Tolo News*, November 15, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/unodc-survey-finds-opium-production-87-year> (accessed on November 19)

participants of the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECCA-VII) in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat on the second and last day of the event. The participants emphasized upon facilitating transit, transportation and trade, women's empowerment and strengthening cooperation among investors and traders.⁶⁰

- **3,000 More US Troops Arrive in Afghanistan, Pentagon Says**

At least 3,000 additional American troops have been sent in to Afghanistan under US President Donald Trump's Afghan strategy, the Pentagon said on November 16, 2017. Pentagon had previously put the number of US forces in the country at about 11,000 but Trump in August authorized an increase requested by the commander on the ground, General John Nicholson.

"In Afghanistan the number we've been working with has been approximately 11,000," Joint Staff Director Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie told Pentagon reporters. "As you know, we've just completed a force flow into Afghanistan."⁶¹

- **Lawmakers Call IEC Chief Ahmadzai's Removal Against the Law**

Some Wolesi Jirga members on Saturday alleged that the dismissal of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) Chief Najibullah Ahmadzai was against the law and accused the government of attempting to engineer the upcoming polls through these efforts. The elections for the Wolesi Jirga or lower house of the Parliament are scheduled for July 18, 2018. On November 15, 2017, President Ashraf Ghani had removed Najibullah Ahmadzai as the head of the IEC through a presidential decree.⁶²

- **CEO Abdullah meets US VP Pence**

The Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah on November 18, 2017, met with the US Vice President Mike Pence in Washington where they discussed political and security environment and terror havens outside the country, the White House said. This was the first high-profile meeting between representatives of the two countries held at White House after the new US administration outlined its new South Asia strategy in August. "They also focused on president Trump's South Asia strategy and its beneficial impact on the security situation in Afghanistan," the White House said.⁶³

Bangladesh

- **AL, BNP gear up for polls**

With the next national polls a year away, the ruling Awami League is scaling up its organisational activities while the BNP is focused on drumming up support for a non-

⁶⁰ "RECCA-VII Reiterates Prosperous Afghan Economy", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 16, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19466 (accessed on November 19)

⁶¹ "3,000 More US Troops Arrive In Afghanistan, Pentagon Says", *Tolo News*, November 17, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/3000-more-us-troops-arrive-afghanistan-pentagon-says> (accessed on November 20)

⁶² "Lawmakers call IEC chief Ahmadzai's removal against the law", *Pajhwok Afghan News*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/11/18/lawmakers-call-iec-chief-ahmadzai%E2%80%99s-removal-against-law> (accessed on November 19)

⁶³ "CEO Abdullah meets US VP Pence", *Afghanistan Times*, November 19, 2017, <http://afghanistantimes.af/ceo-abdullah-meets-us-vp-pence/> (accessed on November 19)

partisan election-time government. Though the two major political camps remain rigid on their stances over the contentious issue of polls-time administration, they have started making preparations for the 11th parliamentary election, say leaders of both the parties.⁶⁴

- **China wants to facilitate bilateral dialogue**

China is willing to facilitate a dialogue between Myanmar and Bangladesh to resolve the Rohingya crisis. Talking to a small group of journalists, the Chinese minister said the actions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) must help Bangladesh and Myanmar address the crisis as quickly as possible through bilateral consultations. “The UNSC action should not complicate the situation and make things more difficult to resolve,” he said.⁶⁵

- **US reaffirms its support to resolve Rohingya crisis**

Describing Myanmar army's atrocities on Rohingya people in Rakhaine State as 'war crime' and 'basic violation of human rights', the visiting US senators on Sunday (November 19) assured Bangladesh of extending all-out US support to it in resolving the crisis, UNB reports. The assurance came when a delegation of the US Senate, led by Senator Jeff Markley, met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Ganobhaban.⁶⁶

- **Govt, ADB ink \$260 m loan deal for infrastructure development**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Bangladesh on Sunday (November 19) signed agreements for \$260 million in loans to help sustain and increase infrastructure investments in Bangladesh as well as renewable energy interventions. The assistance forms the first tranche of \$526 million multi-tranche ADB loans for the Third Public-Private Infrastructure Development Facility (PPIDF 3).⁶⁷

- **China to support Bangladesh in earning middle income status**

China will continue to contribute and extend full support to Bangladesh in its effort to be a middle income country by 2021, said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. “We know that the current priority for Bangladesh is to speed up development to deliver a better life to its people and become a middle-income country by 2021,” Yi said at the Chinese embassy in Dhaka on Saturday (November 18).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ “AL, BNP gear up for polls,” Daily Star, November 18, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/al-bnp-gear-polls-1492825> (accessed on November 18, 2017)

⁶⁵ “China wants to facilitate bilateral dialogue,” Daily Star, November 19, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/mayanmar-rohingya-refugee-crisis-bangladesh-lauded-its-generosity-1493101> (accessed on November 19, 2017)

⁶⁶ “US reaffirms its support to resolve Rohingya crisis,” The Independent, November 19, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/124379> (accessed on November 19, 2017)

⁶⁷ “Govt, ADB ink \$260 m loan deal for infrastructure dev,” The Independent, November 19, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/124393> (accessed on November 19, 2017)

⁶⁸ “China to support Bangladesh in earning middle income status,” Daily Star, November 20, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/china-support-bangladesh-earning-middle-income-status-1493728> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

नेपाल

- सभी दलों ने चुनावी घोषणापत्र में समावेशी तत्व को वरीयता दी:

नेपाल के सभी बड़े दलों ने आगामी चुनावों में समावेशी तत्व को प्रमुख रूप से स्थान दिया है ,नेपाली कांग्रेस . माओवादी केंद्र ,एमालेऔर मधेशी दलों ने संविधान के उन प्रावधानों का सख्ती से लागुकरण की बात कही है जिससे महिलाओंपिछड़े वर्गों और अल्पसंख्यक वर्गों को ,थारुओं ,मुस्लिमों ,मूल निवासियों ,मधेशियों ,दलितों , .आनुपातिक प्रतिनिधित्व दिया जा सके⁶⁹

- भूतपूर्व प्रधानमंत्री कीर्ति निधि बिष्ट का निधन:

वे काफी समय से ,नवम्बर को हुआ 11 वर्षीय भूतपूर्व प्रधानमंत्री कीर्ति निधि बिष्ट का निधन काठमांडू में 90 में नरेश ज्ञानेंद्र के प्रत्यक्ष शासन काल में वे 2005 वर्ष .वे पंचायती काल में तीन बार प्रधानमन्त्री रहे .बीमार थे .प्रधानमन्त्री देउबा और अन्य गणमान्य लोगों ने इस मौके पर श्रद्धांजलि प्रकट की .केबिनेट के उपाध्यक्ष भी रहे⁷⁰

- देउबा के लिए चुनाव में कड़ी चुनौती:

नेपाल के प्रधानमन्त्री शेर बहादुर देउबा पांच बार संसद में चुन कर आ चुके हैं और चार बार वे प्रधानमन्त्री बन चुके हैं लेकिन इस बार के चुनावों .में उनके लिए कड़ी चुनौती मानी जा रही हैवे अपने घरेलु निर्वाचन क्षेत्र . अभी हाल ही में बना वाम गठबंधन और कांग्रेस में बढ़ती दूरियां उनके लिए .दादेलधुरा से चुनाव लड़ रहे हैं .चुनौती रहेगी⁷¹

- ओली और दहाल ने सरकार के मनमर्जी से कार्य करने का आरोप लगाया:

वाम दलों एमाले और माओवादी केंद्र ने सरकार द्वारा बुद्धि गण्डकी हाइड्रो पावर प्रोजेक्ट जो कि चीन के साथ समझौते से चल रहा थावाम दलों ने एक चुनावी सभा को संबोधित करते .उसे रद्द करने पर आलोचना की है , हुए कहा कि चीन की कम्पनी के साथ हुए समझौते को रद्द करना सरकार की बड़ी भूल है.⁷²

Pakistan

- **US and Pakistan** - United States Central Command (Centcom) Commander Gen Joseph Votel who visited Pakistan on a two day visit (15th and 16th November) in which he held a series of meetings with senior Pakistani military commanders, including Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa, reinforced the perception that Pakistan and the US had not been able to narrow their trust deficit despite a series of high-level meetings. Gen Votel, according to a US Embassy statement, "stressed the

⁶⁹ "Parties priorities inclusion in manifesto", The Himalayan Times, 12 November 2017, http://epaper.thehimalayantimes.com/textview_4927_5340_4_1_1_12-11-2017_71_0.html.

⁷⁰ "PM Kirti Nidhi Bisht Passes away", The Himalayan Times, 12 November 2017, http://epaper.thehimalayantimes.com/textview_4927_5342_4_1_1_12-11-2017_71_0.html

⁷¹ Kamal Dev Bhattari, "Challenges galore for 5 time MP, 4 time PM deuba", The Kathmandu Post, 13 November 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-11-13/1>

⁷² "Oli, Dahal accuse govt of working 'on a whim'", The Kathmandu Post, 16 November 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-11-16/1>

Administration's message that Pakistan must prevent all militants from operating within and across its borders". It was essentially the reiteration of the demand for action against the alleged "safe havens".⁷³ The United States has also asked Pakistan to repeal its blasphemy laws. At the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) held in Geneva on November 13th, US representative Jesse Bernstein recommended that Pakistan must "undertake, track and report" investigation and prosecution of security forces who commit human rights violations and abuses. The UK agreed with the issue of Pakistan's lack of freedom for its religious minorities. India, represented by Sumit Seth, urged Pakistan to provide freedom to the people of Pakistan occupied Kashmir by ending "illegal and forcible occupation". It soon followed with a recommendation to dismantle special terrorist zones, safe havens and sanctuaries and take verifiable actions, including on "terror financing".⁷⁴

- **Protest of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah** – Hundreds of members of the radical group Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah has been protesting against amending Khatam e Nabuwat clause in Election Act 2017 for the last week by staging a sit-in protest in and around the Faizabad Interchange area, which remain to be the entry point to Islamabad. The participants' leadership has also threatened to block all airports, railway stations and major roads if law minister Zahid Hamid is not removed from his post, a demand seemingly unacceptable for the government. The proposal of sending the law minister on leave or changing his portfolio has also been unacceptable to the protestors. Minister for Interior and Planning Ahsan Iqbal alleged on November 15th that there were a couple of people among those participating in the sit-in who were inciting violence and carrying weapons so that there could be violence and an emergency-like situation. The government seemed reluctant to take action against the participants of the sit-in at Faizabad Interchange as the residents of the twin cities of Faizabad and Islamabad continued facing hardship due to the road closures.⁷⁵

Indian Ocean Region

Sri Lanka

- **Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates visits Sri Lanka**

⁷³ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan, US trade blame over cross-border terrorism", *Dawn*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1371015> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

⁷⁴ Xari Jalil, "US urges Pakistan to repeal blasphemy laws", *Dawn*,

⁷⁵ "Protesters in no mood to pack up", *The Nation*, November 11, 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2017/protesters-in-no-mood-to-pack-up> (accessed on November 20, 2017); Aamir Yasin & Munawer Azeem, "Govt reluctant to remove protesters", *Dawn*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1370308/govt-reluctant-to-remove-protesters> (accessed on November 20, 2017); Ikram Junaidi & Malik Asad, "IHC gives capital administration 24 hours to clear Faizabad", *Dawn*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1371206> (accessed on November 20, 2017); Mahmood Idrees, "Govt succumbing to Islamabad protesters as ready to change Hamid's portfolio", *Daily Pakistan*, November 20, 2017, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/govt-succumbing-to-islamabad-protesters-as-ready-to-change-hamids-portfolio/> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was in Sri Lanka on 18th November as a part of his Asian Tour. During his visit, Minister Al Nahyan paid Courtesy calls on President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and had bilateral discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tilak Marapana.

Matters related to political affairs, trade and investment opportunities between Sri Lanka and the UAE were discussed during the bilateral meeting. Ministers agreed on several initiatives to strengthen cultural cooperation and employment prospects for Sri Lankan workers in the UAE, which will further expand the relations between the two countries. Sri Lanka invited the UAE investors to invest in Sri Lanka, especially in infrastructure projects which will support Sri Lanka's endeavours to emerge as a maritime hub in the Indian Ocean.⁷⁶

- **Prime Minister warns of stern action against extremists**

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe warned that stern action will be taken against extremists who attempt to create discord among the communities. The Prime Minister said that the relevant authorities are keeping a close watch on such extremist groups. He said this during a visit to Gintota on 19th to inspect the damage caused by the violence in the area and to meet with the affected families. The Prime Minister said that some individuals used social media to spread false information with regards to the Gintota incident and attempted to ignite communal clashes in the country⁷⁷.

- **US concerned by reports of abuses by security forces members**

The US recently said it was concerned by reports of abuses by members of the security forces and by reports of increased violence against religious minorities in Sri Lanka. In its remarks at the third Universal Periodic Review of Sri Lanka in Geneva on 15th the US commended Sri Lanka's commitment to promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights. Meanwhile, the UK said it welcomed the progress on human rights and reconciliation in Sri Lanka including UN Human Rights Council engagement and the establishment of an Office of Missing Persons⁷⁸.

- **TNA says anyone is free to leave the Tamil alliance**

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has said that anyone can leave the Tamil alliance. TNA leaders told Tamil media heads that the door to the TNA remains open for anyone to join them. However the TNA said that, at the same time, anyone is free to leave the alliance. The TNA said this in response to a question raised of the EPRL possibly

⁷⁶ Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates visits Sri Lanka, 18 November 2017, <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/en/media/media-releases/7261-sheikh-abdullah-bin-zayed-al-nahyan-minister-of-foreign-affairs-and-international-cooperation-of-the-united-arab-emirates-visits-sri-lanka>

⁷⁷ Prime Minister warns of stern action against extremists, 19 November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/19/prime-minister-warns-of-stern-action-against-extremists/>

⁷⁸ US concerned by reports of abuses by security forces members, 18th November 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/US-concerned-by-reports-of-abuses-by-security-forces-members-140618.html>

leaving the TNA. The EPRL has already indicated it will contest the Local Government elections separately and not with the TNA⁷⁹.

- **No proposals to overcome country's economic crisis: MR**

While claiming that fraud and corruption of the government had put the country into an economic crisis, former President and MP Mahinda Rajapaksa said no plan had been proposed in the budget or future development programmes by the President and the Prime Minister to come out of it. Speaking during the budget debate, he said the debt obtained by the government during the last three years had increased by Rs. 2,773 billion from Rs. 7,391 in 2014 to Rs. 10,164 billion⁸⁰.

- **Removal of Thonda's name: India to take up with SL**

India will take up with Sri Lanka the issue of reported removal of the name of a revered leader of Indian Tamils S. Thondaman from government institutions, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj assured Tamil Nadu's DMK working president MK Stalin, the Press Trust of India reported. The assurance came after the DMK leader flagged the issue with Swaraj. He "Requested the MEA @SushmaSwaraj to raise India's concerns over the removal of Thiru. Savumiamoorthy Thondaman's name from Sri Lankan government institutions with their government. The revered leader of Hill Country Tamils must continue to be recognised for his immense contributions," Stalin tweeted⁸¹.

Maldives

- **IS terror suspects were planning suicide attack in Malé**

Two Maldivian men charged with terrorism were planning to carry out a suicide attack in the capital Malé, officials confirmed. Ishag Ali, from Madduvari island in Raa atoll, and Hussein Afeef, from Fuvahmulah City in the southern Maldives, were named by prosecutors and are alleged by police to have connections to the Islamic State group operating out of Syria and Iraq. The two men are charged with planning and attempting to take part in a suicide attack⁸².

- **Ruling party claims opposition 'not as united' as they appear**

Ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM)'s deputy leader and Fonadhoo MP Abdul Raheem Abdullah on 18th claimed that the joint opposition is not as united as they appear, and that every leader in the coalition is vying for presidency. Speaking at the ceremony held in capital Male to mark the fourth anniversary of the PPM government, MP Abdul Raheem said that the opposition leaders do not have their "stories straight" and that this proves that they are not as strong as they claim. "Some [opposition leaders] are claiming

⁷⁹ TNA says anyone is free to leave the Tamil alliance, 18th November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/18/tna-says-anyone-is-free-to-leave-the-tamil-alliance/>

⁸⁰ No proposals to overcome country's economic crisis: MR, 16 November 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/No-proposals-to-overcome-country-s-economic-crisis-MR-140532.html>

⁸¹ Removal of Thonda's name: India to take up with SL, 16 November 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Removal-of-Thonda-s-name-India-to-take-up-with-SL-140523.html>

⁸² IS terror suspects were planning suicide attack in Malé, 15th November 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/is-terror-suspects-were-planning-suicide-attack-in-male-134224>

that an interim president should be in office for a year, whilst others are saying that he should be elected for four years. And then there are those that are refraining from discussing the matter at all, claiming that ‘it’s too early’ to discuss an interim presidency,” PPM’s deputy leader said⁸³.

- **Govt allots MVR85 mln for presidential elections, MVR24 mln for political parties**

Government has allotted MVR 85 million as expenditure for the presidential elections and another MVR 24.2 million for the political parties, in the new budget proposed to the parliament on 14th. Proposing the budget to the parliament, finance minister Ahmed Munawar stated that political parties are allotted a sum of MVR 24.2 million in the new state budget. This is a decrease of MVR 3 million compared to this year, when the state budget gave a total of MVR 27 million to the parties⁸⁴.

- **People will start living in the 62 residential towers by 2019 : President Yameen**

President Yameen has inaugurated “Hiyaa”, a housing project by the government of Maldives. The project aims to provide housing for more than 80,000 people. Speaking at the ceremony held last night to launch the project, the President said that 62 towers will be built in this project. President said that government companies, private companies and two foreign companies are taking part in this project. He said that the government has provided sovereign guarantee to the two foreign companies⁸⁵.

West Asia

Israel

- **Israel and Arab States** - Lebanese newspaper *Al-Akhbar* reported on November 14th about an official document of the Saudi Foreign Ministry, that it claims includes a road map towards rejuvenating the 2002 Saudi Peace Initiative and hints at meetings and understandings between Israeli and Saudi officials. According to the leaks, Washington aims to mediate a peace agreement between Israel and the oil-rich kingdom. The document, said to be signed by Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, also allegedly confirms mutual visits by senior officials including the rumored visit of the Saudi Crown Prince to Tel Aviv. The Lebanese paper is alleged to be aligned with Hezbollah and has a history of fabrications.⁸⁶ Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman on November 18th urged moderate Arab

⁸³ Ruling party claims opposition ‘not as united’ as they appear, 19 November 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/ruling-party-claims-opposition-not-as-united-as-they-appear/>

⁸⁴ Govt allots MVR85 mln for presidential elections, MVR24 mln for political parties, 16th November 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/govt-allots-mvr85-mln-for-presidential-elections-mvr24-mln-for-political-parties/>

⁸⁵ People will start living in the 62 residential towers by 2019 : President Yameen, 19 November 2017, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/9341>

⁸⁶ Yasser Okbi & Maariv, “Report: Saudi document lays out plans for peace with Israel”, *The Jerusalem Post*, November 17, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Report-Saudi-document-lays-out-plans-for-peace-with-Israel-514200> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

nations to make peace with Israel in order to better confront the threat posed by Iran.⁸⁷

- **Lost Tribes of Israel** - Members of two “lost tribes” — 162 people from India’s Bnei Menashe and 69 from Ethiopia — arrived in Israel on November 16th to reunite with family members and make new lives in the country. Among those greeting the new arrivals at the airport were Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, Deputy Finance Minister Yitzhak Cohen, and Michael Freund, founder and chairman of Shavei Israel, a nonprofit dedicated to strengthening ties with descendants of Jews around the world. The children will begin school in the next few days while the adults will start intensive Hebrew language lessons.⁸⁸

Iran

- **Focus on Kermanshah Province of Iran after the Powerful Earthquake**

On November 12, 2017, at around at 9:48 p.m., a powerful earthquake struck near the border of Iran and Iraq. This earthquake has so far killed more than 500 people and injured thousands. Recorded at 7.3 magnitude⁸⁹, the effect of this earthquake was also felt in far away locations in Turkey and Pakistan. This earthquake is considered as the strongest so far to hit in the western part of Iran.⁹⁰

The timing and location of this deadly earthquake could potentially trigger a political issue within Iran. This earthquake has hit on the backdrop of ongoing controversy of Independence Referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan and at a time when Trump administration has declined to certify the nuclear deal, threatening the re-introduction of the waived sanctions on Iran. Also, this earthquake on the Iran-Iraq border has hit the Kermanshah Province of Iran, which is part of Iranian Kurdistan. Any slackness on part of the Iranian authorities in providing relief measures could have potential political backlash.

Perhaps realising this, after the visit of Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani to the quake hit province, a week after the earthquake, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei also made an unannounced visit⁹¹ to the quake hit region in the city of Sar-Pul-e-Zahab in Kermanshah on early hours of November 20, 2017. During his visit, Khamenei oversaw the relief efforts in the area. Sympathising with the earthquake victims, Khamenei said, “I share the grief of every single heart here. I wish we could visit you at a better time.”⁹²

⁸⁷ “Lieberman urges Arab nations to make peace with Israel and confront Iran”, *The Times of Israel*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-urges-arab-nations-to-make-peace-with-israel-and-confront-iran/> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

⁸⁸ “231 immigrants from two ‘lost tribes’ arrive in Israel”, *The Times of Israel*, November 16, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/231-immigrants-from-two-lost-tribes-arrive-in-israel/> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

⁸⁹ *The New York Times*, “Iran-Iraq Earthquake Kills More Than 500,” November 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-earthquake.html?_r=0, accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Official Website of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, “I’ve overseen officials’ relief efforts since the hour after the earthquake,” November 20, 2017, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/5282/I-ve-overseen-officials-relief-efforts-since-the-hour-after>, accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁹² Ibid.

Referring to the Iran-Iraq war, he said, “This is not the first time that troubling events happened to the people of this region. I was also among you during the imposed war. You showed your courage and endurance during the imposed war. You show that courage today, too.”⁹³ He also said, “It is a tragedy that the people in this region lost about 500 of their loved ones. But, you see how the Iranians consider themselves as part of the population of Kermanshah. People feel they are indebted to Kermanshah. The massive contribution, with everyone helping as much as they can, reveals this.”⁹⁴

Cyber Security

- **Canada faces Russia-linked cyberthreats at home and abroad, NATO chief says**⁹⁵

Jens Stoltenberg, NATO’s Secretary General asked Canada to keep a watchful eye over Russian cyberwarfare. In recent times, Canadian soldiers were sent to Latvia as a part of NATO group to fight against Russian aggression in the Baltic States. Stoltenberg on 18 November 2017 said, “There is no military operation today without a cyber element. We see that cyber is an area where there are constant attacks from states but also non-state actors. In cyber, the threats and the challenges are constantly changing, so the way we responded yesterday is not a sufficient way to respond today. We have to change all the time, and Canada is part of that change”. He maintained strong regional support for the alliance and encouraged all its members to beef up their cyber security protocols. Meanwhile, looking at the Russian backed online propaganda aiming to undermine NATO alliance, Canadian Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, at the Halifax International Security Forum on 19 November 2017 said, “These are types of things that were happening before there really was a social media. The best way to defuse any type of fake news is to actually go reach out to the community. Canadians are always going to do what they do best: Go out and build relationships”.

- **Govt, Data Security Council to help start-ups develop innovative cyber-security tech**⁹⁶

The Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on 15 November 2017 said that the Data Security Council of India (DSCI) was working towards to conduct a Challenge Grant for cyber security, encouraging innovation in cyber security which was the topmost priority of the government. Inaugurating the first ever Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT), held on 15 November 2017, Mr. Prasad announced that India became a part of the steering committee of APCERT along with six other countries i.e. Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan to formulate the programme for the next two years in the region. Prasad also announced to offer scholarships to candidates working in cyber security in the Asia Pacific region.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ <http://nationalpost.com/pmnl/news-pmnl/canada-news-pmnl/canada-faces-russia-linked-cyberthreats-at-home-and-abroad-nato-chief-says#comments-area>, 19 November 2017

⁹⁶ Business Line, 15 November 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/info-tech/govt-data-security-council-to-develop-innovative-cyber-security-tech/article9962595.ece>

- **UK seeks future cyber-security stars⁹⁷**

The U.K. government launched the Cyber discovery Programme, aiming 15 to 18 year old to build interest in security work and fight against hackers. The curriculum of Cyber Discovery Programme would cover digital forensics, defending against web attacks, cryptography, programming and ethics of hacking. Combining online challenges with face-to-face learning, role-playing and real-world technical challenges, the curriculum is one of the various programmes started by the U.K government to deal with cyber challenges and activities.

- **Kaspersky warns cyber security needs attention⁹⁸**

Stephan Neumeier, the managing director of Kaspersky Lab Asia Pacific in a recent report from the Kaspersky Security Network said that cyber security awareness is very low in Thailand although there are a huge number of internet users in the country. The Thai population is vulnerable to cyber threats such as hacking, malware, financial fraud and so forth. Kaspersky has a huge market in Thailand. Addressing the need for digital responsibility, Neumeier said, “We started by helping local government improve the cyber security awareness- we believe that it should start with the children. We want to educate parents of kindergarten student as well on what available tools can protect the kids from cyber security threats and how to educate kids”. Due to the current political climate in the U.S, Kaspersky’s business is growing rapidly in the Asia-Pacific region and the company has been planning to launch cyber security awareness programmes in the region.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 15	FATA	A faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) made a comeback to Wana town of South Waziristan Agency, under the guise of a ‘peace committee’ and placed a ban on cultural and social activities and put restrictions on movement of women outside their homes without male members of their family through circulation of pamphlets in areas dominated by the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe. However, the political administration intervened,		Taliban-style restrictions resurface

⁹⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-42016824>, 18 November 2017

⁹⁸ The Nation, 19 November 2017, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/Startup_and_IT/30331977

			rejecting the scope and legitimacy of any such committee. ⁹⁹		
2	November 15	Balochistan	At least 15 bullet-riddled dead bodies of Punjabi migrants were found in the Tajban area of Turbat <i>tehsil</i> (revenue unit) in Kech (Turbat) District. The migrants are said to be looking to cross into Iran on their way to Europe. ¹⁰⁰	15	0
3	November 15	Balochistan	Four people, including Superintendent of Police (SP) Muhammad Ilyas and three members of his family, were killed and one passerby was injured in a targeted attack in Nawan Killi area of provincial capital Quetta. ¹⁰¹	4	1
4	November 17	Balochistan	Younis Taukali, one of the eight top 'commanders' of the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), was killed in an exchange of fire during an intelligence based operation near the Alandur, Abdur Rehman village in Turbat District. Younis was involved in the November 15 killing of 15 Punjabi migrants near Turbat. ¹⁰²	1	0
5	November 18	Balochistan	Another five bullet-riddled dead bodies of Punjabi migrants were found in Tajban area of Turbat <i>tehsil</i> in Kech District. The Assistant Commissioner of Turbat Dr Jamil Ahmed Baloch said that the victims may have been kidnapped with 15 others whose bodies were found on November 15. ¹⁰³	5	0
6	November 19	Balochistan	A joint task force of various security and intelligence officials, including	Sanitisation	

⁹⁹ 'Peace committee' slaps Taliban-style curbs on Wana, *Dawn*, November 15 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370585/peace-committee-slaps-taliban-style-curbs-on-wana>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰⁰ Syed Ali Shah, 15 bullet-riddled bodies found in Balochistan's Kech district, *Dawn*, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370677/15-bullet-riddled-bodies-found-in-balochistans-kech-district>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰¹ Syed Ali Shah, SP, three family members gunned down in Quetta, *Dawn*, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370698>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰² BLF commander, allegedly involved in killing of 15 near Turbat, killed: ISPR, *Dawn*, November 17, 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371111/blf-commander-allegedly-involved-in-killing-of-15-near-turbat-killed-ispr>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰³ Behram Baloch, Five more bullet-riddled bodies found near Turbat, *Dawn*, November 19, 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371492/five-more-bullet-riddled-bodies-found-near-turbat>, accessed on November 20, 2017

			Intelligence Bureau and Frontier Corps, conducted a 'sanitisation' operation in provincial capital Quetta days, following the killing of SP Muhammad Ilyas and three members of his family in Nawan Killi area. ¹⁰⁴	operation
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Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 13	Farah	Eight Policemen were killed while another was injured when Taliban militants attacked a check post in Regi area of Farah province at 2:00 a.m. in the morning. ¹⁰⁵	8	1
2	November 15	Kunduz	Two Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and six Taliban militants were killed during an overnight clash when militants attacked security checkpoint in Afghan-Mazar area of Qala-i-Zal District. Deputy Police Chief Colonel Mohammad Safar Akbari said that six soldiers, two Policemen and eight militants were wounded in the exchange of fire. ¹⁰⁶	8	16
3	November 16	Washington	According to the new bill passed by the US Congress, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2018, Pakistan is obliged to work with the Afghan government and Washington for the elimination of the safe havens of the terror network in its soil. The bill includes USD 700 billion	US new bill on Pakistan and Haqqani Network	

¹⁰⁴ Security forces conduct 'sanitisation' operation in Quetta, *Dawn*, November 19, 2017,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371520/security-forces-conduct-sanitisation-operation-in-quetta>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰⁵ 8 Police killed in Taliban attack on Checkpoint, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 14, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2014,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰⁶ ANA Soldiers Among 8 Killed in Kunduz Clash, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 16, 2017,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2016,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 20, 2017

			for the US defense needs for the year 2018 as well as USD 700 million on Coalition Support Fund for Pakistan. However, half of the funds from the CSF amounting to USD 350 million will be released only when the US defense secretary certifies Pakistan's steps against the Haqqani Network. ¹⁰⁷	
4	November 18	Kabul	The National Directorate of Security (NDS) said in a statement that the Afghan forces discovered a cache of mines, explosives, and weapons and foiled a coordinated attack planned by the Haqqani network in Kabul city. ¹⁰⁸	Terror attack foiled
5	November 19	Helmand	Afghan Special Forces rescued at least 30 people, including children, from an illegal Taliban prison in Nawzad District. Reports indicate the people rescued had been accused of supporting government or being related to security personnel. ¹⁰⁹	30 civilians rescued from Taliban prison

Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 14	Baghdad	Six persons were wounded as two bomb blasts took place in southeast and west of Baghdad. According to details, "A bomb, placed near a market at Bawi region in al-Mada'in district, southeast of Baghdad, exploded, leaving three civilians wounded, while another bomb exploded in	0	6

¹⁰⁷ US congress passes new bill regarding Pakistan and Haqqani network, *Khaama Press*, November 19, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/us-congress-passes-new-bill-regarding-pakistan-and-haqqani-network-03877>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹⁰⁸ NDS foil Haqqani network's coordinated attack plan in Kabul, November 18, *Khaama Press*, November 18, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/nds-foil-haqqani-networks-coordinated-attack-plan-in-kabul-03873>, accessed on November 19, 2017

¹⁰⁹ At Least 30 People Freed In Raid On Taliban Prison, *Tolo News*, November 19, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/least-30-people-freed-special-forces-raid-taliban-prison>, accessed on November 20, 2017

			west of Baghdad, leaving three others wounded.” ¹¹⁰		
2	November 17	Diyala	Authorities in Diyala found three decomposed dead bodies of IS militants in Mekheisa area. ¹¹¹	3	0
3	November 17	Anbar	At least 16 of IS militants were killed during the liberation of the group’s last stronghold in western Anbar. Na’em al-Kaoud, head of Anbar provincial council’s security committee, said troops killed sixteen IS militants during battles in Rawa. ¹¹²	16	NS
4	November 19	Mosul	Iraqi troops confiscated huge amounts of weapons of IS in Mosul. “The weapons are estimated by 40 tons,” according to sources. “The weapons were found buried under the ground in Ain al-Jahsh region, southwest of Mosul.” Earlier in the day, curfew was imposed in al-Eraj village, south of Mosul, in search for IS members. ¹¹³	Weapons seized	
5	November 19	Anbar	Three paramilitary personnel were killed, while five others were wounded as a booby-trapped house exploded in in al-Qadisiya in central Rawa. Awad al-Jegheifi, a leader with al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) confirmed the incident. ¹¹⁴	3	5

¹¹⁰ Nehal Mostafa, Six people wounded in two bomb blasts in Baghdad, *Iraqi News*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/six-people-wounded-two-bomb-blasts-baghdad/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹¹ Mohamed Mostafa, Three corpses of Islamic State members found in Diyala, *Iraqi News*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-corpses-islamic-state-members-found-diyala/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹² Nehal Mostafa, Tens of IS militants killed in liberation of last stronghold in western Anbar, *Iraqi News*, November 18, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/tens-militants-killed-liberation-last-stronghold-western-anbar/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹³ Nehal Mostafa, Huge amounts of Islamic State’s weapons seized, southwest of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/huge-amounts-islamic-states-weapons-seized-southwest-mosul/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹⁴ Nehal Mostafa, Three paramilitary personnel killed, five others wounded in western Anbar blast, *Iraqi News*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-paramilitary-personnel-killed-five-others-wounded-anbar-blast/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 15	Aleppo	Three children were killed in a landmine explosion in the al-Bab city, in the eastern Aleppo. The landmine was planted by the IS militants. ¹¹⁵	3	0
2	November 17		The IS surrendered the entire island of Hawijat Kati after several weeks of fighting with the Syrian Arab Army (SAA). According to the pro-government ISIS Hunters, the IS gave up the island after the Syrian military completely surrounded their forces, leaving no way for them to flee the area. The ISIS Hunters added that more than 250 IS terrorists surrendered. ¹¹⁶	IS surrenders entire island	
3	November 17	Damascus	The SAA, led by the 42nd Brigade of the 4th Mechanized Division, resumed their offensive in the Beit Jinn pocket of western Damascus, targeting the Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham's remaining defenses at the large hilltop of Tal Sawadi in a bid to recover all of the territory they lost to the latter two weeks ago. ¹¹⁷	SAA captures territory	
4	November 19	Albukamal	Syrian army forces and their allied militias managed to retake the city of Albukamal, backed by Russian forces, after driving out IS militants. The Syrian army troops are working on cleansing the area from landmines and	Syrian army recaptures the city of Albukamal	

¹¹⁵ Loaa Adel, Landmine kills 3 children in al-Bab east of Aleppo, *Iraqi News*, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/landmine-kills-3-children-al-bab-east-aleppo/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹⁶ Leith Fadel, ISIS mass surrenders large Deir Ezzor island, 250+ terrorists captured, *Al Masdar News*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-mass-surrenders-large-deir-ezzor-island-250-terrorists-captured/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹⁷ Leith Fadel, Syrian Army captures large hilltop near Golan Heights amid heavy resistance from jihadists, *Al Masdar News*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-captures-large-hilltop-near-golan-heights-amid-heavy-resistance-jihadists/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

			bombs left by the IS militants in the city. ¹¹⁸	
5	November 19	Antalya (Turkey)	The Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey met in the Turkish city of Antalya to talk about future cooperation in Syria with regards to the settlement on the Syrian crisis and preparation for a joint Russo-Iranian-Turkish Summit scheduled to be held in Sochi on November 22, 2017 [Media will not be allowed during the meeting]. ¹¹⁹	Russia Iran and Turkey meet over Syrian crisis

International Economic Issues

- **RCEP leaders hold first-ever summit¹²⁰**

On November 14, 2017, leaders from 16 countries including China, India and Thailand began their first-ever summit to discuss an East Asian free trade deal, commonly known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The gathering in Manila was expected to focus on speeding up negotiations for the deal, which has not been concluded after five years of negotiations.

Five years since its launch, there has been five ministerial meetings and 20 rounds of negotiations. RCEP trade ministers, who held a preparatory meeting in Manila on November 12, 2017, agreed to try to conclude the talks next year i.e. 2018, having missed deadlines for three years in a row, including this year. However, it is not clear if the leaders of RCEP countries will in fact be able to set or announce a new target date for completing negotiations in 2018 as the negotiations are complicated. Meanwhile, during the ASEAN-Canada Summit, also held on the same day of the summit, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reiterated his country's desire to join the RCEP summit plus to be able to engage with its members on strategic, political and economic issues. He said, "We are ready to contribute to ASEAN's success in an increasingly globalised world by joining

¹¹⁸ Loaa Adel, Syrian Army drive out Islamic State and retakes Albukamal City, *Iraqi News*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/syrian-army-drive-islamic-state-retakes-albukamal-city/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹¹⁹ Brecht Jonkers, Foreign Ministers of Russia, Iran and Turkey in meeting regarding Syria, *Al Masdar News*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/foreign-ministers-russia-iran-turkey-meeting-regarding-syria/>, accessed on November 20, 2017

¹²⁰ "RCEP leaders hold first-ever summit", *The Bangkok Post*, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1360475/rcep-leaders-hold-first-ever-summit> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

the East Asia Summit ... at the earliest opportunity.” “As unprecedented dynamic growth is driving Southeast Asia's importance on the world stage, it is critical that we build this progress and that we expand this partnership.”

- **No new issues at the WTO: India**¹²¹

On November 20, 2017, the *Times of India* reported that India has clearly marked its red lines for the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) scheduled in December, arguing that it is not ready for talks to set up a global regime for new issues such as e-commerce, until its concerns related to public stockholding and fixing earlier disparities in the global trading system are addressed. In this regard Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu said, “We have certain long-term issues which are developmental issues. The Doha Development Round was an important beginning but somehow lost its way. We are not expecting Buenos Aires (ministerial meeting) to be another reinventing of the Doha developmental issues. We don’t want any new issues to be brought in because there is a tendency of some countries to keep discussing new things instead of discussing what’s already on the plate. We want to keep it focused.” He further added that India will seek a solution to public stockholding problem as it restricts its ability to support its farmers. Additionally, it will push for reduction in domestic subsidy for agriculture in the developed countries apart from more market access for Indian farm goods in other markets, especially in the US, the EU, Canada and Australia.

- **4th Annual India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment Held in New Delhi**¹²²

The 4th India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment was held in New Delhi November 13, 2017. The Indian Delegation was led by the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri Suresh Prabhu while the Canadian side was headed by the Minister for International Trade, Mr. François-Philippe Champagne. Both sides recognized that the current bilateral trade is much below the potential between the two world’s robust economies, despite the huge untapped potential for two-way trade and investment. During the dialogue both sides noted the progress made during the 10th Round of the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) held in August, 2017 and expressed their strong commitment for taking forward negotiations for early conclusion. India also highlighted the importance of Services Component under CEPA. The Canadian side assured that they would look into the issues concerned, including movement of natural persons and what kind of provisions could be built into the CEPA. The Ministers directed the Chief Negotiators to discuss and explore ways for early conclusion of the Agreement. Both sides also took note of the progress made under the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) and expressed their hope for an early conclusion. It was agreed to explore collaboration in the area of export credit insurance through India’s Export Credit Guarantee Corporation Ltd. (ECGC Ltd.) and Canada’s Export Development Canada (EDC). The other issues such as

¹²¹ “Don’t want new issues at WTO meet: Prabhu”, *The Times of India*, November 20, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/dont-want-new-issues-at-wto-meet-prabhu/articleshow/61718214.cms> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

¹²² Government of India, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Press Information Bureau, “4th Annual India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment Held in New Delhi”, November 13, 2017, <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=0> (accessed on November 20, 2017)

early institutionalization of the CEO Forum mechanism, issue of extension of derogation of pulses, etc. Were also discussed.
